

**COVENTRY PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
WEDNESDAY, MAY 4TH, 2016**

The Coventry Parks & Recreation Commission held a regular meeting on Wednesday, May 4th, 2016 in Town Hall Annex. Jennifer Rodgers called the meeting to order at 7:30pm, following the conclusion of the Public Hearing.

Members Present: Todd Messier, Sean Butler, Jennifer Rodgers, Antonia Conti, Marie Gallo-Hall and Jillian Miner.

Members Absent: None.

Others Present: Wendy Rubin, Director of Parks & Recreation and Caterina Merriam, Recreation Supervisor.

Audience of Citizens: None.

Acceptance of Minutes:

Jennifer Rodgers moved to accept the meeting minutes from April 6th, 2016. Marie Gallo-Hall seconded. Motion voted in the affirmative by Todd Messier, Sean Butler, Jennifer Rodgers, Antonia Conti and Marie Gallo-Hall. Motion carried.

Correspondence: None.

Staff Report:

- Laidlaw Park:
 - Ms. Rubin noted that the field is constructed, with irrigation going in this week. The field is being seeded and will now needs to rest for 1 year to allow the grass to grow.
- Miller-Richardson:
 - Additional work is being done, including fencing, replacing the backstop on the major league field, and parking.
- Community Gardens:
 - DPW has assisted by spreading manure and lime, which has been much appreciated. The gardeners have met twice thus far and are building quite the community. Bill Oros, Master Gardener has signed on to help advise the gardeners and provide workshops/training. We are also working with the Boy Scouts on the construction of a sign/message board to be installed at the garden.
- Summer Staff:
 - We are wrapping up the hiring of summer staff now, including camp counselors, lifeguards, gate keepers and park maintainers.
- Beach Stickers:
 - Stickers are in and we are planning on beginning the sale of beach stickers on June 1st, pending the results of this meeting.
- Special Events:
 - The Father Daughter Dance is being held on Friday, May 13th and the Town Wide Tag Sale is scheduled for Saturday, May 7th. 43 homes are participating this year!

- Plan for Health, EHHD:
 - Ms. Rubin has been working with the Eastern Highlands Health District on this grant, which is completed and a Healthy Communities Toolkit has been created. The toolkit includes a lot about “playability” which is great for Parks & Rec.
- National Kids to Parks Day:
 - We’ll be doing a social media blitz ahead of the event, which is Saturday, May 21st. Stay tuned!

Old Business:

- Beach Operations:
 - The Commission spoke at length about the many points brought up during the Public Hearing, including Senior Citizen passes, financial assistance, and 1-day passes for residents.
 - Senior Citizen Passes:
 - The Commission discussed how to define a senior citizen and if the pass should be free. They discussed whether it should just be based on age, or should there be income qualifications. Ms. Rodgers noted that the senior center hangtag pass that is currently offered could be changed to include park and beach access to both beaches, Monday-Friday. The Commission agreed.
 - Financial Assistance:
 - Ms. Gallo-Hall also added that Ryan’s Fund does subsidize a lot, as Mr. Streeter noted when he spoke during the hearing.
 - Ms. Miner asked about other sources of funding, such as the Campership Fund? Ms. Merriam noted that the Human Services office has purchased beach stickers for those in need, but not through the Campership Fund as that is designated for day camp only and they have other funds available for those who qualify.. The Commission agreed that we should do some additional promotion as to the avenues folks could take to obtain assistance.
 - 1-Day Passes for Residents:
 - Ms. Miner noted that when Mr. Streeter spoke, he also mentioned only going to the beach once or twice a year; can we offer a 1-day resident pass for those residents who don’t find it worth it to buy a sticker? The Commission agreed, and discussed offering said pass for \$5 per day. If a resident decides to purchase a sticker, what they’ve paid in daily passes could be used as credit toward the seasonal sticker.
 - The Commission also discussed the current status of the Parks & Recreation budget, and operation costs. Ms. Gallo-Hall noted that she found it very disingenuous of Town Council members present at the hearing to say that we should have asked for more money. She went on to say that the message has always been to come in at a 0% increase. Ms. Rubin also mentioned that it has been discussed for several years now, particularly with the Steering Committee that revenue is low and expenses are up.
 - Ms. Conti noted that there were folks present in opposition of the proposal; do we know if there are residents who are in support? Ms. Gallo-Hall noted that there was some chatter on Facebook, on the Citizens Collective page, and some of the comments were supportive but we have no way of knowing.

- Ms. Gallo-Hall also asked if the Town Council has to approve what is agreed to tonight. Ms. Rubin said no, that it is within the Parks & Recreation Commission's charter to set fees and policies.
- Ms. Rodgers noted that the bottom line is that we have a financial issue, and that we have to charge fees for programs to exist. Ms. Rubin added that an important piece to note is that the entire salary and benefits for the Recreation Supervisor position is paid for out of the fees generated by programs, which is not common. Full-time staff are usually funded by Town government. Mr. Butler added that the message needs to be that this is not something we want to do, but rather have to do.

Todd Messier moved to approve the proposal as presented, including the addition of a \$5 one-day resident beach sticker, and amending the senior center pass to include access to both Patriots Park & Lisicke Beach Monday-Friday. Jennifer Rodgers seconded. Motion voted in the affirmative by Todd Messier, Sean Butler, Antonia Conti, Marie Gallo-Hall, and Jennifer Rodgers. Motion carried.

- Proposed Hours of Operations:
 - Ms. Rubin opted to clarify Mr. Pope's comments during the Hearing, regarding our "number crunching." She said that the numbers had been crunched, with several options from which to choose, but upon further study regarding the scheduling of staff, it was determined that the schedule would be challenging to work with, therefore, additional review and a change in the proposal was required.

Marie Gallo-Hall moved to approve the hours of operation as proposed. Sean Butler seconded. Motion voted in the affirmative by Todd Messier, Sean Butler, Antonia Conti, Marie Gallo-Hall and Jennifer Rodgers.

New Business: None.

Adjournment: With no other business to discuss the meeting was adjourned at 8:28pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Caterina Merriam,
Recreation Supervisor

Please note: These minutes are not official until approved by the Parks & Recreation Commission at the next Parks & Recreation Commission Meeting. Please see the next Parks & Recreation Commission Meeting Minutes for approval or changes to these minutes.