

SERVICES OFFERED:

Parks & Facilities:

- Uptick in use of outdoor pavilions & Bandshell for gatherings, ceremonies & recitals;
- Monitoring guidance to re-open the Lodge & Mill Brook Place. Both became available for rent in September;
- Instituted a COVID-19 special waiver and cleaning fee for all indoor rentals;
- Playgrounds & basketball courts remained opened after re-opening in June;
- Continued social media efforts to raise awareness of Town Parks and amenities to encourage outdoor play & use of Town facilities;
- Coordinated use of Patriots Park Community Center for upcoming Winter Farmer's Market.

Special Programs:

- Kayak rentals, although delayed, were able to operate later in the season;
- Community Garden @ Creaser Park maintained operations successfully throughout the summer season.

Sports:

- Assisted Youth Lacrosse with startup process;
- Developed COVID-19 guidelines for groups using Town fields;
- Assisted Softball Field Committee with ongoing activities.

Digital Camp Newsletter:

- Production continued on new issues of the *Wangumbaug Weekly Newsletter*, culminating in a final edition on August 17th.



WE ARE
PARKS AND
RECREATION

CONFIDENT
ESSENTIAL
DRIVEN
SELFLESS

STRONG

PASSIONATE

JULY 2020

PARKS & RECREATION

QUARTERLY REPORT: SUMMER 2020

JULY – AUGUST - SEPTEMBER

THE IMPACT OF COVID-19: OUR NEW NORMAL

Beaches:

Since beaches opened back in June, both Patriots Park & Lisicke Beach saw increased attendance from previous years. This increase is likely two-fold: in the time of COVID-19, heading to the beach became the one activity that was both conducive to social distancing and completely outdoors. Additionally, the summer of 2020 saw very few rain events, and upwards of 5 heat waves, attracting folks to the beaches in droves. Whether it was a weekday or weekend, Coventry's beaches were THE place to be for both residents and out-of-towners. Revenue generated at beaches was higher than ever this summer.



Programs:

Rec. programs, on the other hand, were negatively affected by the COVID-19 pandemic in more ways than one:

1. **Restrictions:** Registration for summer programs was postponed as we awaited guidance from State & Local Health Officials as to how to safely operate most sports offerings and week-long camps. As a result of the guidance, it was determined that certain programs just could not be offered under these restrictions.
2. **Low Enrollment:** Once guidance was evaluated, registration was opened for the programs that could still be offered. However, most programs that could be offered within the safety guidelines were still ultimately cancelled due to low enrollment. Trends and feedback suggest that many parents continued working from home thereby not needing "childcare," while others still did not feel comfortable with organized/group activities in light of COVID-19 concerns.

A handful of programs did lend themselves to a successful run this season, both in keeping with safety restrictions and appeal. They are: Virtual Tai Chi, Simply Fit, Whiffle Ball Camp, CARE: ZOOM & Fish, and Home Alone Safety for Kids. Staff continued research to determine new and innovative ways of engaging the community in activities for the coming seasons, taking weather and the current state of the pandemic into account.

Beyond our typical week-long camps and other summer programming, staff also spent a considerable amount of time reviewing guidance and planning accordingly for the **Recreation Daze, Before & After School Program**. Unfortunately, after multiple attempts at re-opening alongside the schools this fall (once in August, once in September) the program was also cancelled due to low enrollment. Staff continue to monitor conditions in hopes of a re-opening later in the year, if the demand from families warrants it.

THE IMPACT OF COVID-19: THE NUMBERS

Throughout the Pandemic, public parks and trails provided many people countless opportunities to improve one's physical and mental health every day, often serving as the sole remaining respite as other services and businesses shut down. This has reaffirmed our essential nature throughout the public health crisis. Conversely, the damage the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic has wreaked on the park and recreation budget is startling. According to the [2020 NRPA Agency Performance Review](#), the typical park and recreation agency recovers more than 25% of its annual operating budget through registration and entry fees, rental income, sponsorships, concessions and other earned revenues. In Coventry, our cost recovery rate is closer to **85%**.

At best, these revenues are challenged in a pandemic world, but for many of us, these revenues are simply nonexistent. Without our major programs (*Camp Wangumbaug & Recreation Daze*) in operation, our overall budget is taking an unprecedented hit with few options for recovery until the pandemic subsides. As fall/winter brings colder temperatures and messy weather, staff are continuing to research options for virtual programming, however trends within the industry have shown that virtual options are not as successful as in-person.

PROJECTS UPDATE:

Creaser Park:

- Cleared pond of invasive plants
- Conducted a DEEP staff tour
- Added 4 new park benches

Capital Improvements in progress include new roof for the Community Center at Patriots Park, and significant building improvements to Creaser Park Building One.



LOOKING AHEAD & PROGRAM PLANNING:

It does not look like the Pandemic will end anytime soon so the upcoming fall and winter will also see many challenges, as the weather gets colder and less and less programs can be held outdoors.

- **The Patriot Race** is still scheduled as a live event, scheduled for Saturday, November 7th at Patriots Park. The event will be held with both live/in-person and virtual options for registration, with many adaptations to follow the DECD Sector guidelines, such as no children's Fun Runs, everything is out doors, and hands-free registration.
- **Youth Basketball** cannot be offered this year as the school gyms are unavailable because the schools need the space for their classrooms and cafeterias. The DECD Sector guidelines for sports categorizes basketball as a moderate risk sport but with the lack of available space we cannot run the program safely. Plan is to look towards spring and summer with some outdoor basketball instead.
- **Skyhawks Mini-Hawk Sports Program** did bring in enough registrations to run, beginning in mid-October. Program will be held at Patriots Park, with the Community Center as a back-up indoor location in cases of inclement weather.
- **Town Wide Tag Sale: Fall Edition** & the **2020 Coventry Scarecrow Contest** were planned this season for kick-offs in October. By the end of September, more than 30 homes have registered for the Tag Sale and 11 Scarecrows were signed up for the contest!
- **Holiday Event Planning:** Staff met this season with the *Christmas in the Village* planning committee to review the current DECD Sector Guidelines and provide assistance with planning moving forward.
- **Winter/Spring Program Planning** is set to begin this fall, with content due to The Chronicle in December. Staff are currently working on a virtual program, in lieu of our Valentines Dance come February.



Seasonal Highlights:

Red, White & Blue Contest: New Community Event

Parks & Recreation and Coventry Human Services came together this season to offer a brand new, social distancing-friendly new community event: the Red, White & Blue Contest! Families & businesses were called upon to decorate their front door, yard, vehicle, tree – whatever item/area they chose to show their patriotism in time for the July 4th holiday! Submissions were received via Facebook & email, and posted to the Parks & Recreation Facebook page. Results were AWESOME!

Disc Golf @ Creaser Park:

Awareness of our newest amenity continues to grow this summer, as residents and disc golfers from nearby communities have tried it out! Staff designed new score cards, which are available at the entry with pencils. We also have a loaner program in place with equipment for those new to the sport, to try it out for free!



COVENTRY PARKS & RECREATION

1712 Main Street
Coventry, CT 06238

Wendy L. Rubin, CPRP, Director
Caterina Merriam, Rec. Supervisor
Bethany Cologna, Office Aide
Yasmine Forte, Office Aide

www.coventryct.org