

Wethersfield Parks and Recreation Advisory Board  
Minutes - Thursday, April 23, 2009

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. by Chairperson Tom Ragonese. The meeting was held in Town Hall, Conference Room #1. Members present were Tom Ragonese, Dan Silbo and Carmelo Amoddio. Also present were Jeff Kotkin, Town Council Liaison, Kathleen Bagley, Director of Parks and Recreation and Colleen Smith from the Wethersfield Evangelical Free Church.

A. Public Comments.

Colleen Smith, who represented the Wethersfield Evangelical Free Church, requested permission from the Board to hold a Crayons for Cancer Benefit Concert at Cove Park on either Saturday, August 15 or Sunday, August 16 at 5:00 p.m. She distributed a written request to Board members. Families would be the target audience for this event, and they are estimating an audience of 250 people. There will be no charge for the concert, but they are asking people to donate unwanted used crayons. These crayons are a fundraiser to benefit the Family Fund at the Connecticut Children's Medical Center in the Hartford Oncology Unit. Ms. Smith explained that the event is designed to create awareness that anyone, including children, can help families of those dealing with cancer. Those attending will actually peel and sort crayons by color and be a part of the process. It also has a green effect - the crayons are recycled for a good cause. The Church will work with the Parks and Recreation Department to provide all the appropriate insurance requirements and at the end of the event they will pick up all the garbage. They might also request the use of the department showmobile for this event. Board members discussed this event with Ms. Smith and had no additional questions. Chairperson Ragonese explained that the Board would discuss this item under New Business and have Ms. Bagley contact her. Ms. Smith thanked the Board members for considering her request.

B. Minutes - February 26, 2009.

These minutes were tabled from the March 26 meeting, because there was no quorum at that meeting. Dan Silbo moved to approve the minutes of February 26, 2009. The motion was seconded by Carmelo Amoddio and voted unanimously. Chairperson Ragonese explained that notes were taken of the March 26, 2009 meeting, but no action is necessary because this was not an official Board meeting. These notes were taken because Board members did discuss some of the agenda items at the last meeting. Carmelo Amoddio asked about the status of the Wilkus property, since it was in the March meeting notes. Chairperson Ragonese reported that a group of residents petitioned for this property purchase to go to a referendum. The Town Council has set a date for a vote on this issue. The date for voting will be May 12, 2009. Board members were supportive of the purchase of the Wilkus Farm for open space by the Town Council.

C. Monthly Report - March 2009.

Board members reviewed the monthly report. Ms. Bagley reported that registration is ongoing for summer programs and residents are registering by mail, in the office and on line.

D. Letters and Announcements.

Chairperson Ragonese asked Ms. Bagley to give a status report on the distribution of the summer brochure. Ms. Bagley reported that the summer brochure was distributed to resident's home through the Rare Reminder Newspaper. She explained that the cost for printing and distributing through the Rare Reminder was the same as printing the brochure and distributing it in the school system. The school system reaches approximately 3,000 families, but the Rare Reminder goes to 11,000 households in town. The Rare Reminder was offering an attractive price to distribute through their newspaper. Board members thought this was a great idea since the brochure was distributed to every household in town.

E. Old Business.

1. Mill Woods Park Building Committee.

Chairperson Ragonese gave an update on the construction of the Little League field in Mill Woods Park. He reported that the field is almost completed and the remaining items include the construction of the press box and the acceptance of the sod on the field. The contractor will be completing the punch list items in the next several weeks. Hopefully Little League will be able to use the field at the end of May. The Parks and Recreation Department and Little League will be looking to set a date for the ribbon cutting for this field. Chairperson Ragonese also reported that Men's Softball donated \$5,000 to Little League to help with the construction of the press box. Board members were very appreciative of this donation from the Men's Softball League. Ms. Bagley explained that parking will be an issue in this area since the new parking lot has not been built yet. She will be working with town staff to help alleviate this problem and maximize the parking near the new field.

2. Proposed Budget 2009-10.

Chairperson Ragonese asked Ms. Bagley to give Board members an overview on the status of the upcoming budget. Ms. Bagley reported that one of the major changes to her budget is that the Nature Center will have to be self-sustaining for next year's budget operation. The Town Manager has given the Nature Center \$5,000 towards the \$142,000 budget requested by the department. These funds are to help pay the Nature Center building utilities of \$29,000. The Nature Center will need to raise the remaining funds needed to operate their programs and cover building maintenance. Ms. Bagley has been working with the Nature Center director and the Friends of the Nature Center to help in this process. She reported that the Friends of the Nature Center felt that the town should pay the cost of the utilities for this town building. Board members recognize the difficult economy, but still support the Nature Center and its operations and hope that plans can be worked out to keep the Nature Center operating in the upcoming budget year. Ms. Bagley also reported that the budget calls for closing Willard Pool one week early in the summer to save money. This closing would mean that both pools close August 21 instead of Willard Pool staying open until August 28. Mill Woods Pool will be closed Friday, Saturday and Sunday evenings also to save money. The attendance on these nights has been low at this facility and Willard Pool will still be open for evening swim. The Town Council will be working on the budget in the next several weeks. The budget adoption date is May 15.

3. New Fees for Community Center Rentals, Pool Pass and Playgrounds.

Chairperson Ragonese asked Board members to review the changes in fees recommended by the Parks and Recreation Department. These changes are included in the Board member's packet. He explained that the pool pass fee will go up \$5, the playground fee would go up \$15 and the Community Center rental fees are increased slightly for the various rooms. Carmelo Amoddio moved to approve the fee increases for the pool passes, playgrounds and the community center rentals. The motion was seconded by Dan Silbo and voted unanimously.

Town Councilor Jeff Kotkin asked board members to consider allowing the family's babysitter/nanny on the family pool pass. He had received some calls regarding this issue from residents. He gave an example of a grandmother caring for grandchildren for the summer. With the existing policies, she cannot be placed on the family pool pass. Board members thought it was a good idea that families should be allowed to place the person taking care of their children on the pool pass. Dan Silbo moved to allow families to add one additional adult on their family pool pass as long as that adult is the family babysitter. The motion was seconded by Carmelo Amoddio and voted unanimously.

F. New Business.

1. Request from Wethersfield Evangelical Free Church to Hold Concert at Cove Park.

Chairperson Ragonese asked board members if they approved of the church holding a concert at the Park. Board members had no problem approving this request. They asked Ms. Bagley to work with the Church to handle all the details. Dan Silbo moved to approve the use of Cove Park for a Crayons for Cancer Benefit Concert sponsored by the Wethersfield Evangelical Free Church on either Saturday, August 15 or Sunday, August 16 at 5 p.m. The motion was seconded by Carmelo Amoddio and voted unanimously.

2. Keane Foundation Carnival.

Chairperson Ragonese asked about the status of the Keane Foundation Carnival coming up in October at Cove Park. Ms. Bagley reported that the Foundation members are meeting on a regular basis to finalize their plans for this carnival. They did receive permission from the Town Council and the Planning and Zoning Commission to hold this event.

3. YMCA Use of Emerson Williams School Fields.

Dan Silbo asked Ms. Bagley to look into the use of the baseball field by the YMCA at Emerson Williams School. The YMCA used the field when it was very wet and muddy. Ms. Bagley will look into this situation and let the YMCA know they cannot damage the field or they will not be allowed to use it.

G. Motion to Adjourn.

Carmelo Amoddio moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:30 p.m. The motion was seconded by Dan Silbo and voted unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted,

Kathleen A. Bagley, Director  
Parks and Recreation Department