

TOWN OF SIMSBURY – CULTURE, PARKS, AND RECREATION COMMISSION
Subject to Vote of Approval – Regular Meeting Minutes – **Thursday, March 24, 2022** – 4 pages

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 6:02 p.m. by Kelly Kearney, Vice Chairman at Simsbury Town Hall. Other commission members who were present included Chris Boswell, Danielle Celli, Rachel Wellman, Lori Coppinger, and Liz Keppel. The C. P. & R. Director, Tom Tyburski, and Simsbury Farms Golf Course Superintendent, Brian Johnson were also in attendance.

Public Comments

No comments.

Culture, Parks and Recreation Commission Member Comments

No comments.

Minutes of Previous Meeting

No changes were made to the January 27, 2022, Regular Meeting Minutes. Mr. Kearney declared the minutes approved and requested that they be put on record.

New Business

Simsbury Farms Golf Course -Opening of 50th Season of Play- Mr. Johnson shared that they opened up Tuesday (slow soft opening). He highlighted some of the course projects stating that the 12th forward tee should be done shortly which will allow beginning golfers / higher handicap golfers a shorter distances to hit from. He also stated they should be sodding next week weather permitting. Four Seasons Landscaping will be coming in to level four tees (funded by Friends) and it will hopefully be done sometime in April. In the meantime, they are continuing clean up on golf course, there has been a little damage on the greens from the freeze thaws during the winter. They also did put the 50th anniversary flags out (funded by Friends).

Ms. Coppinger asked if they should put signs up to keep dogs off the course? Mr. Kearney stated that he thinks it is a chronic problem in Town and suggested possibly doing some marketing to get people publicly aware. Mr. Tyburski commented that he would put something up on social media.

Mr. Kearney asked if they should be putting coverings on various greens and courses? Mr. Johnson stated that they have covers, however, he is not a big proponent of them, he prefers the grass to deal with the environment and if used, the golf maintenance crew would have to put them on and off every day.

Old Business

Update on FY 2023 Culture, Parks and Recreation Budget & Project Requests - Mr. Tyburski shared that the golf course irrigation system is the only big project in the Town budget this year. Due to the size of the project, it's going to be listed on the budget referendum as a separate question.

Mr. Tyburski commented that the golf course should be a self-sustaining entity in its own Special Revenue Fund as it is a community asset. He discussed the idea of the golf course being spun off on its own, profit wouldn't have to come back to the Town's GF it would be reinvested back into the course or cover losses in future seasons. He suggested that there be a minimum fund balance of \$250-300K in the Golf Fund, anything above that would come into play for golf course improvements, marketing, etc. With minimum wage

increasing, it has been incredibly difficult to hold prices down at the pool and rink, the Town will need increase its General Fund subsidy to the Parks and Recreation fund to keep up in the coming years. Mr. Tyburski stated that everything requested and more was moving forward, including Mr. Johnson's request for additional part-time staff position paid out of golf user fees not by the Town.

Projects and Equipment that currently included in BOS Budget:

\$10,000 to replace half of rental ice skate inventory at Simsbury Farms Rink
\$12,000 to replace softball backstop at Weatogue Park (**ARPA**)
\$12,000 to replace softball backstop at Tariffville Park (**ARPA**)
\$75,000 to compensate for increased costs of Simsbury Farms Playground replacement (**ARPA**)
\$70,000 to replace roof at Simsbury Farms Clubhouse
\$35,000 to begin design and begin construction on golf cart path extensions (3-4 year project)
\$65,000 for interior repairs at Golf Clubhouse (HVAC, restrooms, hardware)
\$30,000 to continue small playground renovations
\$16,000 for park sign replacement
\$30,000 to replace failing plaster on Simsbury Farms Wading Pool
\$50,000 to dredge Town Forest Pond (**ARPA**)
\$75,000 to replace Tariffville Park Pavilion (**ARPA**)
\$2,550,000 to replace golf course irrigation system and make repairs to retention pond dam
\$350,000 for permanent restrooms at Simsbury Meadows/Rotary Park
\$350,000 to demolish old tennis courts and build pickleball courts at Tariffville Park (**ARPA**)

Using the Golf Course Equipment Surcharge Fund:

\$50,000 to replace golf course dump truck
\$90,000 to replace golf course turf sprayer

Mr. Tyburski shared that there is a public hearing on the budget on April 5th. He also stated that the timelines for the playground renovations are getting pushed back 6 months or more due to production delays.

Update on Park Maintainer Recruitment - Mr. Tyburski reported that they have hired someone who will be starting on 4/11. They will now be fully staffed at 10.

Simsbury Farms 50th Anniversary Planning- Mr. Tyburski stated that they have approached a large business in Town about being a primary sponsor for a concert and fireworks at the Farms. They are waiting on a response, They are starting to put together the calendar next week, 50 days for 50 years. He shared that new interior and exterior fire doors at the golf clubhouse have been put in and the restaurant now has additional secure storage spaces. There is also some new equipment in kitchen, and have everything they need for liquor license, a are also installing a basic tap system. The town is also trying to improve the wifi on outdoor patio to help their order system.

Parks and Open Space Master Plan Update- Mr. Tyburski shared the status of the general recommendations from the Parks and Open Space Master Plan as follows:

1. Improve/upgrade existing facilities and outdated amenities that do not function well- *in progress* – *West Mountain Park & Simsbury Farms Playgrounds, Memorial Bench Program*
2. Increase number of parks maintenance staff - *Scott Kiley, new second shift Parks Maintainer begins on April 11, Mark Raymond moves to days later in the spring*

3. Expand walking pathways and trail connectivity to and within parks- no update
4. Implement and update the ADA Transition Plan to address areas that are not compliant- *work has begun on accessibility and parking improvements at Simsbury Meadows*
5. Improve/upgrade/replace signage (wayfinding, directional and interpretative)- *in progress and SF Fitness Trail and Entrance signage at many parks*
6. Improve communication and event/facility marketing – *trying to be more active on FB, IG*
7. Increase funding for parks and facility maintenance – *FY23 Proposed Budget moving through Boards to referendum*
8. Develop maintenance standards of level of service – *In progress of selecting maintenance software*
9. Improve access to athletic fields for existing and new/ growing user groups – *working with rugby groups for summer access at this time*
10. Preserve and expand open space –no update
11. Focus on conservation and sustainability – *in progress No Mow Zone Signs out this spring, working with Open Space Committee on long term maintenance plans for various meadows*
12. Conduct feasibility study for new indoor facility – *no progress*
13. Update park and open space/trail maps – *Plans for this have stalled, staff time needed*
14. Explore additional usage of school facilities – *Some progress has been made with adult indoor pickleball and more efficient gym use for winter basketball programs*
15. Increase special event programming – *Planning for 50th Anniversary moving along*
16. Review recreational program offering and adjust annually – *In progress*
17. Develop Town-wide invasive plant management plan- *In discussion at Open Space Committee at this time*
18. Educate residents and visitors about the importance of natives, invasive species removal, and benefits of ecologically sensitive areas, pollinator pathways, and habitat buffers- *In discussion at Open Space Committee at this time*
19. Develop and implement a system of park and open space plans for expanded recreational types/changing trends and conservation priorities- *staff time needed to move on this initiative*
20. Actively monitor all parks and open spaces for illegal dumping and encroachment by abutters- *staff is making effort to call attention to illegal dumping, installing cameras this spring in problem areas*

Ms. Coppinger asked if there was anything being done to the Apple Barn. Mr. Tyburski shared that internally it was painted this winter and they replaced some ceiling tiles, however, there are no plans for a major renovation at this point.

Ms. Celli asked if C.P.R. has considered doing more programming for young kids? Mr. Tyburski stated that they are moving forward hiring a part-time recreation coordinator and one goal will be youth programming and offering.

In follow-up to item #3- expand walking pathways, Mr. Kearney stated he would love to have something that shows people what all the parks are in Town, physical way fairing signs, facilities, etc. Mr. Tyburski stated that he has had a couple conversations with UCONN who is working on a trail mapping website, however, he would need to have someone go through and pull all that information to give to them. Mr. Kearney believes they should be drawing people downtown by promoting each gateway to be easily accessible and esthetically pleasing.

Adjourn

Ms. Celli made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Ms. Keppel seconded the motion. All were in favor. The meeting was adjourned at 7:12 p.m.

Next Meeting

The next Regular Meeting of the C. P. & R. Commission will be April 28, 2022 at 6 p.m. at Town Hall.

Respectfully submitted,
Heather Taylor,
Commission Clerk