

TOWN OF SIMSBURY – CULTURE, PARKS, AND RECREATION COMMISSION

Subject to Vote of Approval – Regular Meeting Minutes – **Thursday, February 22 2024** – 3 pages

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 p.m. by David Bush, Chairman at Simsbury Town Hall. Other commission members who were present included Lori Coppinger, Liz Keppel, Kelly Kearney, Chris Boswell, Michelle Lipar, Tim Walczak and Erik Petersen. The C. P. & R. Director, Tom Tyburski and Board of Selectman Liaison, Diana Yeisley were also in attendance.

Public Session – Comments limited to 3 minutes per person. Culture, Parks and Recreation Commission

No comments.

Culture, Parks and Recreation Commission Member Comments

Mr. Tyburski shared that he presented the C.P.R. budget to the new Town Manager in late January. The majority of increases are related to the minimum wage increase on the programs' side. An increase in utilities, fuel costs and agricultural products also play a role in budget increases. Overall, the budget isn't increasing very much. Projects included in the presented budget include; keeping up with playground renovations (next being Weatogue this fall and Tariffville next summer), a couple of parks maintenance vehicles and mowers, field irrigation system (in process of replacing at Memorial Park, this summer will likely do two of the Little League fields). On the golf side, funding was requested for cart path paving and drainage improvements. The Town Manager will be presenting his overall budget to the BOS on Monday night, February 26. The BOS budget workshop is Saturday, March 9th. The presentation to the BOS will be more of a high-level Q&A than previous years. The next BOS meeting following 3/9 (if they pass the budget that meeting) is March 11 it then goes to the Board of Finance on March 19 to review then goes to public hearing (4/2) and then to referendum (usually the first Tuesday in May).

Mr. Bush asked if there are any areas that may be challenging to get the funding for? Mr. Tyburski shared that he is unsure at this time what changes the Town Manager has made. They are currently fully staffed; one truck may come out of budget but they can put that off for a year. Tax payer money isn't being used for Simsbury Farms' projects so those should be a safe bet (funded out of revenue fund balance). However, there are some unknowns due to having a new Town Manager and new BOS members.

Minutes- January 25, 2024 Culture, Parks and Recreation Commission

Mr. Bush declared the January 25, 2024 minutes approved and requested that they be put on record.

Presentations

None

New Business

Hilltop Grille Restaurant—Mr. Sparks, Ms. Spafford and Chef Jacob from Chez Hospitality Group were present.

Mr. Kearney shared that they want to express their appreciation to their efforts for improvement. He commented that he wants Hilltop Grille not only to meet but exceed expectations. He stated that he would like to hear some of the progress made towards last year's goals. Mr. Sparks shared regarding their guest service experience goal and how they have been able to solicit feedback via Square (can often respond in real time). Their receipts and the website also have the ability to solicit feedback. Mr. Kearney shared that there has to be some sort of

mechanism in addition to the electronic such as a card. Mr. Sparks commented that they could set up an iPad in the corner or have a QR code. Ms. Spafford shared some of the feedback they have received via Square. Ms. Boswell commented that the sample size on surveys seems small. Mr. Sparks commented that it is just for restaurant feedback not for events. Mr. Bush asked if they have the ability to allow event participants to provide feedback. Mr. Sparks shared that since it is a private event, he doesn't feel that have permission to poll participants. He shared that the best way will be to put QR codes up.

Mr. Sparks shared that he loves the idea of improved cart paths as it will help with the beverage cart program. They really want to double down on what they did last year for kicking off the season. Ms. Boswell commented that last year there was still a problem of being ready to go when the leagues arrive, i.e. menus ready, carts ready, etc. She shared that she feels they need to come out of the gate with specials which are advertised as it's critical to keep patrons.

Ms. Keppel questioned how they receive communication regarding league activity. Ms. Spafford shared that it is usually from the pro shop with a projected start date (which usually consists of a series of dates). Ms. Keppel asked if they are part of the distribution group of the leagues. Ms. Spafford stated they are not but it would be very helpful.

Mr. Sparks shared that they will do their best to have drink/food specials specific to the leagues.

Mr. Bush encouraged a better selection on the beverage cart.

Mr. Kearney asked if the internet situation was resolved. Mr. Sparks shared that it is much better. Mr. Tyburski commented that they are all on the same internet now, however, cell service still isn't good. Ms. Spafford shared that the wi-fi does reach the tent but isn't strong and can depend on weather. Mr. Kearney commented that Friends of the Farms may be offer assistance if it is still an issue.

Mr. Kearney asked if they meet with the Pro Shop on a regular basis. Mr. Sparks stated every morning the lead is required to check the tee sheet and around 10 a.m. they connect on the conference line to discuss increased play at the course, etc.

Meadowood Open Space – Mr. Tyburski shared that yesterday there was an event at the library featuring the Landscape Architecture class from UConn. They have come out to the Meadowood site the last two years, they had a lot of interesting ideas for the land that seemed to all focus on different things. As part of land purchase the Town is required to maintain public access, a planning committee should be tasked with what this looks like. Mr. Bush shared that he is concerned about the two barns and stated that there needs to be a plan whether it is restoration or not. Mr. Tyburski shared that they have been evaluated by an architect and he believes they are working on an construction estimate. He shared that all four barns need repairs and they are all currently cabled. The progress was delayed due to an easement issue. Ms. Yeisley shared it is on the BOS radar. Mr. Tyburski also shared that the remediation of the once contaminated soils at the site was completed before the Town purchased the land.

Flashlight Egg Hunt at Simsbury Meadows on Thursday, March 28, 2024 – Mr. Tyburski shared that the Junior Women's Club is stuffing eggs and the Lacrosse teams will help spread eggs out. Social services helped with cost for the event.

Old Business

Parks and Open Space Master Plan Update – Mr. Bush shared that he would like the members to highlight a few items where there are questions so they can discuss it next month.

Mr Tyburski shared that Friend of the Farma did wayfinding signs in the complex and fitness trail. They completed ten park entrance signs and this spring will be working to do the main entrance sign at Simsbury Farms. They are looking at moving the Weatogue Park playground to the front of the parking lot and would love to see a paved path to the bike trail. It is also still an ongoing goal to get trails on the All-Trails site map. The sun deck at the pool was approved in funding last year, hopefully reconstruction can begin this spring. They also completed the Simsbury Farms playground renovation. He shared that the pickle ball construction has been put off until about spring 2025 due to flood plain mapping.

Mr. Kearney recognized Harry Ryan's passing away.

Appointments

Laura Riley has been appointed by the Board of Selectman to the Simsbury Culture, Parks and Recreation Commission at their Wednesday, February 14, 2024 meeting.

Adjourn

Ms. Keppel made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Ms. Boswell seconded the motion. All were in favor. The meeting was adjourned at 7:31 p.m.

Next Meeting

The next scheduled meeting of the Simsbury Culture, Parks and Recreation Commission is scheduled for Thursday, March 21, 2024 at 6:00pm at the Town Hall.

Respectfully submitted,

Heather Taylor,
Commission Clerk