

TOWN OF SIMSBURY – CULTURE, PARKS, AND RECREATION COMMISSION

Subject to Vote of Approval – Regular Meeting Minutes – **Thursday, June 24, 2021** – 3 pages

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 6:05 p.m. by David Bush, Chairman via Zoom video conference. Other commission members who were present included Kelly Kearney, Rachel Wellman, Sarah Cramer, Lori Coppinger, Liz Keppel, and Danielle Celli. The C. P. & R. Director, Tom Tyburski, Golf Professional, John Verrengia; Board of Selectman Liaison, Chris Petersen, and Recreation Supervisor, John Thibeault.

Minutes of Previous Meeting

No changes were made to the May 27, 2021, Regular Meeting Minutes. Mr. Bush declared the minutes approved and requested that they be put on record.

Public Session:

The following public comments were read regarding adding 2 lines (on each side of the net) to make one or two of the existing four courts at Simsbury Farms pickleball friendly

Richard Eudicone commented in support of making the courts pickleball friendly.

Borden Schofield commented in support of making the courts pickleball friendly.

Nancy Murphy commented in support of making the courts pickleball friendly.

Florie Manasi commented in support of making the courts pickleball friendly.

Heather Calabro commented in support of making the courts pickleball friendly.

David Hartwell commented in support of making the courts pickleball friendly.

Brynn Brown commented in support of making the courts pickleball friendly.

Steve Byer commented in support of making the courts pickleball friendly.

Kay Yablecki commented in support of making the courts pickleball friendly.

Pat Pursell commented in support of making the courts pickleball friendly.

Richard Murphy commented in support of making the courts pickleball friendly.

Charlotte Couchon commented in support of making the courts pickleball friendly.

Philip Couchon commented in support of making the courts pickleball friendly.

Loraine LeLoup commented in support of making the courts pickleball friendly.

Duane Royce commented in support of making the courts pickleball friendly.

Christine Boswell commented in support of making the courts pickleball friendly.

Mr. Kearney stated that he appreciates everyone's comments regardless of what side of the issue they are on as a fruitful discussion is good for the town. Mr. Kearney also commented that he is hoping to integrate beautification with whatever the town is planning and wanted to make sure it is still on the radar.

Ms. Keppel commented that the pickleball discussion should be focused to the Board of Finance as the four courts that were built at Simsbury Farms were voted on by the tax payers for tennis courts and she believes they need to find a better solution for the pickleball community. She hopes they can find a solution and thinks it should be a priority to build a facility or repair the existing facility that doesn't conflict with the only public tennis courts that the taxpayers chose to put at Simsbury Farms.

New Business

Summer 2021 Aquatics Update- Mr. Thibeault reported that they have sold a tremendous number of pool passes, they are up \$24,000 in season pass revenues from 2019. Daily admissions are down a fair amount however, it may be because people bought passes. Mr. Thibeault shared that the Farmington Valley Health District has informed them to do what they feel is safe and requested that staff maintain attendance records for contact tracing purposes if necessary. Staff will do this by tracking pool pass entries and for daily admission

they have asked guests to fill out on a clipboard their name, telephone number, and the time they came into the facility. Swim lessons enrollments are up a significant amount from 2019, Mr. Thibeault stated he did cut the number of available slots in those lessons as many who would be taking part are unvaccinated. They have a lifeguard staff of about 55 people. Music Mondays will return as well as other events like Silly Saturdays.

Ms. Celli asked if they would be adding any more sections to the swimming lessons. Mr. Thibeault stated that he has already added another section of about 18 as Level One (which wasn't offered last year) was in high demand. He stated that that section too sold out. He stated the issue he is having is finding water safety instructors especially because last year none of those classes were being held.

Simsbury Farms Golf Course Update- Mr. Verrengia shared that their numbers are outstanding. He stated they are short about \$10k for the month of June compared to last year, however, year to date they are up almost \$35k. From July 1st to June 24th, they are up about \$220k over last year. He stated outings, leagues and overall play are doing well. The men's club is averaging 60 to 65 players per tournament. The ladies' club is maxed out around 75 players.

Mr. Petersen asked for an update on Hilltop Grille. Mr. Verrengia stated that it was a slow start but they had a lot of catering opportunities at the beginning of the year which they did fantastic with. He stated they didn't have their beer and wine license until almost the middle of May and the past month they have done a great job of putting everything together. They have been doing live music every Friday and Sundays and they began offering Sunday brunch.

Summer 2021 Camps Update- Mr. Tyburski shared that they are operating Camp Stuff-Ta-Doo for grades one through six at Memorial Park. There are about 16 counselors staffing that program and there are 90 kids signed up every week for eight weeks and they are just completing their first week tomorrow. The new camp director has been doing a fantastic job. The camp is broken up into groups and they are limiting the interactions between those groups during the day. They are in the second week of their enrichment camps and sports camps and everything is either near capacity or at capacity. They have a new Simsbury Farms youth (grades 6 and 7) basketball league starting tonight.

Mr. Kearney asked for an update regarding the lighting project at Simsbury Farms. Mr. Tyburski shared that the road lighting is complete, they do still have to take down the old poles. The basketball court lighting is not yet complete as the lighting company is waiting for the poles to come from California, as they were bogged down with supply chain issues.

Ms. Celli asked if there was a playground equipment update. Mr. Tyburski stated that the Town did approve fully funding the renovation of the Simsbury Farms playground and they are hopeful that the West Mountain playground is something that's going to happen this fall. They are working with a couple playground reps to get an assessment of what they have and what the options are and then they are going to work with a small focus group from the Mountain Farms neighborhood to get that finalized. They will then move onto the Tariffville playground and the Simsbury Farms playground in conjunction with each other. Since the Simsbury Farms playground is a major renovation, they will potentially be doing some surveys and meetings to get the public's input for that.

Pickle Ball Lines at Simsbury Farms Discussion Following Request from May 2021 Meeting- Ms. Celli shared that having a facility that is more updated would be helpful for the age group that typically plays pickleball. The conditions of the courts is a concern of hers.

Ms. Coppinger asked how many pickleball courts they have that are in need of repair. Mr. Tyburski stated that 5-6 years ago the Town converted two of the little used tennis courts at Tariffville Park into pickleball courts, however, the court surface is now in disrepair, a short-term renovation of those courts would probably run 50-

60k and is not a long-term solution. A request for funds to completely rebuild the pickleball courts are currently sitting as a placeholder in the Town's capital plan in year five, it is not guaranteed funding.

Ms. Celli asked if the added lines are confusing for tennis players. Ms. Keppel stated that it is three sets of lines that would need to be added and that for instructing children and adults it is very confusing for them.

Ms. Keppel questioned if there was a formal ask to Simsbury Public Schools about accessing the already designated Henry James court during the school day if people signed-in in a secure manner. Mr. Tyburski commented that in the last two weeks the pickleball players have been going back and forth with the school about using the HJMS courts during the course of the summer and they have been told no for a period of time because of summer school activities taking place there

Ms. Wellman questioned how often all four tennis courts are in use at Simsbury Farms. Mr. Tyburski commented that when camps are in sessions they will be busy from 9:00a.m. to 2:00 p.m. with kids on the courts, which will happen three weeks this summer. There are at times other instructional lessons and camps up there during school vacations, generally, during the school year the courts are not very busy in the mornings.

Mr. Kearney made a motion to recommend that Culture, Parks and Recreation staff use their discretion to add the pickleball lines to two of the Simsbury Farms courts as they see fit (and after the 7/29 camps end) and as proposed at the May 27th meeting with the express knowledge that this is not the optimal solution but are making an accommodation based on the large outpouring of support they saw. Ms. Celli seconded the motion.

Ms. Coppinger stated that she feels that the lines will be confusing for youth instruction and would like to see money from the Town for nice pickleball courts.

Mr. Kearney amended the original motion to state that once the dedicated pickleball courts are built that the lines be removed from the Simsbury Farms courts.

The motion passed with Mr. Bush, Mr. Kearney, Ms. Wellman, Ms. Celli and Ms. Cramer in favor and Ms. Keppel and Ms. Coppinger opposed.

Mr. Tyburski shared that there is a park dedication at Hopbrook Landing on Saturday from 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. and encouraged the Commission members to stop by.

Old Business*Update on Meadowood Open Space Acquisition-* This item was tabled until next meeting.

Parks and Open Space Master Plan Update- This item was tabled until next meeting.

Adjourn

Ms. Cramer made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Kearney seconded the motion. All were in favor. The meeting was adjourned at 7:15 p.m.

Next Meeting

The next Regular Meeting of the C. P. & R. Commission will be July 29, 2021 at 6 p.m. at Simsbury Town Hall.

Respectfully submitted,
Heather Taylor,
Commission Clerk