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Cc:

CULTURE, PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION MINUTES
February 25, 2010
REGULAR MEETING

I. CALL TO ORDER

The regular meeting of the Culture, Parks & Recreation Commission was called to order at 7:35 p.m. in the Main Meeting Room of the Simsbury Town Offices. Present were Commission members Linda Johnson, David Bush, Kelly Kearney, Harry Ryan, John Pendergast, Mary Liljedahl, Karen Cortes and Director of Culture, Parks & Recreation Gerry Toner.

II. Minutes – January meeting

Commissioner Ryan made a motion to approve the January 28, 2010 meeting minutes as written. Commissioner Pendergast seconded the motion, which was unanimously approved.

III. FY 2010/11 Fee Proposals – Golf Course

Mr. Toner stated that at the last meeting, this Commission discussed the Complex Committee's review of the fees. This Commission made a set of recommendations regarding information that the revenue fund was going to be adjusted. The Complex Committee again reviewed the increases with this new information and did adjust the fees, although not much. They feel that they are in line with other golf courses in the area.

Mr. Toner feels that the fees that were decided upon by the Complex Committee are appropriate. They tried to keep the 9 hole about 60% of the 18 hole. Overall, the Complex Committee feels that these fees are now in line.

Mr. Toner stated that the Town did offer, to residents and non-residents, the option to purchase their 2010 golf passes at 2009 rates; these could be purchased until February 15th. The Town generated \$69,000 in revenue from this offer.

Ms. Liljedahl questioned if the Complex Committee discussed the upcoming deficit that the Town will face that will need to be made up in the revenue fund. He stated that they are aware of the circumstances and feel that the increases are appropriate.

Mr. Bush stated that the increases are all \$1 except for the 9-hole weekends for non-residents. Mr. Toner stated that the \$21 to \$24 increase was a result to try and keep things at the 60% on the 9 hole versus the 18-hole rate.

Mr. Ryan made a motion to accept the Simsbury Farms Golf Course Annual Fee Schedule for 2010 as presented. Mr. Pendergast seconded the motion, which was unanimously approved.

IV. FY 2010/11 Operating Budget – Status

Mr. Toner stated that the combination of fee increases to offset added expenses has made the revenue fund self sustaining. The Finance Director was satisfied with this. Regarding the general fund budget, which entails the park maintenance operation and Memorial Pool, Memorial Field and all the parks and open space, the Board of Finance has set a guideline of between zero and 1.33 percent for both the Town and the Board of Education. Cuts had to be made. The one cut that will affect them, however, is the proposal to close Memorial Pool for the summer. He stated that the impact that this has relates to the Camp Stuff To Do Program. This is the most highly attended and profitable camp that the Town runs.

Mr. Toner stated that they are currently looking at what the cost would be to bus the kids to the Simsbury Farms pool or to have the camp at a different location this year. Moving the camp does create problems including safety concerns and schedule conflicts. Mr. Toner stated that the bigger issue would be the revenue that would be lost if the camp is not held. There is some sense of urgency to get the word out to residents and begin taking registration for the program. He is hopeful that this will get resolved in the near future.

Mr. Toner stated that, as of right now, Memorial Pool will be closed unless the Board of Selectmen put it back in the budget. If this pool is open, it may only be for the camp, for lessons, and limited swimming. It would not be open on the weekends.

Mr. Kearney questioned if it is too late to consider creating an account and finding money through slight fee increases. Mr. Toner stated that he did propose to take Memorial Pool and put it in the Revenue Fund since it is currently in the General Fund. He stated that there was not support for this.

Mr. Bush questioned what the age group is for the Camp Stuff To Do Program and who would supervise these children if the camp was moved to Simsbury Farms. Mr. Toner stated that children ages 6-12 can sign up for this camp.

Mr. Toner stated that the Board of Selectmen are in a difficult spot and have difficult decisions to make. Ms. Cortes stated that she feels it would be foolish to close Memorial Pool. She believes that parents will find an alternate place for their children to go in the summer.

Ms. Liljedahl stated that this Commission is the advocate for recreation and children in the Town. She stated that she will have a hard time voting in favor of closing Memorial Pool.

Mr. Kearney questioned if this Commission could say that they support keeping Memorial Pool open because it will have a negative impact on citizens and camps, and that they will raise the additional \$24,000 through a variety of fee increase. He questioned if this would be realistic to do. Mr. Toner stated that this is something that the Commission could do if they chose to.

Mr. Toner stated that he wanted to make this Commission aware of these issues. If the Commission feels that a motion should be made to keep the pool open that would be fine.

Mr. Kearney made a motion that the Culture Parks and Recreation Commission supports Memorial Pool remaining open on a limited hour basis so it can support the current camp programs and lessons but do so, in order to generate sufficient revenue to offset the cost of allowing the pool to remain open. Ms. Cortes seconded the motion.

Ms. Liljedahl questioned if the Town looked into getting any grants in order to keep Memorial Pool open. Mr. Toner stated that he does not believe there are any grants of this type.

The motion was unanimously approved.

V. FY 2010/11 Capital Projects – Proposed

Mr. Toner stated that the main building at Simsbury Farms was to be considered this year as a capital project. Because of the economic climate, this project was dropped to next year. Golf course improvements have been moved up to this year, which will cost the Town \$350,000. The Board of Selectmen has made it clear that the projects that they want to move forward this year are maintenance related. They felt that the golf course improvement project would be consistent with this philosophy. Mr. Toner stated that although these improvements are needed, presenting this

to the public will be a challenge. The Board of Selectmen did approve the project going forward and the Board of Finance will be sending it to public hearing on March 9th.

Mr. Toner stated that the golf course improvements will be bonded; the Town will have 10 years to expend these funds. It is a priority not to adversely impact play at the golf course. The Men's Club has sent a letter in support of these improvements. Mr. Toner stated that this is a good time to bid for work because of the hard economic times; it is just a matter of getting it approved.

Mr. Pendergast stated that these improvements are important; it is a necessity. These improvements will affect the amount of play and their ability to continue to have increases in rates and higher revenues.

Gerry Wetjen, President of the Men's Club, stated that there was a survey done last fall; people stated that the bunkers and tees needed to be improved. These improvements should have been done a long time ago. If they are not done now, they may not happen in the future because there are bigger projects in the budget process that will come ahead of this project. Also, if not done, it will negatively affect the quality of the product that the Town is giving to the public. He stated that these improvements are a must.

Mr. Pendergast stated that the Town needs to be proactive to start building funds so the Town does not get to the point where large projects need to be done and large amounts of money need to be spent at one time.

There was some discussion regarding the recreational athletic fields and the cost for maintaining them. Mr. Toner stated that, because of the economic climate, which does not look like it will be any better next year; another field is not in the plans unless something else is closed. Ms. Liljedahl suggested that the Town may need to start charging user fees for all of their fields.

Mr. Bush stated that this Commission should discuss user fees for all sports for the maintenance of fields and facilities. He feels that this is an important discussion that should be had.

VI. Simsbury Celebrates – Linda Johnson

Ms. Johnson stated that the hardest part of Simsbury Celebrates is raising the money. They do not book anyone for this event until the money is in hand. She stated that this Commission should feel good about Simsbury Celebrates.

Ms. Johnson stated that they have already started raising money for this year. A pledge of \$2,000 has already been given for this year. There are so many people involved that this event could not be done without them. She stated that 12,000-14,000 people attended Simsbury Celebrates last year; she has heard only good things from residents about this event.

Ms. Johnson stated that their goal will, again, be to raise \$24,000. She encourages new volunteers to join Simsbury Celebrates; the health of any group is change.

Mr. Bush stated that Simsbury Celebrates has become a signature event. It has gotten a great deal of publicity. He stated that it was recently pictured in The Valley Book, which is given to many Towns in the Valley.

VII. Other Business

There was none.

VIII. Adjournment

Ms. Cortes made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:55 p.m. Commissioner Bush seconded the motion, which was unanimously approved.