

From: SimsburyCT Postings 7/30/09 9:08:18 AM  
Subject: Parks & Recreation Commission Minutes 07/23/2009  
To: SimsburyCT\_ParkRecMin  
Cc:

Culture, Parks & Recreation Commission  
Regular Meeting – Minutes  
July 23, 2009

I. CALL TO ORDER

The regular meeting of the Culture, Parks & Recreation Commission was called to order at 7:30 p.m. in the Main Meeting Room of the Simsbury Town Offices. The following members were present: Chairman Linda Johnson, Commission members John Pendergast, Karen Cortes, Kelly Kearney, Barbara Koff, Mary Liljedahl, and Harry Ryan. Also in attendance was Gerry Toner, Director of Culture, Parks & Recreation.

II. MINUTES – April and May MEETING Minutes

Mr. Kearney made a motion to approve the April 23, 2009 and May 28, 2009 minutes as written. The motion was seconded and unanimously approved.

III. DOG PARK PROPOSAL – Linda Johnson

Chairman Johnson stated that this Commission needs to discuss the issue of the dog park again. Because she is part of the Dog Park Committee, she will be recusing herself from this discussion.

Karen Cortes made a motion to appoint John Pendergast as Temporary Chairman for the dog park discussion. The motion was seconded, which was unanimously approved.

Mr. Garlick, 38 Hedgehog Lane, stated that he lives diagonally from the proposed dog park. Several months ago when this issue was before this Commission, the park was being proposed at Meadow Pond. This Commission approved that location and sent the application on to the Board of Selectmen. One of the issues that was raised was making sure the neighborhood residents knew about the proposed park. Several of the neighbors had concerns; they started a group in opposition to the dog park. This group filed a petition and was heard at the Board of Selectmen

meeting.

Mr. Garlick stated that Linda Johnson and Sally Garlick found another location for the park off Iron Horse Boulevard. It was asked that the Dog Park Committee withdraw the Meadow Pond application. Because the Committee had spent a great deal of time and effort with that application, they tabled the application, but did not withdraw it.

Mr. Garlic stated that they are here tonight to ask this Commission to recommend this new location to the Board of Selectmen.

Karen Cortes stated that this Commission's concerns should not be about the neighbors; it is moving forward with the proposal. The neighbor's concerns are considered by the Zoning Commission and the Wetlands Commission. Mr. Toner stated that this Commission is not precluded from taking the neighbor's concerns into account. He stated that this new proposed location, he feels, is suitable. This Commission needs to make a recommendation to the Board of Selectmen.

Mr. Garlick showed the Commission members a map depicting the new location of the proposed Dog Park. He stated that this proposed location is behind the bandshell. This location has a great deal of parking and does not have any abutting neighbors. It is very overgrown and needs to be cleared.

Linda Johnson stated that prior to looking at this new location, they did look at the skate part property, although there were issues with that location. After talking to Mr. Sawitzke and Mr. Beach, this new location behind the bandshell was found. Years ago in 1970, a group of Boy Scouts used this area to build a faux Indian village. It is currently covered with dense overgrowth; large trees line the property. Because of the overgrowth, it is hard to tell the exact dimensions of the property. There are also wetlands on the property.

Linda Johnson stated that they are envisioning two separate areas of the dog park; one area may be used for more timid dogs.

Ms. Cortes questioned if they would be keeping the entrance to this dog park from Helen's Way. Ms. Johnson stated that they would not be using that entrance, although they are not sure of the exact location. She stated that there is water access at the bandshell. Because the parking lot is not blacktop, they could easily trench in a special water pipe, which can be left on for most of the winter.

Ms. Johnson stated that the Dog Park would only be open from sun up to sun down, although there are lights on this property. This new location has parking, water, no abutting property owners, it is far away from the

playground, and it is in a central location downtown. She feels that there will be an economic response to the Center because of this dog park.

Ms. Johnson stated that they cannot move forward until they receive approval from this Commission. They will then need to go before the Board of Selectmen, the Wetlands Commission and the Zoning Commission. She stated that she is very excited about this proposal.

Mr. Kearney made a motion to endorse, as this Commission has previously done, the concept of the Dog Park, with the new location as the stipulation of this motion. Ms. Cortes seconded the motion, which was unanimously approved.

Ms. Cortes made a motion to suspend John Pendergast as Temporary Chairman. The motion was seconded, which was unanimously approved.

Chairman Johnson returned to the Commission.

Mr. Toner stated that an e-mail was sent out asking for parental support regarding the skate park. He stated that they did get two phone calls from parents who would be willing to assist. Drew Baxter, who is present at the meeting tonight, would be willing to help. He understands the concept of the skate park and the dilemma the Town is facing. Mr. Toner stated that he is hopeful that more parents will also come forward.

Mr. Baxter stated that he is very interest in helping with the skate park; it is necessary for the kids to have a place like this park. He stated that the kids are now merging park bikes into the skate parks. He suggested looking into the idea of changing the park in order to let the kids on bike use it also.

Mr. Pendergast stated that when he was walking near the skate park during the middle of the week he saw four kids using the park. The park is getting utilized.

Ms. Koff questioned if the park would need to be expanded if they were to allow bikes also. Mr. Baxter stated that this would only involve a small area in order to do tricks. Several kids have tried their bikes at the park and thought it would be an adequate space. Mr. Toner stated that they could try this out on a temporary basis.

Mr. Baxter stated that another issue at the park is that the kids are not wearing their helmets. He feels that this needs to be enforced and needs to be a condition of using the park. This is a big liability for the Town.

Ms. Liljedahl stated that the park is currently very secluded. She

questioned if there was a location in the center of Town that may be more suitable. Mr. Toner stated that there was a great deal of opposition when they were looking at downtown locations in the past. Mr. Baxter stated that he is not sure that the location of the park is the problem; kids just do not want to wear their helmets.

Mr. Baxter stated that he would also like to look into having the local bike and skate shops sponsor part of the park. They could put up stickers around the park advertising their business.

#### IV. SUMMBER PROGRAM REPORT

Mr. Toner stated that the summer camps have gone very well. Although the weather has not been ideal, the staff has been able to adjust. Selling the season pool passes prior to June 1st made a big difference. He stated that season passes are up over last year.

Mr. Toner stated that in response to the pool survey, they have addressed cleanliness of the locker rooms and more amenities in terms of chairs, umbrellas and shade areas at the pools.

Mr. Toner stated that swimming lessons have been going well, although there have been issues with Memorial pool. The problem is that it is very shaded and the water is too cold for the smaller children. This is also somewhat due to the weather they have had this summer.

#### V. SIMSBURY CELEBRATES! REPORT

Chairman Johnson stated that they have added a ginger bread house contest to the Celebration. They will be advertising for this; there will not be a charge. It will be held at the Free Public Library. The contest will have four categories of houses. There will be individual, adult, children, business, and professional entries. She stated that there will also be a teacup auction beside each house; people can bid on them. All of the houses need to be edible and will be restricted in size.

Chairman Johnson stated that they have raised approximately \$13,000 for Simsbury Celebrates! They are a little bit over half way to their goal.

#### VI. SIMSBURY FARMS GOLF COURSE REPORT

Mr. Toner distributed the golf course revenue report. The course has done, from a revenue standpoint, well in June in spite of the weather. Mr. Toner stated that they did have several outings, which was very helpful for the course. The money that was invested in the drainage work has been paid back; they would not have had the amount of play if this work was not

completed. He feels that it was money well spent. To date, it has been a good season.

Ms. Cortes stated that her husband serves on the Public Building Committee. She believes that there have been some communication issues between them and this Commission. The CP&R Commission has been on their agenda for the past several months to talk about the Simsbury Farms Needs Assessment Study. Mr. Ryan stated that when he attended one of their meetings, they were expecting a full presentation from this Commission, which he was not prepared to do.

Mr. Toner stated that he will be checking into this. He stated that he has never received a request from the Public Building Committee asking for a presentation.

Ms. Cortes stated that the Public Building Committee's minutes stated that they would like to put this back on their agenda for their September meeting. She stated that this Commission still has not had a chance to look at the architectural plans. Mr. Pendergast suggested that the Commission members look at these plans prior to September and generate questions if needed. Mr. Toner stated that he will send the plans to the Commission members by e-mail if possible. If not, he would make hard copies of the plans for members and ask the architect to make a presentation at the September meeting.

Chairman Johnson suggested that this Commission apologize for not attending the Public Building Committee's meeting, although they did not know they were asked to attend. She stated that they can then ask them what they are looking for from this Commission.

The Commission had a discussion regarding the architectural process of the Farms Complex and what this involved. There was discussion regarding how the architect was selected and if a Subcommittee should be established going forward. Mr. Pendergast questioned if this Commission would have input regarding the design of the building as far as LEED certification in order to achieve gold or silver certification. He also questioned if there would be any State or Federal reimbursement in this was achieved. Mr. Toner stated that this is an important part of the process, and will be discussed with the architect at the September meeting.

## VII. ADJOURNMENT

Linda Johnson made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:45 p.m. Ms. Cortes seconded the motion, which was unanimously approved.

