

Wethersfield Parks and Recreation Advisory Board
Harbor Management Commission
Minutes - Thursday, February 27, 2014

The meeting was held at Town Hall and called to order by Chairperson Tom Ragonese at 7:00 p.m. Members present were Bill Leonard, Richard Lepore, Tom Mull and Tom Ragonese. Also present was Mike Hurley, Council Liaison and Kathy Bagley, Director of Parks and Recreation.

A. Public Comments.

None.

B. Minutes – January 23, 2014.

Bill Leonard moved to approve the minutes of the January 23, 2014 meeting. The motion was seconded by Richard Lepore and approved unanimously.

C. Monthly Report – January 2014.

The Monthly Report was reviewed by board members. Ms. Bagley reported that the high school pool was closed to the public over February vacation week due to abatement work.

D. Letters and Announcements.

None.

E. Old Business.

1. Status of Budget Process for Fiscal Year 2014-15.

Chairperson Ragonese asked Ms. Bagley to provide a status report on the proposed budget for fiscal year 2014-15. She reported that the Parks and Recreation budget will see increases in their salary account, utilities and benefits. Her salary budget is affected by the increase in the minimum wage and union contracts. The proposed budget is due tomorrow and she will have a copy of the budget for the next board meeting.

2. Meeting with School Officials on Use of High School Facility in Spring.

Ms. Bagley reported that the meeting keeps being rescheduled due to snow days. Another meeting is scheduled for early March.

F. New Business.

1. Nature Center Assessment by Association of Nature Center Administrators.

Chairperson Ragonese explained to members that the Nature Center received a grant to have an evaluation of the Nature Center operation. A small team of experts from the Association of Nature Center Administrators will visit the Nature Center over the next three days and review operations, interview people and develop a list of recommendations for the Nature Center. Chairperson Ragonese noted that he and Mike Hurley will be interviewed as part of this process. Chairperson Ragonese asked board members if they had any input for him to bring to this interview. Board members suggested looking at how to market the Nature Center, get the word out to scout groups, take advantage of the location with traffic on Prospect Street, look at partnerships, provide a great resource for the schools, address recruitment issues for the Friends Board and better signage for the building. Chairperson Ragonese asked Ms. Bagley to get board members a copy of the report when it is completed. In the future, the Board may consider holding one of their meetings at the Nature Center. Ms. Bagley distributed a flyer inviting the public to the presentation of some recommendations by this team of experts on Saturday, March 1 at 4:00 p.m. at the Nature Center. Both Chairperson Tom Ragonese and Town Councilor Mike Hurley plan on attending this presentation.

2. Homeowner Fence Bordering Spring Street Pond.

Ms. Bagley reported that she spoke with the homeowner whose property borders Spring Street Pond. He is interested in replacing the chain link fence with something like a split rail fence. Since the existing fence borders the pond, he needs to start the discussion with the Park Board. Right now the property

owner is just gathering information on the process for approval to replace the fence. In the future, he will need the approval of the Historic District Commission and possibly other town boards and commissions. The property owner's intent is to make the fence more appealing and attractive, instead of the chain link fence. At this time, this is not a formal request; the property owner is only soliciting information. If board members drive by the area, they can check it out for future discussion.

3. Change in Position for Parks and Recreation Director.

Ms. Bagley explained to board members that the Director of Social and Youth Services is retiring on March 31, 2014. The Town Manager asked Ms. Bagley if she would be interested in serving as the Director of this department and the Parks and Recreation Department. Ms. Bagley accepted the position and will be working with the Town Manager and the current director on the transition process. Chairperson Ragonese and board members congratulated Ms. Bagley on this new position.

G. Board Member Comments.

None.

H. Harbor Management Commission.

1. Status of Boating Infrastructure Grant with State.

Chairperson Ragonese asked Ms. Bagley for an update on the state grant contract. She explained that the state sent the contract to the town and Ms. Bagley reviewed it. She sent it to the Town Manager for his review and he will send it to the Town Attorney for review. Once it is approved, it will go to the Town Council for their review and approval. Councilor Hurley did not anticipate any issues when it goes to the Town Council, because everyone is looking forward to replacing the docks at the Cove.

2. Dredging of Cove Channel.

Chairperson Ragonese discussed with board members the publicity on the TV news commenting on the start of the dredging operation at the Cove channel. Mr. Lepore explained that he saw on the news that the Coast Guard cutter was coming up the Connecticut River to break up the ice in order for the dredge to come up the river. The news reported that ice fishing will be prohibited starting tomorrow at the Wethersfield Cove because of the possibility of unsafe conditions once the dredge starts working in the channel. Ms. Bagley reported that a contractor meeting was held at the Cove this morning with all parties represented from the Town (Police, Fire, Engineering, Physical Services & Parks and Recreation), the contractor and the Army Corps of Engineers. Work is scheduled to start tomorrow once the dredge comes up the river. They are just waiting on the Coast Guard to give them the all clear for navigating up the river. The contractor is scheduled to complete his work by March 31st.

3. Harbormaster Report.

Chairperson Ragonese reviewed the Harbormaster report distributed at the meeting with the members. Ms. Bagley reported that the existing harbormaster boat is being repaired for the season and she is working on ideas with the Town Manager for funding a new boat for the future. Harbormaster Forsdick is still looking for applicants for the deputy harbormaster position. He asked commission members to continue to solicit interest in the position.

I. Motion to Adjourn.

A motion was made by Tom Mull and seconded by Bill Leonard to adjourn the meeting at 8:07 p.m.
Motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathleen A. Bagley, Director
Parks & Recreation Department