



Orange Parks and Recreation Commission Meeting

Town Hall Meeting Room– 7:30 p.m.
Wednesday October 26, 2022

(Unapproved)

ATTENDANCE

Commissioners Present: Chairman James O'Connor, Deborah Davis, William Nicolette, Linda Kantor, Jack Pritchard, Dave Corris, Stephen Bospuda, James Ronai, and Chuck Stackpole
Staff: Dan Lynch, Director of Parks and Recreation; Deborah Satonick, Recording Secretary

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1. CALL TO ORDER

- Chairman O'Connor called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m. and asked the Commission members to introduce themselves.

2. PUBLIC DIALOGUE

- Erica Higgins, 303 Drummond Road, advised that she was speaking on behalf of numerous parents living in the town of Orange, she sent an email previously to the Commission members and apologized for not having everyone's email address. Ms. Higgins and her husband have three boys involved in sports and have lived in the town for over twelve years. Her concern is the lack of forward motion of the town's recreational facilities. She noted that the recreational facilities in Milford far exceed those in Orange. She is particularly concerned that the Commission made a vote last month to stop further discussion of the unused land at Fred Wolfe Park. She felt that the \$375 rent from farmers to use a portion of this land is not bringing in any revenue to the town but additional fields would.
- Ms. Higgins noted that there is a serious parking issue at Fred Wolfe Park. There were four games going on simultaneously last Sunday and at 3:00 p.m. there was literally no parking available. In addition, there are no handicap spaces available at Fred Wolfe Park. She expressed concern over the safety of children running in the traffic.

- Ms. Higgins also expressed concern regarding the outdoor basket courts. She noted that they are uneven, there is no fencing or lights, and there is no netting on the hoops. Lastly, Ms. Higgins noted that in reviewing the minutes from previous meetings, oftentimes there was not a quorum to discuss and vote on these important matters.
- Chairman O'Connor addressed many of Ms. Higgins issues and concerns. Due to lack of money, current inflation, and minimal state funding, the town is very limited with the recreational facilities. He explained the reason behind the Commission vote last month. The town received a STEEP grant and First Selectman Zeoli established the Playground Committee to design the location of the playground and the equipment to be purchased. This decision had nothing to do with the Parks and Recreation Commission and they voted that there would be no further discussion on this particular topic. He added that the Commission is always willing to dialogue with anyone in consideration for future recreational planning.
- Mr. Lynch explained that repair of the basketball courts is on the Capital Improvements for the 2022-2023 fiscal year. The tennis courts were repaired for \$150k last year and he is hopeful that the pickleball courts will be in place at Fred Wolfe Park in the near future.
- Mr. Bspuda mentioned that there is another soccer field at Fred Wolfe Park that is not being used. Ms. Higgins advised that the field is not usable as the ground is sloping. She spoke with the Men's Soccer League as well as the lacrosse team who confirmed that there are safety concerns with the field. It is currently being used as a dog park. About \$40k of town money was spent to irrigate this field for soccer use. Mr. Bspuda noted that the town pays not only for irrigation, but for the lining of the fields, maintenance, and insurance. The Orange Soccer Association pays for the fertilizer.
- Ms. Higgins expressed her appreciation for the Parks and Recreation Commission and all that they do. She also appreciates total transparency and team cooperation between the different groups using the fields. She feels that parents and organizations would be willing to contribute toward improved recreational facilities. Mr. Ronai advised that many towns get grant money for funding these projects, and Ms. Higgins offered personally to search for grant money for the town.

3. MINUTES –September 28, 2022

*Mr. Corris made a motion to approve the September 28, 2022 minutes, seconded by Ms. Kantor. All were in favor, with Mr. Ronai and Mr. Stackpole abstaining. The motion **PASSED.***

4. OLD BUSINESS

- Mr. Lynch answered questions and concerns from last month's meeting. He explained that the Parks and Recreation Commission split between Democrats and Republicans is

not an issue as the members of the Commission are hand-picked by the First Selectman and then voted into term by the Board of Selectmen. Mr. Lynch will give Ms. Davis a copy of the playground handbook which shows the equipment and the layout. Mr. Goodwin gave Mr. Lynch the name of the installer for the wind shields for the tennis courts and they will be installed in the spring. The gym floor will be completed prior to Election Day and gym wall padding will be installed.

5. NEW BUSINESS

A. Grounds and Facilities – Steve Bspuda

- Mr. Bspuda reported that the Parks Department has been maintaining the school properties since 1984. Mr. O'Connor felt that this is a very taxing job for a small department and is not the norm in other towns.

B. Personnel

- Mr. Lynch reported that the seasonal help will continue until the first week of December and will be welcomed back in the spring.

C. Budget

- Chairman O'Connor advised that everyone has a copy of the budget, which is about 25% expended in most line items. There were no questions at this time.

D. Director's Report

- Mr. Lynch reported that registration for fall 2022 swim lessons and programs began on October 17, 2022 for residents and on the 24th for non-residents. Fall baseball/softball will conclude the end of October and soccer and lacrosse will conclude the weekend of November 13th. Both an Aquatics and Programs Report have been included in the Commissioners' packets.
- Mr. Lynch advised that they are short-staffed at the pool and the Aquatic Director has been covering a lot of shifts. There is a lifeguard class in progress and Mr. Lynch is hoping that the town will get additional lifeguards graduating from this class.
- Mr. Lynch reported that they will be having Youth Basketball at High Plains, Mary L. Tracy, and Amity Middle School. Unfortunately the teams will not be allowed to use the gyms during the week and can only practice prior to the games. Chairman O'Connor will contact Mr. Gray and the Dr. Scarpetti to discuss this matter.
- Ski Bums will be offered again this year for 5th -9th graders from January 3rd to February 10th. They can accommodate up to eighty students with three buses.

6. Chairman's Report

- Chairman O'Connor asked members to review the meeting schedule for 2023. A vote is required for approval. There will be a later discussion about having meetings over the summer. Mr. Ronai expressed his thoughts that residents can come to the Parks and Recreation Department and Commission members outside of a scheduled meeting to discuss any concerns or issues.

Mr. Bospuda made a motion to approve the 2023 Parks and Recreation meeting schedule as presented. Mr. Corris seconded the motion and all were in favor. The motion PASSED.

- Ms. Kantor asked for an update on concussion protocol with equipment. Chairman O'Connor felt that this matter should be discussed with Mr. Hoffman. As for lacrosse, the helmets have been redone and need to be rectified every year.

7. Adjournment

Mr. Stackpole moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:25 p.m., seconded by Mr. Bospuda. All were in favor and the motion PASSED.

Respectfully Submitted,

Deborah Satonick,
Recording Secretary