



Incorporated 1787

Parks & Recreation Commission

**REGULAR MEETING**

**MINUTES**

**MONDAY JANUARY 11, 2010**

**7:30 P.M.**

**WESTON TOWN HALL  
DAUGHERTY COMMISSION ROOM**

David C. Juneau  
*Chairman*  
Committees:  
Administrative,  
Fields

Carl Bernstein  
*Vice Chairman*  
Committees:  
Fields, Parks

Eric Albert  
*Secretary*  
Committees:  
Administrative,  
Programs

Marc Butlein  
*Commissioner*  
Committee:  
Programs

P.J. Dodge  
*Commissioner*  
Committee:  
TBD

Carlos Mello  
*Commissioner*  
Committee:  
Aquatics

Robert A. Uzenoff  
*Commissioner*  
Committee:

*Official action of the commission in these minutes is indicated by underlining.*

The Weston Parks and Recreation Commission (WPRC) held its regular monthly meeting on Monday, January 11, 2010 at Weston Town Hall. Commissioners present: Eric Albert, P.J. Dodge, David Juneau, Carlos Mello and Robert Uzenoff. Marc Butlein joined the meeting at 7:40 p.m. Commissioners absent: Carl Bernstein. Staff present: Weston Parks and Recreation (P&R) Director David Ungar. Public present: none.

- 1) Call to order: Mr. Juneau called the meeting to order at 7:31 p.m.
- 2) Approval of minutes. Minutes of the December 14, 2009 meeting were approved with no corrections. For: Albert, Butlein, Dodge, Juneau, Mello and Uzenoff. Against: None. Abstain: None.
- 3) Public Forum: None.
- 4) Unfinished Business
  - a) Review of Action Items from December 14, 2009 Meeting.
    - i) 2009-22 – Discussion adjourned until February 8, 2010 meeting.
    - ii) 2009-24 – Messrs. Juneau, Bernstein and Ungar met with John Clevenger of Weston Little League (WLL) on January 6, 2010. Report of this meeting is discussed in Item 4(c) below. This item is now closed.
  - b) Parks & Recreation Proposed Budget Update.

- i) Mr. Ungar reported on his department head budget meeting with the First Selectman, Town Administrator and Town Finance Director, which was held on January 5, 2010.
  - (1) There were very few issues discussed/concerns raised at the January 5 meeting concerning P&R's proposed operating budget. The town may seek a \$5,000 to \$10,000 reduction in the proposed budget's drinking water quality management plan. This would not affect any other portions of the proposed operating budget.
  - (2) Two specific items were raised at the January 5 meeting concerning P&R's portion of the town's enterprise fund: (i) usage fees for the pond at Bisceglie-Scribner Park (BSP); and (ii) admission prices for the Fourth of July fireworks show.
  - (3) The Commission discussed the possibility of reinstating the annual BSP pond usage fee, which was not charged during the summers of 2008 and 2009.
    - (a) Mr. Ungar indicated that it costs approximately \$35,000 to operate the BSP pond on an annual basis, and that in prior years, usage fees generated revenue of approximately \$12,000-\$15,000 per year.
    - (b) Mr. Juneau stated that the Commission decided to take away the BSP pond usage fee to see if it would lead to an increase in demand/usage. According to Mr. Ungar, while usage at BSP pond increased significantly from 2007-2009, such increase coincided with the playground improvements done by the Weston Park Project. As such, it is difficult to ascertain by how much the increased usage of the pond is attributable to the deletion of the usage fee as opposed to other factors (most specifically, the upgraded playground area).
    - (c) Mr. Uzenoff suggested that Mr. Ungar inquire with other area towns to determine what amounts they charge for similar amenities.
    - (d) Mr. Butlein made a motion to reinstitute a BSP pond usage fee starting with the summer of 2010, with the specific fee structure to be decided at the Commission's regular February meeting after hearing about the results of Mr. Ungar's discussions with other towns. Mr. Juneau seconded the motion. All in favor 6-0. A usage fee (amount to be determined at the Commission's February 2010 meeting) will be reinstated for the BSP pond beginning with the summer of 2010.

- (4) The Commission discussed whether to raise the admission prices for the Fourth of July fireworks show.
  - (a) According to Mr. Ungar, the admission prices (\$5 for adults, \$2 for children) have not been increased in approximately 20 years.
  - (b) The Commission believed that the ticket prices should be increased starting with the 2010 Fourth of July fireworks, but requested that Mr. Ungar inquire with other area towns to determine what prices they charge for fireworks shows. The Commission agreed to make a decision about the 2010 Fourth of July price structure at its February meeting.
  - (c) Mr. Albert inquired whether there were other revenue opportunities, including sponsorships. Mr. Ungar stated that he had not yet discussed with Fairfield County Bank (2009 sponsor) whether they would be interested in sponsoring the 2010 event, but would have such discussions in the future.
  - (d) The Commission also discussed moving one of the “entrance gates” further down School Road (near the Intermediate School entrance) to try to minimize the number of non-paying attendees.
- ii) Mr. Ungar then discussed reaction to P&R’s proposed capital budget requests.
  - (1) As of the date of the meeting, three of the proposed capital items are still in play: (i) the turf replacement fund (\$20,000); (ii) Revson Field infield replacement (\$20,000); and (iii) sealing the High School track (\$55,000). With regard to item (iii), consideration is being given to splitting this into \$27,500 in this year’s budget and the additional \$27,500 in next year’s budget. The fourth capital request item – BSP Field 1 infield replacement (\$10,000) – appears to not have made it through the first round of cuts.
  - (2) Mr. Juneau stated that the Commission should inform WLL about the status of the BSP Field 1 capital request.
  - (3) Mr. Mello raised the issue of how to best pursue dialogue with the budget decision-makers about ensuring appropriate maintenance and repairs on a going forward basis for the town’s fields, such as Revson and BSP.
    - (a) Mr. Uzenoff indicated that he spoke with a few members of the Board of Finance regarding the importance of proper maintenance of the ballfields and

the High School track and they seemed receptive to increased dialogue on such issues.

(b) Mr. Mello stated that the Commission should present a longer range strategic plan to the Board of Selectmen and Board of Finance at the early stages of the next budget cycle (2011). Mr. Butlein suggested that the Commission should do this as part of its proposed capital plan (similar to what is being done with regard to the turf replacement fund).

(c) At Mr. Juneau's request, Mr. Mello will create a first draft of a framework for a P&R 10-year capital plan.

c) Fields Subcommittee Report on Meeting with WLL.

- i) On January 6, 2010, the Fields Subcommittee (Messrs. Bernstein and Juneau) along with Mr. Ungar met with John Clevenger, President of WLL, to further discuss the issues with the BSP ballfields that were raised at the Commission's December 14, 2009 meeting.
- ii) According to WLL, the primary problem at the three BSP ballfields is that the fields have sunk over time, which causes very poor water drainage. In addition, lips have developed where the infield dirt meets the outfield grass, creating a dishing situation. Moreover, the quality of the clay (mixed with significant amounts of drying agent over time) also exacerbates the drainage problems.
- iii) WLL is of the view that we are not getting full bang-for-the-buck from the current Stecks' maintenance contract. But according to WLL, even improving the maintenance will not solve the sinking issues and resulting drainage problems.
- iv) Ms. Dodge inquired about Stecks' expertise in ballfield maintenance and stated that it would be useful to know how other area towns maintain their ballfields.
  - (1) Mr. Ungar stated that he would make such inquiries. He stated that Westport contracts maintenance with a different vendor at a very high price.
- v) Mr. Uzenoff suggested that the Commission consider getting an expert opinion on the BSP field issues. He proposed as possible experts the persons responsible for maintaining the Bridgeport Bluefish stadium or the Yale University baseball field. He also stated that we should see if Dr. Dest is qualified to do this.
- vi) Mr. Butlein stated that the Commission needs to come up with a paradigm for fields that are essentially user-controlled – how should field maintenance responsibilities be divided between

the user (for BSP, WLL) and P&R? Mr. Juneau stated that WLL is interested in partnering with P&R.

vii) Mr. Albert inquired whether WLL can increase its revenues in order to contribute further to the field repair/maintenance costs. In this regard, Mr. Mello asked that if WLL raised additional funds, whether it could then gift monies to the town for field remediation. Mr. Juneau believed this to be the case.

viii) The Commission decided that the Fields Subcommittee (Messrs. Bernstein and Juneau) will continue to work with Mr. Ungar to further investigate the BSP repair/maintenance issues.

d) Other Unfinished Business: None.

5) Reports of Standing Committees and Resulting Motions.

a) Administrative Committee (Messrs. Juneau and Albert).

i) Mr. Juneau announced that Mr. Albert had requested to be placed on the Commission's Programs Committee.

b) Aquatics Committee (Mr. Mello).

i) Mr. Mello asked Mr. Ungar whether the extreme heat problem at the Middle School pool had been resolved. Mr. Ungar stated that the problem has been corrected. A faulty part in the heat exchanger was repaired. The heat situation resulted in a few program cancellations and minor user displeasure, but nothing significant. Mr. Ungar further stated that the heat exchanger is about 9-10 years old and this was the first time it broke.

ii) Mr. Juneau asked whether it was cost prohibitive to stock an extra of the part that broke. Mr. Ungar said that it was, especially given that there were no problems for 9-10 years.

c) Fields Committee (Messrs. Bernstein and Juneau).

i) See Unfinished Business Item 4(c) above regarding the Fields Committee's meeting with WLL on the BSP ballfields.

ii) The spring scheduling meeting for field usage will be held in mid-late February according to Mr. Ungar.

d) Programs Committee (Messrs. Albert and Butlein).

i) Messrs. Juneau and Ungar discussed an issue that arose last week in connection with sign-ups for second grade Sports & Fitness and the fairness of first come-first served sign-ups.

ii) The Commission discussed the benefits of going to a lottery sign-up system and asked Mr. Ungar to make inquiries with other area towns that utilize lottery sign-ups. The Commission was unanimously in favor of moving towards some type of

lottery sign-up system and further discussions would occur at the February meeting based on Mr. Ungar's findings.

- iii) Mr. Albert proposed that the Commission consider moving towards an automated registration system, including revamping and improving P&R's website.
  - (1) Mr. Albert indicated that he reviewed the parks and recreation websites of 15 area towns and determined that 10 of the 15 appear to have automated registration for parks and recreation programs (Darien, Fairfield, Monroe, New Canaan, New Fairfield, Newtown, Ridgefield, Stratford, Westport, and Wilton) while 5 of the 15 appear to not have automated registration (Bethel, Brookfield, Easton, Redding and Shelton). In addition, Mr. Albert stated that the design and functionality of the other towns' parks and recreation websites exceeded ours.
  - (2) Mr. Albert suggested that an improved website combined with automated registration could increase usage and make sign-ups more efficient and fair. Mr. Mello stated his view that automation of youth sports programs increases usage.
  - (3) Mr. Uzenoff stated that increasing automation and electronic record-keeping is important and that P&R should not feel constrained by the limitations of the town's website (citing the websites of the Weston Public Library and the Weston Police Department as examples).
  - (4) Mr. Ungar raised the concern that in-person sign-ups allows the P&R Department to recruit coaches and chaperones for several of its programs and that on-line/automated registration would negatively impact this.
  - (5) Mr. Juneau requested that Mr. Albert work with Mr. Ungar to further explore issues regarding automated program registration and improving the P&R website.
    - (a) Mr. Uzenoff suggested as a resource the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA).
- e) Parks Committee (Mr. Bernstein).
  - i) Mr. Ungar reported that the "No Snowmobiling" sign has been hung at Morehouse Farm Park.
- 6) New Business
  - a) Program Fee Discussion.
    - i) See discussion above concerning the BSP pond usage fee and Fourth of July fireworks admission prices.
  - b) P&R Satisfaction Survey.

- i) Mr. Mello discussed the recently-conducted Planning & Zoning Commission survey, which included certain questions of interest to P&R. According to Mr. Mello, the P&Z survey yielded 740 responses.
  - ii) Mr. Butlein asked what the fundamental purpose would be for P&R to conduct a separate survey at this time and whether there were specific issues that P&R needed to delve into.
    - (1) The Commission agreed that given the recent P&Z survey, and the lack of any specific issues necessitating a further P&R survey at present, the timing was not right for a P&R “customer satisfaction” survey. The Commission agreed to revisit conducting such a survey in the future.
- 7) Correspondence.
- a) The Commission received a further email from Debbie Danenbaum on behalf of Yankee United Soccer seeking information concerning turf field usage during the spring season. Yankee United is interested in renting time on the turf field this spring. Mr. Ungar will provide this information to Ms. Danenbaum after the spring scheduling meeting is held and after the high school spring sports schedule comes out. Mr. Ungar also will provide this information to Beachside Soccer, who also has expressed interest in renting time on the turf field.
  - b) Messrs. Juneau and Ungar received correspondence from a concerned parent regarding sign-up procedures for the second grade sports and fitness class. See Programs Committee discussion above.
- 8) Announcements, remarks for the good of the order.
- a) Mr. Uzenoff requested that Mr. Ungar provide the Commission with the information he learns from other towns in advance of the February 8, 2010 meeting.
- 9) Adjournment: The Commission adjourned at 10:04 p.m., Butlein/Mello motion and second. All in favor 6-0.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Eric Albert

## OPEN ACTION ITEMS

- 2009-17      Opened on 9/14/09. Mr. Ungar will have a rain sensor installed at MFP in order to regulate the irrigation system. Decision as of October 5, 2009: Deferred until Spring 2010 due to scheduling and needless wear and tear during winter to sensor.
- 2009-22      Opened on 11/9/09. Mr. Mello will pursue the idea of adult fitness with both the United Way and the Weston Commission on Aging.
- 2009-24      Opened on 12/14/09. The Fields Committee will meet with Weston Little League and the Diamond Club to further discuss BSP and Revson ballfield options and to review the current Steck's maintenance contract. Meeting held on January 6, 2010. This item is now closed.
- 2010-01      Opened on 1/11/10. The Commission will set the 2010 BSP pond usage fee and Fourth of July fireworks admission prices at its February 8, 2010 regular meeting.
- 2010-02      Opened on 1/11/10. Mr. Mello will draft a proposed framework for a P&R 10-year capital plan.
- 2010-03      Opened on 1/11/10. The Fields Committee will further investigate BSP ballfield repair/maintenance options, including potentially seeking an expert opinion.
- 2010-04      Opened on 1/11/10. Mr. Albert will work with Mr. Ungar to further investigate the option of automating P&R program registration and upgrading the P&R website.