

**Town of West Hartford Parks and Recreation Advisory Board**

September 23, 2019 5:30 – 6:30

West Hartford Town Hall Room 217

Present: Shawna Kitzman, Robin Collins, John Minze, Terry Schmitt, Sarah Needham, Brian Clifford

Absent: Kim Evans, Greg Shimer, Tanja Low

Non-Members Attending: Marc Blanchard

1. Recap of Summer Programs. Mr. Blanchard reported that the Funtastic summer camp program was generally very successful in its first year of running 8 one-week sessions versus two-week sessions. His internet survey got about 63 responses out of 150 – 200 participating families with favorable feedback. Points of particular success included the one vs. two-week duration and the flexible drop-offs. Flex drop off is a new service, including staffed, unprogrammed care between 8-8:30am and curbside pickup. Other programs also did well. All had increased revenue and all but the rink experienced increased registration. The small soccer and the girls' field hockey program were particularly successful. There weren't any negative comments following the shift to a Cornerstone swim team from the historic swim team program at neighborhood pools.
2. Mr. Blanchard reported the new user brochure has been issued and the new RecDesk POS system is in place. The department is working though some new consumer issues with Rec Desk, largely owing to user unfamiliarity with the system. Mr. Schmitt reported having such issues, but he noted they may have their origins in instructions given by Ms. Rubino-Turco's staff.
3. Feast on the Farm is this Friday, September 27 at night. The Town has sold 150 tickets so far and hopes to sell an additional 60 given a good weather outlook. Mr. Schmitt polled members on their past attendance and recommended the event to all, since he thinks the food is good. The 10 Minute Walk is on track for 10.10.19; Ms. Kitzman, Ms. Collins and Mr. Schmitt plan to attend. Park Bingo was noted to have succeeded in its goal of raising park awareness and consumer engagement though there were reports that the instructions may have been too complex, and some users noted their cards stayed 'on the refrigerator' rather than being returned to Town Hall.
4. Mr. Blanchard reported study is continuing as to how the department will deal with the stepped increase in the minimum wage to \$15. The department will be one of the most impacted in town government since it has many part time workers who earn minimum wage. He expects the impact will be primarily passed on to the public in pool fees and program fees. Work is underway for recommendations to the Board of Finance and Town Council. Mr. Blanchard said since the wage increase effects will be felt by competitors as well, it will not put the Town in a competitive disadvantage.
5. Capital Improvements
  - a. Sterling Field – The football field has been regraded, equipped with irrigation, re-sodded, and returned to service. The softball field is now undergoing the same process.
  - b. Wolcott Park – Mr. Blanchard reviewed some difficulties in the project including the need to have the contractor redo painting and some delays incident to heavy rainfall over the summer. He noted, however, Phase 1 is now complete with tennis and pickle ball courts in service and Phase 2 will begin to run through next year, including: removal of the snack bar; improvements to the parking area; and renovation of restrooms.
  - c. Fern Pathway work is complete. Mr. Blanchard encouraged all to visit the part and see these new park arteries.
6. Mr. Blanchard reviewed likely next steps in the Capital Improvements projects including a new roof for the Fern Pool building, reconstruction of the Eisenhower restroom, and repairs the pipes for the Eisenhower pool. The pipe repairs will require opening the concrete deck around the pool.
7. Ms. Collins noted the Board had received a customer complaint over the summer. Mr. Blanchard noted there have been some complaints about large gatherings in the parks without permit. He reviewed the practice with complaints about users being non-residents is to advise the complainant that non-residents can use Town facilities, and further it is very difficult for any user of the parks to know whether another user is Town resident or not.
8. Ms. Kitzman noted to several of the members that their terms would be expiring and some are not eligible for further terms. The committee is seeking a new Chairperson.