

Parks and Recreation Advisory Board Meeting
November 19, 2018, 5:30-6:50
Town Hall, Room 217

Members in attendance: Chris Bennett, John Minze, Sarah Needham, Shawna Kitzman, Kim Evans, Greg Shimer, Terry Schmitt

Members absent: Brian Clifford, Robin Collins

Non-Members in attendance: Helen Rubino-Turco

1. Parks Update

- a. Westmoor Park Received the Clyde O. Fisher Award from the Connecticut Bar Association's Environmental Law Section.
- b. Friends of Fernridge Park made a \$20,000 donation to the Town. Leisure Services Department earmark another \$20,000; funds will be used to complete Phase I of the promenade around the pool and pool house, building new 9' wide paths and renovating existing paths. Board went on to discuss opening up the Friends of Fernridge Park non-profit to all West Hartford parks, the potential impact and administrative steps required.
- c. Park Improvements
 - i. Sterling fields: an estimated \$450,000 will be spent over two phases to irrigate the fields. First phase will begin in the spring and the second in the fall. The project is currently in the design stage.
 - ii. Whiting Lane: Lower fields will be irrigated, project to be completed in spring; funded by Field of Dreams and Town capital funds
 - iii. Beachland: 2 new playscapes are going in now
 - iv. Spicebush Swamp: Need to dredge the pond. Will possibly be done over next winter to mitigate the effect on wildlife.
 - v. Wolcott Park: \$750,000 received from State Bonding Commission, town will contribute additional \$500,000 to implement most of Peter Miniutti's design.
- d. Engineers discovered that the site proposed for location of dog park is not actually owned by the town. Inherited by numerous individuals, taxes haven't been paid since 2006. Town's corporate counsel is looking into parsing ownership and potential paths forward for acquiring the land. Then the process to consider it for a possible dog park would continue.
- e. The town zoning board received ordinance change to allow Youth League Sponsorship Signage in public parks. The TPZ now owes a recommendation/opinion to the Town Council but has delayed the due date to continue considering the proposal. A public hearing is scheduled for December 11. Parks Board discussed drafting a letter in support of the proposal, indicating that the board has reviewed the proposal, discussed the implications of the signage multiple times over the last six months, and is favor of allowing it.
- f. West Hartford Land Trust is interested in allowing public access to two pieces of property, one at the corner of South Main Street and Still Road, which it owns, and the other near the intersection of Albany Avenue and Mountain Road. The second location is the site of a revolutionary war-era camp ground that is owned by the Town. Adjoining

parcels are owned by MDC, the State, and private individuals. The Land Trust is exploring possibility of installing trails for public access with the Town, historical commission and other entities.

2. Recreation Update

- a. School start time debate is going up for a vote on Nov 19th. Changes to school start time would have an effect on pool and golf facilities (but not rink) because of the high school athletic teams' use of those facilities.
- b. Currently, there are two rates for golf, resident and non-resident. Revenue at Rockledge is low, due to a number of factors. Resident rates are too low to sustain the course and non-resident rates are prohibitively high. Several competitor courses have gone to one rate for both residents and non-residents and Leisure Services is considering doing the same for 2019 golf rates.
- c. Cornerstone Aquatics Center is currently renting lanes to Avon from 7:30-9:00 PM, which has caused some concern from members about pool availability. Maintaining that facility is expensive and the fees paid by Avon are needed, however the board discussed ways to communicated the new schedule more clearly to membership so they are aware of the available swim times.
- d. Consensus from residents that they appreciated the additional recreation swim time at the outside pools this summer and it is likely that going forward Leisure Services will continue to maintain the additional rec swimming at the outdoor pools and keep the summer swim teams at Cornerstone.