

## Minutes

### Town of West Hartford | Parks & Recreation Advisory Board Meeting

May 17, 2021 | West Hartford WebEx

Present: Shawna Kitzman, Steve Kutcher, Anna Park, Kate Eikel, Robin Collins, Gus Melita

Absent: Greg Shimer, Tanja Low, Steve Garneau

Non-Members Attending: Helen Rubino-Turco

Guest: Carol Waxman- Interim Director of the West Hartford Library

#### 1. Welcome and Housekeeping

- a. Helen Reviewed the protocols necessary for a virtual public board meeting.

#### 2. Adoption of March Meeting Minutes

The Board adopted the minutes of the March 15, 2021 meeting. Steve Kutscher moved to adopt and seconded by Robin Collins and all other members in attendance agreed.

#### 3. Old Business

- a. Although the 2021 Celebrate West Hartford was cancelled due to Covid-19 restrictions, some upcoming Celebrate events will go on – in a different format. The Celebrate West Hartford 5K road race registration is open but not many have registered. Please publicize! The event benefits the Town That Cares Program and the Leisure Service Scholarship Fund. The virtual / socially distant walk/run may be completed anytime between June 4-13. The long-distance race can be run anytime in June. If you register by May 24<sup>th</sup> registrants will receive a t-shirt. Sign up on the Leisure Services website. A virtual arts & crafts show will run throughout June.
- b. Leisure Services Summer Program Guide was mailed to all residents in late February. Registration has been brisk and many programs are filled and new sessions added, in some instances. The Department plans to operate programs normally, with contingencies for Covid-19 restrictions if necessary. Staff learned a great deal and can pivot quickly to implement safety protocols.
- c. Outdoor pools will be run by Cornerstone Aquatic Center this season. One pool will open early (Beachland) while another (Fern) will stay open a week later at the end of the summer. The aquatics staff will be seasonal employees of the Town, but CAC will manage them. CAC has additional staff resources to operate successfully.
- d. The summer swim team will operate at Cornerstone Aquatic Center as it has in recent years.
- e. Recovery Act funding may be available to fund a few specialized programs, including “Summer Arts Festival” for the use of a show mobile this summer and other outdoor programs. The Town Council is considering uses as part of the budget adoption process. The Town budget would be adopted May 25, 2021- later than normal this year.

#### 4. New Business

- Helen and Carol Waxman from the Library spoke to the group about the proposed purchase of the St. Brigid School property for \$6 Million. The Faxon Library and Elmwood Community Center (ECC) may join forces and co-locate in this parcel if the transaction takes place. The Town is currently in the due diligence phase, assessing all characteristics of the property. Town leadership expects to conclude the purchase by the end of summer 2021. The ECC facility is available for use and can continue supporting operations until a potential facility on the St. Brigid campus is ready for occupancy. There was discussion on what would happen to the current ECC property. The purchase is not contingent with ECC being sold. A

sub-committee would be formed and extensive community comment will be solicited regarding what they would want to see if the building was to become a library/community and cultural center. The building would house the Senior Center, Teen Center and Daycare Facility.

Issues, such as traffic calming and non-motorized ability to get to the “new” facility, would be explored during the design phase. Board members asked additional questions and commented on the need to study issues related to travel and accessibility if the St. Brigid School property is purchased. Key considerations are for safety, equity, and accessibility.

- **Capital Improvements**

- a. New restrooms at Eisenhower Park, ready for opening Memorial Day weekend. Other projects include: ADA improvements at the Wolcott Park restrooms and renovations to the eastern parking lot at Wolcott Park. Kennedy Park bathhouse will be reviewed with an eye towards introducing ADA family changing areas.
- b. The Hunter House at Westmoor Park (front entrance area) needs improvement and part of the funding would come from CBDG (handicap ramp access) as well as the Westmoor Park fund. The front entrance area (ramp) of the Hunter House currently does not meet ADA compliance. Helen’s overall goal in all these projects is to make them accessible to all.
- c. Recent dredging and pond restoration has been completed at Spicebush Swamp. There may be a dedication ceremony around the time of CT Trail Days in June. They want to also replace the dock, which had to be removed when the pond was dredged, with an ADA-accessible dock.
- d. The potential sand volleyball courts planned for Eisenhower Park will be developed in a different location due to neighborhood opposition. Plans for the courts would be finalized before proceeding to the Zoning Department for discussion in July.

- **Tree Canopy Study.** Recent interest in a study has been fortified by the recent efforts of two science teachers in town who arranged for a donation and distribution of 1,000 tree seedlings in Town. Notable trees were discussed in town with the desire to plant throughout the community.
- A question was raised about free yoga in the parks provided by WH Yoga organization (it will roll out in June). A comment was received about the successful pickleball program being run out of Wolcott Park, which is popular especially with retired seniors.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:25pm

The next meeting is scheduled for **Monday, June 14 at 5:30PM**. Location TBD – pending confirmation.