

West Hartford Parks & Recreation
Virtual Meeting
June 21, 2021 at 5:30 PM

Present: Shawna Kitzman, Chair; Greg Shimer, Gus Melita, Robin Collins, Steve Garneau, Steve Kutscher

Absent: Tanja Low, Kate Eikel, Anna Park

Staff: Helen Rubino-Turco, Director

Meeting called to Order 5:33

Welcome & Rules of Decorum and Procedure provided by Shawna Kitzman

1. Roll Call

2. Adoption of May 17, 2021 Meeting Minutes. Motion: Robin Collins/Steve Kutscher. **APPROVED**

3. Old Business:

- Staff Report
 - Leisure Services Summer Programming Update
 - Camps opened today. Unfortunately, Eisenhower Pool did not open due to a leak. Programs at Eisenhower Park have been relocated to Fernridge Park. Leisure Services is conducting an investigation as to the cause of the leak. Funtastic Camp registrations tend to start slowly, as is the case this year, but staff reports a steady number of registrations throughout the rest of the summer. Specialty camps are seeing their highest registrations ever experienced.
 - Fernridge Pool opened 1 week early (last Monday) and was popular. With the exception of Eisenhower, the other pools opened today. Beachland Pool will be held open 1 week longer at the end of the summer. Leisure Services is working with Cornerstone to schedule additional times for lap swimming at other pools due to the closure of Eisenhower Pool.
 - Celebrate West Hartford Arts and Crafts show continues and can be accessed at www.celebratewesthartford.com. Community members are encouraged to support by visiting the site and purchasing from the artisans.
 - The two senior centers have reopened. West Hartford Senior Center is currently open Monday-Friday from 9:00am-4:30PM. Elmwood Senior Center is open Tuesday & Thursday from 9:00am-4:30PM. In September Elmwood Senior Center will go back to regular hours. The senior centers are offering a wide variety of summer programs in-person, virtual, and hybrid.
 - Capital Improvements Update
 - The Spicebush Swamp restoration is complete; however, more enhancements are forthcoming, such as making the park more accessible for those with physical disabilities. The West Hartford Garden Club established one pollinator garden in the park, and plans to help with a second garden at Spicebush Swamp.
 - The Eisenhower Park restroom project is complete and open featuring ADA compliant, unisex bathrooms. These, and all park restrooms, are open from

Memorial Day to Labor Day. Renovations to improve ADA-compliant restrooms are planned for Wolcott and Kennedy Parks.

- Eisenhower Pool replacement may be moved up on the capital improvement plan list to be addressed sooner than originally planned.
- The Hunter House front entrance is still in design. Will meet in the next few weeks with architect to put this project out to bid.
- Leisure Services is working with P&Z on the sand volleyball court in Eisenhower Park, with a hearing likely to be held in July.

4. New Business

- American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds
Additional programming this summer will be made available as a result of the ARPA. Free programming to welcome our community back post-Covid will be part of “Welcome Back West Hartford!” and include:
 - Family Fun Nights in Parks – in Kennedy, Fern and Beachland to host evening pool parties; Eisenhower’s event is TBD. Wolcott Park event may be in the fall due to western parking lot construction.
 - Fun Fridays at Veterans Rink - Targets children entering grades 6, 7 & 8. Fun Fridays likely be for 4 Fridays starting July 9 from 7:00 PM until 8:15 PM, and will include free admission and free skate rentals. It will also include special programming for children in the HANOC neighborhood, including bussing them to the rink and dinner before the event to ensure the event is as inclusive and fun as possible.
 - All About Sports program - Likely will be held at Conard High School Saturday mornings starting July 10th. Will entail a range of sports programming.
 - The Showmobile will be set up during two different weeks in Eisenhower Park. Free concerts will be offered by the West Hartford Public Library; other free events will be planned by Leisure Services.
 - The Summer Arts Festival will be supported by ARPA funds; it was originally planned as a free event outdoors, but will move indoors with safety protocols. It will remain subsidized this summer.
 - Special Needs programming will include a Halloween Party at Elmwood Community Center in October.
 - Additional ARPA funds have been allocated for the Leisure Services scholarship fund to expand of the number of weeks camp and programming is subsidized, and will raise the raise the per-person cap.
- ARPA Capital Improvement funds pending. Town Manager requested all directors make suggestions about projects they would like to see accomplished with ARPA funds. As these are vetted and perhaps approved, Helen will announce improvements to our park systems such as replacing bridges, improving handicapped accessibility project, replacing sewer lines, etc.
- St. Bridgid’s School purchase - The purchase may be discussed as part of the Town Council’s July 13th meeting agenda, and a request was made that the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board draft a letter in support of the property because of its intended use as a community center. After discussion of the purchase and its benefit to the outlook of the Elmwood area and greater accessibility to Beachland Park, the Board agreed. Shawna will prepare the letter.

- Fall/Winter Programming – brochure schedule and format – Leisure Services will present a virtual Fall/Winter brochure, which will be accessible online with a small number of hard copies available at various community facilities. Information on accessing the brochure will be mailed out instead, saving a significant amount of money in printing and mailing costs.
- Boards & Commission in-person meetings to resume soon – With Covid-19 restrictions ending this summer, in-person meetings will likely resume this summer. The next Parks & Recreation Advisory Board meeting is scheduled for September 20, 2021. Suggested meeting location is Westmoor Park's Outdoor Classroom.
- Additional Notes:
 - Feast on The Farm, the annual fundraiser for Westmoor Park is scheduled for September 24, 2021. More information forthcoming.
 - Any community member who is interested in serving on the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board should contact Essie Labrot, West Hartford Town Clerk, as this position must be appointed by the Town Council.
 - Steve Kutscher presented an update on the West Hartford Parks Foundation. The Friends of Fernridge is evolving and being refocused to broaden its scope to all local parks. Their purpose is to raise awareness, stewardship and money to support projects for all parks in West Hartford. The Foundation added 3 new board members last month with an additional 4 new members being confirmed this week.

Meeting Adjourned at 6:33PM. Motion: Robin Collins/Steve Kutcher
Minutes submitted by Gus Melita.

Next Meeting: Monday, September 20, 2021 at 5:30 PM, tentatively at Westmoor Park's Outdoor Classroom.