

West Hartford Parks & Recreation Advisory Board
Minutes of Board Meeting held Monday, September 20, 2021 at 5:30 PM
Westmoor Park Outdoor Classroom – 119 Flagg Road in West Hartford

Present: Shawna Kitzman, President; August Melita, Robin Collins, Tanja Low, Steve Kutscher
Absent: Greg Shimer, Steve Garneau, Kate Eikel, Anna Park
Staff: Helen Rubino-Turco, Marc Blanchard

Shawna Kitzman, President, called the meeting to order at 5:30 PM. Steve Kutscher volunteered to take the minutes.

1. Roll Call
2. Adoption of June 21, 2021 meeting minutes - adopted unanimously
3. Old Business

A. Staff Report

Leisure Services Summer Programming Wrap Up - Marc Blanchard

- 1) In general, a comparison of 2019 to 2021 programming shows minimal COVID impact. Most impact observed in indoor programming; e.g. Veterans Memorial, Elmwood Community Center.
- 2) Failure of Eisenhower pool resulted in the relocation of “Funtastic” summer camp to Fernridge Park.
- 3) Cornerstone Aquatics Center management contractor, Health Fitness, has been doing well. In Summer 2020, they operated two outdoor pools with limited capacities and at no cost to users; In summer 2021, Leisure Services contracted with them to operate all four outdoor pools with normal schedules, but, due to Eisenhower’s closure, they operated three very well. Lifeguard shortages was a universal complaint across the region, but Cornerstone managed to staff the three outdoor pools and indoor facility.
- 4) At the indoor facility, Cornerstone, they have been managing well, despite numerous capital improvement projects.
- 5) To attract enough lifeguards in the future, alternative staffing models are being explored, such as hiring retirees as lifeguards.

Leisure Services Scholarship Fund - Helen Rubino-Turco.

- 1) Town allocated ARPA funding of \$90K towards the scholarship fund to help cover 75% costs for eligible children. In Summer 2021, \$20K was used to cover camp costs for 56 enrollees. In 2022, Leisure is considering using some funds to train and certify lifeguards from low- or moderate-income families.

B. Capital Improvements Update - Helen Rubino-Turco

- 1) Existing - Wolcott Park – accomplishments so far include new Tennis, PickleBall and basketball courts; electrical upgrades, lighting, pathways and new fencing at the community gardens. Western parking lot is currently underway, and improvements to the eastern half of the park is

slated for FY22, including the replacement of the restroom with ADA-compliant facilities.

- 2) Next projects in Kennedy, Beachland, Eisenhower, and Westmoor.
 - a) Eisenhower - Pool failure will require repair after 51 years. Possible reopening in Summer in 2023.
 - b) Kennedy - Targeted improvements; new irrigation system for soccer and baseball fields is underway; ADA and other improvements to the bath house are planned, as well as basketball court improvements.
- 3) American Rescue Plan Act – Significant requests have been submitted to dredge ponds (similar to what has been done at Spicebush), replace footbridges, install rain gardens and pollinator gardens, improve general accessibility at all major parks. Expect funding request to be discussed at a Town Council meeting in October.

4. New Business

- A. Mayflower property update - purchase completed on or about 9/20/21. Town Council will form a “New Community Center Committee” to determine use etc. Possible opening in ~ 5 years. A member of the Parks & Rec Advisory Board would be welcomed as a proposed member of the new Community Center Advisory Committee.
- B. Leisure Services Fall Programming - registration has been "brisk," most programs filled. Program Guide is available online, with copies at all LS facilities and libraries.
- C. Memorial Bench Program - Memorial bench program. A \$2700 donation to place a memorial bench in a park. Considering a memorial tree program as well.
- D. Town is exploring arboretum potential and tree canopy study.

5. Public Comment - none

Meeting adjourned at 6:49pm.

Next meeting – November 15, 2021 at 5:30 PM; location Elmwood Community Center