

2025 MAR 17 PM 12:51

REC'D BY: Chm

**SUFFIELD PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION  
MONTHLY MEETING  
March 12, 2025**

The Suffield Parks & Recreation Commission held its regular meeting on Wednesday, March 12, 2025 in the conference room, Town Hall, 83 Mountain Rd., Suffield, CT. Zoom was also available for those who wished not to attend in person.

ATTENDANCE: .....Brian Casinghino, Chairman  
.....Bill Boucher, Vice Chairman  
.....Sam Lombardo  
.....Andrew Joly  
.....Stephen Marchillo  
.....Christopher Parker  
.....David Rusnock

ABSENT: .....Jackie Guzie

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: .....Peter Leclerc, Director

Brian called the meeting to order at 7:04 p.m.

Brian asked Peter to read the agenda into the minutes:

- A. Call to Order
- B. Public Input
- C. Review of Minutes
- D. Correspondence
- E. Program Reports
- F. Old Business
  - a. Dancing Stars of Suffield event update
    - i. Tickets through Eventbrite
    - ii. Celebrity Dancers
    - iii. Judges, Staff & Volunteers
  - b. Budget Process
  - c. Summer Registration opens 3/17/25
- G. New Business
  - a. Parks & Recreation Staffing
  - b. 2025 Award Recipients
  - c. DPW/Highway Field Use Fees
  - d. Other
- H. Adjournment

**PUBLIC INPUT:** None.

**MINUTES:** Andy noted that the agenda date for tonight's meeting is incorrect. It is stated as February 12, 2025 and should be March 12, 2025. Andy made a motion to accept the February 12, 2025 minutes. Stephen seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous to accept the minutes.

**CORRESPONDENCE:** None.

**PROGRAM REPORTS:** Peter reviewed a few highlights from the reports.

Donna, Bethany Sullivan, and Marylou Brewster (Senior Center) did another collaborative program. It was a pizza night and we made use of our new 100 meal oven. All ages and abilities were involved and it was a lot of fun and very successful.

Peter reviewed a few of our new fitness programs with Stephanie Dolan who is a former commission member. We are happy to have her onboard.

The Mini Soccer Stars program, run by Dan is still ongoing due to weather cancellations. The program is held at the Senior Center and has been very well received.

Dan wrote a grant for funds to help put together our new robotics program for youth in grades 3 and 4. This program is a feeder program for the Middle School. The equipment for this program is expensive and the grant really helped. We used to sub out the program to a vendor but now we are doing it all in-house. This will be an ongoing program.

We are all busy working on spring and summer programs and camps.

The commission discussed the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> grade basketball program regarding facilitating more games by traveling to other towns, extending the season, travel basketball, a tournament, etc.

The commission continued to discuss youth sports and the competitiveness of players and parents. Brian asked Peter to put this topic on the June agenda.

**OLD BUSINESS:**

**Dancing Stars of Suffield event update:** This event is a fundraiser for Special Olympics and the Bowling Buddies program. Our goal is to raise \$10,000.00. We have an anonymous donor who has covered 90% of the event costs. Peter said he has looked for another venue because the Fred Astire Studio has limited space but he has not found a suitable site. Right now, the studio works well for the event. Last year we sold out without opening tickets to the public. The event will be held on April 19 and this date was chosen to accommodate the celebrity judge's schedule.

Peter is looking for volunteers to help on the day of the event. Doors will open at 5:15. The event will run to 9:00 p.m.

**Tickets through Eventbrite:** Tickets are available at Eventbrite. It is a little more expensive but with the logistics it just works out better. Go to site and look for Dancing Stars of Suffield to get your tickets.

**Celebrity Dancers:** We have 5 dancers: Neil Altieri, Stephanie Salerno, Craig Tini, Derek Donnelly, Ashley Fedigan. They have started their lessons and started fundraising.

**Judges, Staff & Volunteers:** The judge is a former tv Dancing with the Stars participant and winner. Dave Camera will do the lighting. Chris Kellogg will emcee the night and Rob Faber is donating his time to do the photography.

**Budget Process:** Last Monday Peter had a meeting with the Board of Finance to review the budget. The budget is about level with last year but the Recreation and Sports Programmer position has not been funded. In its place, we have funds for some parttime seasonal help for events and programs.

Once the budget passes, we can think about maximizing the funds for parttime seasonal help. It is based on a 20-hour position for a specific number of weeks. Peter wants to find people who have the knowledge and experience to provide what is needed for the position.

**Summer Registration opens 3/17/25:** Registration starts at 9 a.m. Monday, March 17. The staff will be available to help anyone that has questions. The brochure is now available online with all the information about our summer programs, camps – sports – movie nights – concerts – etc. The brochure and information was sent out before registration sign up so parents could review and decide what they wanted their children to attend.

The commission discussed the movie night program which is sponsored by Stefanie Salerno and the cost of licensing. The criteria to choose what movies to show was discussed. Some of the movies will have activities associated with them.

#### **NEW BUSINESS:**

**Parks & Recreation Staffing:** Matt Cummings left 2 weeks ago for another opportunity and the position has not been included in next year's budget.

We have our core staff and hope to have some new people. We are good on lifeguards. The wages for staff were discussed since minimum wage keeps going up and we must have an incentive for staff that has more responsibility.

**2025 Award Recipients:** We talked about the awards that are presented at the Yard Goats game last month and the recipients will be named in the next few weeks.

The award recipient for the Louis Casinghino Public Service Award which recognizes an individual who has provided unselfish service for over 10 years in the interest of the Parks & Recreation Department is Bill Boucher. Bill thanked Peter for the award. Peter reviewed many of the things Bill has done for the department over the years. The commission congratulated Bill and Bill said he is honored to receive the award.

The commission discussed some of the awards, what they are given for, how recipients are chosen, previous winners and the event itself.

**DPW/Highway Field Use Fees:** Peter passed out the new policy which has been updated. This policy is done by Public Works which maintains the fields. The last time it was updated was in 2016 or 2017. Fees have been updated for non-Suffield parties. The exemptions for field use fees are on page 1 - this includes the board of education, Suffield clubs or organizations and our department. This was signed off on last week. Peter reviewed the work that is involved to keep the fields in good order and what happens when the people using the fields do damage. When fields need work done unexpectedly someone has to be pulled off the road work crew.

Dave asked about the turf field at the high school. Peter said the school maintains that field. This policy pertains basically to Bruce Park and Sullivan Field.

Chris asked about Sullivan Field and if the wallboard could be put up. Peter said he brought this up previously but did not get much traction. He suggested it be put on the agenda and we can discuss. He will then bring it up to the selectman.

Brian asked about the last page (#4). This is regarding scheduling. Dan now schedules all the fields and coordinates with DPW. With the change to have Dan do the scheduling of fields it has been a big improvement.

There was discussion of having town groups pay a small fee for field use. Peter said that this is something that will probably be worked on in the future.

The commission discussed the fields, how they used to be maintained with volunteer help along with the highway department.

**Other:** Peter has received many emails about House Bill 6952 and Senate Bill 6 which has come out of committee. The bill is worded under the guise of child safety. There are items in this bill that are not viable. One of the items was not counting staff that is under 18 but this was taken out. We do background checks but the bill would require that we use the state company that does background checks. They have a backlog and the fee is more. Certain organizations are exempt from some of these regulations. Peter reviewed the testimony he has heard along with some of the other regulations which would be detrimental to us.

One of the items is licensing, we would not be exempt and must be licensed by the state. We have very strict regulations that we follow and we are accountable to the citizens of the town. We are overly cautious and our standards are higher than the state.

This bill targets municipal programs and camps. Why are we (municipalities) being singled out? The YMCA and Boys and Girls Club are exempt.

Peter will forward a synopsis of the bills. He reviewed several of the aspects of the bill. The commission discussed several of the items Peter brought up, including groups that would be exempt. The politics of the bill was discussed along with how bills get passed or denied in the legislature. The best representatives to contact regarding our feelings about this bill was reviewed. Peter said he felt this bill would be good for private companies that do not have year-round staff and the requirements we do. Towns have fulltime, year-round staff that is responsible to the townspeople, with varying levels of oversight including, commissions, elected officials, HR, and the Town Attorney.

The work study group was made up of 9 people but only 2 were from municipal groups.

The bill is brought forward as child safety but as the bill is now, it is not safe for everyone. The bill did not pass last year. The licensing should be instituted for private camps. We have safeguards in place that many private companies do not.

The commission discussed how this bill will affect the cost of town camps if it passes. Then the cost between a private camp and a town camp will not be that great. Presently our fees are much lower and we provide a safe and high-quality program, at a reasonable cost to families.

**ADJOURNMENT:** Bill made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Andy seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 8:23 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Carol Scheitlin, recording secretary for  
Sam Lombardo, Clerk

These minutes are not official until accepted at subsequent meeting

**THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY  
LEFT BLANK**