

# *Park and Recreation Commission*

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## **Minutes**

(meeting taped)

Monthly meeting: Monday, December 11, 2006 in the New City Hall.

Meeting was called to order at 7:05 p.m.

By roll call, members present: John Walsh, Al Felice, James Benanto, Nick Serednitsky and Andrew Cota. David Mikos arrived at 7:08 p.m. Beverly Moran was excused. Chairman Walsh noted that the Mayor has appointed Mr. Cota to the commission. His knowledge as past Chief of Police will certainly be an asset to the Commission. Mr. Zinnis, appointed in October, decided not to serve and withdrew.

Parks and Recreation Director Dennis O'Connell was present. Athletic Director Joseph Orazetti was excused.

### **ADDITIONS OR DELETIONS TO THE AGENDA:**

Without objection, the agenda was accepted as written.

### **APPROVAL OF MINUTES:**

A motion was made by Al Felice and second by James Benanto. Move to accept the minutes of October 10, 2006, as written. Motion carried unanimously.

### **PUBLIC PORTION:**

No public came forward at this time.

### **CORRESPONDENCES:**

Nothing was presented.

### **DIRECTOR REPORTS:**

**Parks & Recreation Director's Report:** Mr. O'Connell reported youth basketball is still registering. There are 19 teams set so far. Girl's basketball is also still registering and the team drafts will be held this weekend. He has been working on the schedule of the facilities as he has lost eight games a week at Irving School and two nights a week at Bradley School as the High School cheerleaders are practicing there. He currently has 23 games a week scheduled at the Derby Veteran's Community Center.

Reporting on the facilities, a light pole went down at the Ryan Field Complex softball diamond due to high winds. The City Engineer has been asked to inspect all the light poles, as they are more than thirty-five years old. The lights on the field are not utilized for recreational programs and the Athletic Director has been advised of the situation and the suggestion has been made to prepare scheduling without the need for lighting.

The bleacher installation at the football field is complete. There are no plans in place at this time to replace the remaining sections. The remaining sections were inspected and maintenance was performed, as needed.

The Bradley School playground remains closed. The Board of Apportionment and Taxation sought to have the Board of Education fund the repairs. Funds are not available at this time. Members noted that this is another case where the oversight has not been defined at the time of construction. There has been no clear answer as to who was to oversee the facility although at the time of construction it was handed over to the Board of Education and Principal Duggan did expend funds for some upkeep.

The Greenway Committee has recommended placing benches along the trail. They have not been ordered as of yet. Suggestions were made to review the State bid package so as to forego the need for local bidding process. The State goes out to bid yearly on numerous materials and services and cities have the ability to benefit from this far-reaching process.

The Fact Finding Committee is working to create a report to present to the Board of Alderman. They have been discussing the ongoing concerns that have arisen for many years now. There is a need for a defined structure for Parks & Recreation to maintain the facilities and supportive staff to accomplish the work. There needs to be a chain of command to manage and oversee projects. Long-term consistent management is needed for the facilities so maintenance is done on an ongoing basis and it is clear who is to manage this duty. The Commission and the Director do not have the resources to accomplish these tasks on their own and their purpose should be focused on programming, not day to day maintenance duties. Mr. O'Connell noted one instance he recalled regarding the Derby Veteran's Community Center where due to OSHA requirements he was going to have to fix a door. Exploring the costs by contacting various contractors revealed an expense of more than a thousand dollars whereas, Board of Education Maintenance Supervisor Lou Rogowski was able to remedy the situation at a cost of \$30. The need for maintenance supervision not arises at the Parks & Recreation facilities but also all City-owned properties. Members discussed how the reorganization of the Public Works Department did not accomplish what was originally described. It still is not clear whether the department has the full complement of employees and this is being discussed by the Committee. Another consideration is how the City pursues grants. Other towns have grant writers on staff.

The Skatepark is closed for the year. The Derby numbers were low and it has proven a benefit to join with Shelton in this endeavor.

**High School Athletic Director's Report:** Mr. Orazetti was excused.

It was noted that the trail marking for Witek Park would be held over until the spring. The Beltway Line trail will also be held until the spring.

**NEW or OTHER BUSINESS:**

The gymnasium use was touched on earlier in the meeting. Mr. O'Connell noted that the Derby Veteran's Community Center fee schedule has not been increased since the Parks & Recreation Department took over. He noted that the pool has been recently resurfaced and he suggested reviewing the walk-in fee schedule. Fees at the Center are low compared to other facilities. It was suggested that this increase could offset some maintenance costs and the matter should be discussed during the budget preparation. The matter will be studied further and presented next month. Members questioned whether the increased revenue would be returned to the Parks & Recreation department. This would be a budget issue to be discussed with the Board of Apportionment and Taxation. It was also noted that staffing is very tight in the evenings at the Center. Mr. O'Connell would like to explore additional staffing to provide oversight of the facility. Increasing the fees may satisfy this addition.

Members from Little League were present last month, where there was no quorum. They will be invited to attend next month's meeting. Mr. O'Connell will also invite another program next month so that the Commission can begin to gather information for the budget process.

Mr. O'Connell has been working with the Derby Public Library Director Kathy Williams regarding the Yoga program. She favors the idea and hopes to get it underway after the holidays. Mr. O'Connell is searching for an instructor.

Motion was made by James Benanto and second by Al Felice. Move to adjourn the meeting at 8:22 p.m.

Respectfully prepared,  
Karen Kemmesies, secretary