

Park and Recreation Commission

Andrew Cota, Chairman

Beverly Moran
James Benanto
Ronald Sill
John Monahan
James Butler Sr.
Bruce Sill

Minutes

(meeting recorded)

Monthly meeting: Monday, May 8, 2017 in City Hall.

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

By roll call, members present: Andrew Cota, Beverly Moran, James Benanto, Ronald Sill, James Butler Sr. and Bruce Sill. John Monahan was excused.

Parks and Recreation Director Dennis O'Connell and Athletic Director clerk Jennifer Moffat were present.

ADDITIONS OR DELETIONS TO THE AGENDA:

MOTION made by Andrew Cota and second by Ronald Sill. Move to add the following items:

- 1) 6A Propose naming of the field house and baseball field at Ryan Field. Discussion and action.
- 2) 6B Request by Walter Mayhew for a summer soccer program at Witek Park. Discussion and possible action.
- 3) 6C Acceptance of proposed recreational basketball court on City property located at map block no. 8-5-144 on Caroline Street. Discussion and possible action.

Motion carried unanimously.

MOTION made by Ronald Sill and second by James Butler Sr. Move to accept the agenda, with the additions, as presented. Motion carried unanimously

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

MOTION was made Beverly Moran and second by Bruce Sill. Move to accept the minutes of April 10, 2017, with the correction under New or Other Business, page 1, should read Mrs. Joan Payden. Motion carried unanimously.

PUBLIC PORTION:

No one was present.

CORRESPONDENCES:

Mr. O'Connell presented a communication from an anonymous person simply signed Very Concerned Parent dated May 3, 2017. It raises concern for one of the coaches in the Pop Warner program who has prior felony convictions. It states that it is their understanding that the Derby Pop Warner board is aware of his criminal background, yet allowed him to serve as a head coach last year anyway. This person's son will not be allowed to participate this year if the situation is not addressed.

Mr. O'Connell has communicated with the Pop Warner Board and was told that they reached out to the regional and national leadership for guidance. They were advised that there was nothing within their regulations that would prohibit his involvement in the program. Mr. O'Connell noted that the convictions occurred in 2010 and time was served. This is a volunteer position. The charges were significant which can raise concern for interaction with youth.

The Board of Education has procedures in place that address background checks for all personnel, employed and volunteer. Kenneth Marcucio was present and noted that Little League has a process in place for background checks. Currently, Mr. O'Connell noted that he has not seen a need for background checks for much of his staff as they are long time Derby residents whom were often lifelong acquaintances.

Members questioned why this situation was not brought to Mr. O'Connell's attention or to the Parks and Recreation Commission as soon as Pop Warner became aware of the coach's circumstances. Members discussed whether there should be protocols in place to administer background checks for all persons involved in Park & Recreation programs. It was decided to seek guidance from Corporation Counsel on how the City should proceed in this circumstance as well as structuring a general rule.

6A (added) Propose naming of the field house and baseball field at Ryan Field. Discussion and action.

The Building Committee has requested that the Parks and Recreation Commission acknowledge the generous contributions of the Payden family that are allowing for the construction of a new baseball field and new expanded field house at Ryan Field. It would become the J.R. Payden Field house and Baseball Field.

MOTION by James Butler Sr. and second by Ronald Sill. Move that the Parks and Recreation Commission supports and encourages the Board of Alderman to accept their recommendation to name the new field house and baseball field after Mr. Payden. Motion carried unanimously.

6B (added) Request by Walter Mayhew for a summer soccer program at Witek Park. Discussion and possible action

Walter Mayhew, representing Walnut Hill Community Church, was present requesting use of Witek Park from June 26th to the 30th from 9:00am to 12:00pm each day for a summer soccer camp. He will be using the same company that oversaw the soccer clinic in April through May. He asked that the Commission allow him the same stipulations for this camp.

Mr. O'Connell indicated that he saw no scheduling conflicts with this request. In a side note, he indicated that with the new turf field he anticipates seeing a greater interest from outside groups requesting use of the fields. With that said, he suggests that the Parks and Recreation Commission begin discussing standards and requirements to be developed to define what permissions would or would not be allowed. The members should consider what limitations the City may want to set on the use of the fields, the degree of City participation within the program, possible fee schedule, etc.

MOTION by Ronald Sill and second by Bruce Sill. Move to approve the field use request from Walnut Hill Community Church for the use of Witek Park Soccer fields during the period from June 26th to the 30th from 9:00am to 12:00pm each day for a summer soccer camp and further, that there shall be at least 80% participation of Derby children and that necessary insurance certification will be provided prior to the start of the camp. Motion carried unanimously.

6C (added) Acceptance of proposed recreational basketball court on City property located at map block no. 8-5-144 on Caroline Street. Discussion and possible action

Mr. Cota stated that the City recently asked the residents what they would like to see for the City owned lot on Caroline Street that was formerly the UI parking lot. Currently, there are residents playing basketball in the Hawkins St/Anson St area but their activity is potentially hazardous with activity in the streets. The City may be able to create a basketball court on this parcel with potential grant funding. The Public Works director has indicated that his department can assist in the needed remediation and

improvements. The City is asking for the Parks and Recreation Commission to accept this court as a new recreational facility once completed.

Mr. O'Connell noted that the issue of loitering and vandalism is increasing around the Derby Veteran's Community Center. He is concerned that the current patrons will be discouraged from using the facility if they don't feel safe coming to the building. There are very limited activities for the City's youth and this court may provide them with a more positive activity. It was acknowledged that the facility would not have lighting and would close at dusk. The terms of use of the facility would have to be clearly defined in proper signage and no loitering must be stressed. Additionally, the police department will likely have to increase their patrols in the area.

MOTION by Ronald Sill and second by James Butler Sr. Move to accept the proposed basketball court on Caroline Street as a new Parks and Recreation facility that will fall under the Parks and Recreation Department oversight. Motion carried unanimously.

NEW or OTHER BUSINESS:

Mr. Cota suggested that the Parks and Recreation Commission consider circulating an informational survey to ascertain what the residents are looking for in the City recreationally. There are the established programs, but is there something that is not being considered at this time that the residents would like to see?

Mr. Benanto noted that he is hearing many saying that they are concerned that the turf fields will be overused. In his experience, he has found the fields to be very durable as long as proper maintenance is done. There is a set life span of around 10 years for a turf field but holding back use is not going to greatly extend that timeframe. The advantage of a turf surface is that it is resilient and can support much greater use than a natural grass field.

Mr. O'Connell agreed and that he welcomes recreational uses throughout the City. With the turf fields, as noted before, he would like to set parameters so that it is clear when play is allowed and by whom. Also, there is a need to consider the impacts on the neighborhood. The area around the turf fields is residential and there are parking limitations. Members suggested that if outside sources are permitted the use of the field that the potential fees received should be placed into an account specifically for field remediation or replacement, not into the general fund. Members agreed that this matter needs further discussions.

DIRECTOR REPORTS:

Parks & Recreation Director's Report: Mr. O'Connell stated that the Summer Program is set to begin on July 5th and will run for six weeks.

Mr. O'Connell is working with the Superintendent of Schools Dr. Conway to replace the basketball baskets at Bradley School and he is discussing with the Public Works Director Mr. DeFala in regards to improvements and repairs.

High School Athletic Director's Report: Ms. Moffat indicated that the spring schedules are well underway. Softball and Baseball are doing well. Boys and Girls track and field are having great seasons with records of 9-1 for the girls and 10-0 for the boys.

There will be a closing ceremony for the baseball field on May 15th at 3:30 pm with a post game cookout.

The closing of the Red Clynych Softball field is scheduled for May 18th.

NEW or OTHER BUSINESS:

Update on the Football/Baseball/Field house Committees: Things are progressing. As noted earlier in the meeting, plans are going forward with the naming of the field house and baseball field.

MOTION by Beverly Moran and second by Ronald Sill. Move to adjourn the meeting at 8:16 p.m.
Motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully prepared,

Karen Kemmesies

Karen Kemmesies, secretary

These minutes are subject to the Commission's approval at their next scheduled meeting.