

RECREATION COMMISSION MEETING

September 20, 2007

Attending: C. Deming; J. Gowac; M. Michalski; B. Parker
Guests: S. Reiter; E. Schwartz

Brad Parker called the meeting to order at 7:08 p.m.

Approval of Minutes

The minutes from the August 16, 2007 meeting were not available.

MR. GOWAC MADE A MOTION TO DISPENSE WITH THE APPROVAL OF THE AUGUST 16, 2007 MEETING MINUTES UNTIL THE NEXT RECREATION COMMISSION MEETING. MR. MICHALSKI SECONDED THE MOTION AND IT CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

Mr. Parker stated he would like to change the order of the agenda to accommodate the guests in attendance. He introduced Ms. Susan Reiter and Ms. Eileen Schwartz and advised that he had met with them previously about a proposal to create a dog park in East Haddam. He noted that they were at tonight's meeting to talk about their proposal and to solicit the support of the Recreation Commission for the project.

Ms. Schwartz thanked the Commissioners for inviting them to the meeting. She advised that they had collected over 400 signatures on a petition for the dog park and had done extensive research on the subject. She noted that there is a core committee of approximately 8 people who are supporting the proposal and they developed the following mission statement:

To establish a fenced-in, off-leash dog park where well-behaved canine citizens can exercise and socialize in a clean, safe environment without endangering or annoying people, property or wildlife. To develop a beautiful, well-maintained space open to all dog lovers and friends who are willing to uphold the park's rules and restrictions. To view this park as a community project, in partnership with the town of East Haddam, designed to satisfy the needs of dog-owners and non-dog owners alike.

Ms. Schwartz advised that she has visited dog parks around the country and that CT has approximately 30 parks that she is aware of. She noted that most dog parks are approximately 1+ acres and are surrounded by a 4'-6' fence with a gated double entry set-up. Some of the other requirements are cleaning supplies (i.e. covered garbage cans, waste bags, and pooper-scooper stations), shaded areas, benches, and located in a safe, assessable area with adequate parking.

In response to questions from the Commissioners concerning expenses and liability, Ms. Reiter advised that the committee is prepared to undertake a fundraising campaign and they have done some preliminary research on grants, etc. She also noted that the project could provide a number of community service opportunities. There was a general discussion concerning liability issues and Mr. Parker agreed to check the Town's insurance to see if there are any conflicts.

Mr. Parker advised the Commissioners that Ms. Schwartz and Ms. Reiter have informed him that their committee is willing to do the work required to establish and maintain the park, however, they feel it would be beneficial for them to have the endorsement of the Parks and Recreation Commission.

Ms. Deming noted that many residents used to take their dogs to run at Echo Park and suggested the State be contacted to see if they would consider allocating some part of the property for a dog park. Mr. Parker agreed to check into that possibility.

The Commissioners in attendance expressed support of the idea and Mr. Parker noted that Ms. Quinn had also told him that she supports the proposal. He advised that the Commissioners would review the material provided by Ms. Schwartz and Ms. Reiter and vote on their request at their next meeting.

Ms. Schwartz and Ms. Reiter thanked the Commissioners for their consideration.

Committee Reports

There were no Committee Reports.

Director's Report

Mr. Parker reported that Ms. Quinn had received her doctor's clearance to return to work next week. He noted that she is looking forward to coming back to work and expects to be at the October meeting.

In Ms. Quinn's absence, Mr. Parker provided the Director's report covering the following items:

- Soccer registration went well, however, the game schedule had to be delayed by one week because, initially, they did not have enough coaches. Games are now scheduled to begin on Saturday, September 22nd.
- The fall programs are beginning, including a pre-school art camp at the Grange and the adult soccer, volleyball, and scrap-booking programs.
- There is a new Soccer Club president who is interested in talking to the Commissioners about combining the Parks and Rec soccer program with the Club's program.
- The girls and boys travel basketball program will be held again this year.
- One of the Town's teenage residents met with Mr. Parker to inquire about a place to skateboard in Town. Mr. Parker referred him to Ms. Quinn to discuss establishing a skateboard club.
- The Concerts on the River series was very successful. Everyone liked the new location and enough money was raised to cover this year's expenses with a surplus to begin with next year. The organizers discussed coordinating 7-8 concerts next year.

Guest and Audience

The guest discussion was covered earlier in the minutes.

Old Business

Mr. Parker advised that Candy and Kasey Carle's theatre company held their auditions at the Grange, however, performances will be held at a different location. He noted that he had informed them that the Commissioners would be willing to talk with them about establishing a theatre program for Town residents, however, the Carle's did not indicate whether or not they would pursue the idea.

New Business

Mr. Parker reported that the Town is negotiating with Daniel Harris to purchase 150 acres of land on Mt. Parnassas. He noted that part of the property is wetlands and/or hilly, however, there is approximately 40 acres that is suitable for a recreation area. There was a general discussion concerning the activities that could be supported in such an area. Some of the ideas mentioned included soccer and ball fields, and tennis, bocce, and horseshoe courts. Mr. Parker noted that he will be meeting with Mr. Harris again in October.

Mr. Parker advised that the Town will be taking part in a drill on November 3rd for a potential pandemic flu disaster. He noted that the drill is being coordinated by the 5-town Chatham Health District. The screening site for East Haddam is the Town's high school and the distribution site for the vaccine is the Portland High School. Mr. Parker stated that volunteers are needed to participate in the drill and all volunteers will be eligible to receive a free flu vaccine at the Portland High School. He stated the drill would be from 8:30 a.m. until noon and that interested residents should call his office.

There being no further business to discuss, MR. GOWAC MADE A MOTION TO ADJOURN THE MEETING. THE MOTION WAS SECONDED BY MR. MICHALSKI AND APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY.

The meeting adjourned at 8:52 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Sharon R. Wheeler
Recording Secretary