

**CITY OF NORWALK
RECREATION, PARKS & CULTURAL AFFAIRS
MARCH 18, 2009**

ATTENDANCE: Fred Bondi, Chairman; Richard Bonenfant; Richard McQuaid,
Amanda Brown

STAFF: Michael Mocciae, Director of Recreation and Parks

OTHERS: Anna Duleep, Council Member at Large; Laurel Lindstrom

PUBLIC HEARING

Mr. Mocciae called the Public Hearing portion of the meeting to order, and stated the rules for public comments. The following residents spoke:

1. Mr. Truman Curtis voiced his concern about access to boat slips after hours, and stated that once in Vets Park you cannot get out without calling for a Police Officer to open the gates. He would like to see card access similar to the bathroom access be installed at the parking gates.
2. Mr. Jeffery Achum wants easier access to Vets Park for emergency purposes He is a paramedic, and if there was an emergency, rescue vehicles cannot access through the parking gates. Both Mr. Curtis and Mr. Achum asked to were the monies from the slip fees go. Mr. Mocciae responded “to the General Fund”.
3. Ms. Allison Lovito asked to discuss the usage of Gallagher Estate in Cranbury Park by a wedding. Mr. Mocciae stated that this would be covered during the regular portion of the meeting.

Mr. Bondi closed the Public Hearing at 7:40 p.m.

ROLL CALL

Mr. Bondi called the regular meeting to order at 8:00 p.m. with a roll call. Members listed above were in attendance.

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES FROM FEBRUARY 18, 2009.

**** MR. MCQUAID MOTIONED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE
FEBRUARY 18, 2009 MEETING AS SUBMITTED.
** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

OLD BUSINESS

1. Rowayton School PTA Carnival.

Mr. Mocciae mentioned that the date needs to be modified to begin Thursday, as this is always the ride test date and set up date for the concession inspection for the permit. He also instructed Ms. Ives that she had to come to the Common Council meeting next Tuesday, to just show up if there were any questions.

**** MS. BROWN MOTIONED TO AUTHORIZE THE MAYOR, RICHARD A. MOCCIA TO ENTER INTO AN AGREEMENT WITH THE ROWAYTON SCHOOL P.T.A. FOR THE USE OF ROWAYTON SCHOOL FIELD FOR THEIR ANNUAL SPRING CARNIVAL TO BE HELD FRIDAY, MAY 1, 2009 FROM 10:00 AM – 5:00 PM WITH SET UP TO TAKE PLACE THURSDAY, APRIL 30, 2009 FROM 10:00 AM AND TEAR DOWN SUNDAY, MAY 3, 2009 BY 9:00 AM. ESTIMATED ATTENDANCE 500.**

**** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

NEW BUSINESS

1. Approve 2009-10 Facility Usage and Parking Fees for the Department of Recreation and Parks.

Mr. Mocciae highlighted the department recommendations for 2009 compared to 2008 actual fees. He added that non-resident parking sticker fees for Vets Park 2009 should be \$5.00, which is not increased, and reviewed the variances from the service-types of items including increases to the Marina usage fees. He mentioned that because the season was cut short last year due to the dredging project, they did add amenities. Boaters now have access to their own bathrooms, which are actually quite nice, and the fee is still quite low, in comparison to the services provided, as an accommodation to the short season of last year.

Also, due to non-compliance with rules of garbage removal, there was an increase of \$10 per night per campsite for the Grass/Ram/Shea Island fees. There was a discussion relative to the increase in park usage fees for large groups. Mr. Mocciae explained that more and more groups are booking large events, such as the bike race, The Bloomin' Metric and walks for causes like "Light the Night". He said there is still a 10% discount for non-profit groups within the City, but that due to increased staffing costs and man-hours involved with set up/take down charges, etc. The fees have been taken up from \$200 to \$275 for groups less than 250, and increased according to an incremental scale for each 250. Usage fees are and up now to \$1,000 + custodial charges for events with more than 1,500 attendees. Additional revenue from these events can be used to help with additional overtime appropriation requests of the city.

Ms. Brown asked what was the estimate of large groups this year, and Mr. Mocciaie said he varies year to year. He said that once people come to the event and see how nice the park is, he helps bring in other groups, and promotes the image of Norwalk. Mr. McQuaid asked when these rates go into effect, and Mr. Mocciaie responded July 1. Ms. Brown asked if there was anything else in addition to this fee, and Mr. Mocciaie said no, just the insurance certificate, plus any charges for field lighting..

He also mentioned the Show Mobile fees have gone up as it takes three people to handle this due to the size, and overtime costs involved.

He added the ball field lighting fee is \$250, based on actual charges from the electric bills. He said this is just for the Calf Pasture Field, Brien McMahon, and the football fields, which can now be accessed and activated remotely from home. Mr. Bonefant asked about events for the schools, like the band, and he said they do not charge the schools, only for an outside group, such as College Lacrosse.].

**** MR. MCQUAID MOTIONED TO APPROVE THE 2009-10 FACILITY USAGE AND PARKING FEES FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF RECREATION AND PARKS.**

**** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

2. Santec Master Plan for Cranbury Park RFP #2736

This item has been in the budget and is to get Cranbury park up and running, and this is the landscape architect. This was an RFP at \$35,000 which actually came in at \$30,000. Previous work was all done by volunteers, and they are very happy to start this project...

**** MR. MCQUAID MOTIONED TO APPROVE TO AUTHORIZE THE MAYOR, RICHARD A. MOCCIA TO ENTER INTO AN AGREEMENT WITH SANTEC FOR THE CREATION OF A COMPREHENSIVE MASTER PLAN FOR CRANBURY PARK RFP #2736 FOR A SUM NOT TO EXCEED \$33,000.00. ACCOUNT #09076030-5777-0399.**

**** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

3. Cranbury Park by PAWS (Pet Animal Welfare Society) for the Third (3rd) Annual "Bark in the Park

**** MR. MCQUAID MOVED TO APPROVE THE USE OF THE ORCHARD AT CRANBURY PARK BY PAWS (PET ANIMAL WELFARE SOCIETY) FOR THE THIRD (3RD) ANNUAL "BARK IN THE PARK) TO BE HELD SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 13, 2009 FROM 9:30 AM – 1:00 PM WITH A RAIN DATE OF SUNDAY SEPTEMBER 20, 2009. ESTIMATED ATTENDANCE IS 145 – 160.**

**** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

4. Usage of Gallagher Estate in Cranbury Park by Allison Lovito for a Wedding.

**** MR. MCQUAID MOVED TO APPROVE THE USE OF THE GALLAGHER ESTATE IN CRANBURY PARK BY ALLISON LOVITO FOR A WEDDING TO BE HELD SATURDAY, OCTOBER 31, 2009 FROM 12:00 NOON – 12:00 MIDNIGHT. ESTIMATED ATTENDANCE 150 – 200. ****
**** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

5. (A) The Norwalk Exchange Club Usage of Taylor Farm for their Annual Exchange and Gateway Antique Auto Show.

Ms. Brown questioned if one hour was enough time to break down, and Mr. Mocciae said that when it is over, cars leave, and they are usually gone by 5:00.

**** MS. BROWN MOTIONED TO AUTHORIZE THE MAYOR, RICHARD A. MOCCIA TO ENTER INTO AN AGREEMENT WITH THE NORWALK EXCHANGE CLUB FOR THE USE OF TAYLOR FARM FOR THEIR ANNUAL EXCHANGE AND GATEWAY ANTIQUE AUTO SHOW TO BE HELD SUNDAY, APRIL 26, 2009 FROM 8:00 AM – 4:00 PM WITH A RAIN DATE OF SUNDAY MAY 3, 2009. SET UP TO TAKE PLACE ON APRIL 24, 2009 AFTER 12:00 NOON WITH TEAR DOWN BY SUNDAY, APRIL 26, 2009 BY 12:00 NOON. ESTIMATED ATTENDANCE IS 1,000. ****
**** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

(B) Approve the use of the “Show Mobile” by the Norwalk Exchange Club for their Exchange and Gateway Antique Auto Show.

**** MS. BROWN MOTIONED TO APPROVE THE USE OF THE “SHOW MOBILE” BY THE NORWALK EXCHANGE CLUB FOR THEIR EXCHANGE AND GATEWAY ANTIQUE AUTO SHOW TO BE HELD SUNDAY APRIL 26, 2009 WITH A RAIN DATE OF SUNDAY, MAY 3, 2009. ****
**** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

6. Approve the use of Veteran’s Park by Side by Side Community School for their Annual Field Day.

Ms. Brown asked when the last day of school was, to be sure this was not in conflict with post-school camps. Mr. Mocciae responded that the last day of school is June 23, which is late this year due to snow days.

**** MR. BONENFANT MOTIONED TO APPROVE THE USE OF VETERAN’S PARK SIDE BY SIDE COMMUNITY SCHOOL FOR THEIR ANNUAL FIELD DAY, FRIDAY, JUNE 12, 2009 FROM 9:00 AM – 3:00 PM WITH A RAIN DATE OF FRIDAY, JUNE 19, 2009. ESTIMATED ATTENDANCE IS 230. ****
**** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

7. National Manufacturers Association (NMMA) usage of Calf Pasture Beach, Shade Beach, Taylor Farm, Marvin School for attendee parking for the Norwalk International In-Water Boat Show.

A discussion was held relative to the increase in parking rates from \$6 to \$7 last year to \$8 this year. Mr. Bonenfant stated that the boating industry was not doing well this year and asked if the increase to parking rates was necessary. Mr. Mocciae stated that the increase was due to the additional staffing hours required for repairs to the Taylor Farms grounds from overflow parking, etc. He stated that there is a \$15 admission charge for the event and no parking charge to residents, but just for non-residents only.

He also instructed that a representative from the group to come to the Common Council meeting next Tuesday, if there were any questions.

- ** MS. BROWN MOTIONED TO AUTHORIZE THE MAYOR, RICHARD A. MOCCIA TO ENTER INTO AN AGREEMENT WITH THE NATIONAL MANUFACTURERS ASSOCIATION (NMMA) FOR THE USE OF CALF PASTURE BEACH, SHADE BEACH, TAYLOR FARM, AND MARVIN SCHOOL PARKING LOTS FOR ATTENDEE PARKING FOR THE NORWALK INTERNATIONAL IN-WATER BOAT SHOW TO BE HELD THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 24, 2009 THROUGH SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 27, 2009. ESTIMATED ATTENDANCE IS 20,000+.**
- ** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

8. Annual Kayak for a Cause 1A to be held at Calf Pasture Beach.

Mr. Mocciae stated that this one of the most well-run outdoor events, and asked how long does it take. Mr. Scholwold reported that this year the launch is from Crab Meadow in Huntington, and that it takes that usually 3.5 hours at a non-stop paddle pace. Ms. Brown asked if local causes are a part of the event, and Mr. Scholwold responded that Outward Bound, and the Norwalk Maritime Aquarium are at least two of the local non-profit organizations that benefit from the event.

- ** MR. MCQUAID MOTIONED TO AUTHORIZE THE MAYOR, RICHARD A. MOCCIA TO ENTER INTO AN AGREEMENT WITH THE KAYAK FOR A CAUSE FOR THEIR ANNUAL KAYAK FOR A CAUSE 1A TO BE HELD AT CALF PASTURE BEACH ON SATURDAY, JULY 25, 2009 FROM 12:00 NOON – 9:00 PM WITH SET UP TO TAKE PLACE AT 12:00 AT 12:00 NOON. ESTIMATED ATTENDANCE 1,500+.**
- ** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

DISCUSSION

Response to Public Comments

1. Mr. Mocciae discussed the possibility of using the same key cards that open the bath facilities at Veterans Park to open the gates. When fishermen need to come or go at late hours they need to call the Norwalk Police to open the back entrance to let them in or out. By having key card access to the gates on the West Side, it will alleviate a police call. Mr. Bonnefant asked when do the parking gates close, and Mr. Mocciae replied when the park closes, which is typically 9-9:30, depends on the officer on duty. But, because of budget cuts, there is no officer in sight. The difficulty of having to call the police and time factor involved for a response, then for opening the gate, it really poses a dangerous situation. Ms. Brown questioned the cost, and Mr. Mocciae mentioned that it would probably not be much, but he will get back with a cost estimate next month.

2. Lease Agreement Ryan Park –

The Green Dream Community Sports Center Representatives showed a summary report with the scope of the lease as the term of 30 years with an option to renew for two consecutive 30 periods upon mutually agreed upon terms. Notice for renewal should be applied 6 months prior to termination. The rent at a rate of \$65,000 a year that is paid in kind through services provided by the facility at market rates. Rent will commence once facility is fully operational.

Mr. Mocciae stated that a Public Meeting that will be handled by this department has been scheduled to be held at the Police Station on March 31, 2009 6:30 PM – 8:00 PM. Mr. McQuaid clarified that this should be a Public Information Session rather than a hearing so there can be open discussion.

Ms. Brown asked what is defined as fully operational. Mr. Mocciae answered that the verbage is preliminary, and this is just the start of the dialogue. Once the documents are crafted, each term will be clearly defined. The idea behind the project is to bring a lot more than \$65,000 to the community. Mr. Mocciae responded that after that amount was just a value starting point. Once the program gets underway, revenue will be directed to other areas. Ms. Brown asked what other non-profit 501c3 organizations could this be compared to, and Mr. Mocciae listed Friends of Fodor Farm, Friends of Cranbury Park, Stepping Stones, etc.

More information would be available at the Public Information Session at the end of the month.

3. 2009 -10 Operating and Capital Budget

Capital Improvements Projects 2009-10 to 2013-14

Mr. Mocciae reviewed and explained the areas of the Capital Improvement Projects. Calf Pasture Beach of \$450,000, which is the remainder of the amount appropriated for improvements to the walkways and asphalt along the beach roads. Areas for approved projects are \$90,000 for Parks Garage Roof Repairs; \$125,000 for Mathews Park; and \$100,000 for a new Cranbury Park Pavillion, which is completely booked for this season, which includes Crystal Theater and Summer Camps. Another Pavillion is much needed, and the location is to be determined by the Master Plan. \$160,000 for School & Park Playgrounds, which includes a complete re-do of Naramake School playground, and improvements to Rowayton School playground. Unfortunately that won't go too far towards major improvements. Backstop and Fencing of \$25,000.

The one area that is not included, which everyone has forgotten is the request for replacement of the track at Norwalk High. The field turf at Testa Field was done, but the track was eight years old. The balance remaining from the turf replacement budget of \$50,000 was going to be used for the track, but the bid has now come in at \$110,000. Ms. Brown asked if it could be re-bid, and Mr. Mocciae stated that there were no other companies due to the specialization of rubberized track and the petroleum based products required. The issue is that although the planning commission decides on all of the spending, \$70,000 still needs to be spent on the school turf replacement. It is coming up in places and presents a safety issue in certain areas.

Mr. Bonnenfant asked if school PTOs wanted to do special fundraisers to supplement the playground project, that would be incorporated into the renovations.

Recreation and Parks Operating Budget.

Mr. Mocciae reviewed the budget area variances from the original recommended budget and provided comments relative to where cuts had been made from the City budget cuts to wages and services. Since the City Fireworks has been eliminated, monies to other family-related programs were restored to minimum levels. Compared to Greenwich which as 1,200 acres of parks has 120 full time P&R staff—we have 20. Further, they operate a golf course which has more staff than the city of Norwalk Parks & Recreation. Both the Towns of New Canaan and Wilton have more staff than Norwalk. One position which was he was able to bring back through creative budgeting is a mechanic, to have continuity for training and learning, which leave a full-time staff of 16. Also the retirement package has taken 45% of his staff. Over 460 years worth of commitment to the City. He also lost his Park Supervisor going into the busiest season. In summary, not only is the budget cut, but he has lost staff. Park Superintendent was eliminated five years ago, which was handled by the Parks Supervisor, and he now has to bring back the top-down support and resulting training time.

He added that there was nothing but praise for the Department and sad eyes from Common Council members when they saw the ramifications of the cuts. Perhaps Public Works can provide some help, and luckily the staff operates as a team. Ms. Duleep asked if any of the seven workers who have accepted the early retirement program would be able to work part-time. Mr. Mocciaie said that is where he is hoping to fund the Parks Supervisor position.

Mr. Mocciaie also stated that it is now coming down to having only self-funding programs that are income producing that break even, as they are no longer sustainable otherwise. The big concern is the budget itself, with park stickers, etc. Utility costs are up and are uncontrollable. Programs are not free anymore to the public. This is the last year that he can operate like this, and now has to look forward to more self-sustaining programs, like a large increase to beach permits, hold more special events, etc.

For the record, the Mayor commented to the Finance Director that as long as it does not affect the beach, he agrees with the cuts. He does not want to see the beach go back to the condition that it was before.

There was a lengthy discussion about use and mis-use of the city parks, for many well-attended special programs. Regulations should be noted for the public awareness.

There was a further discussion relative to why the police security has to be paid for by the Parks & Recreation Department cost. Ms. Brown asked why this not a City expense, as a "beat" not special pay for time and a half to sit in a handicapped parking spot.

Ms. Lindstrom asked the committee members to come out to the Public Hearing next week to speak in behalf of the Parks & Recreation Department, to prevent services from being deteriorated. At this point, it is the cost of not doing something.

ADJOURNMENT

**** MR. MCQUAID MOTIONED TO ADJOURN.
** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting was adjourned at 10:15 p.m.