



TOWN OF ESSEX
Park and Recreation Commission

29 West Avenue • Essex, Connecticut 06426

Regular Members

Brette Fitton, Chairman

Anthony Mosa

John Bean, Jr.

Daniel Needleman

Carolyn Field

Chris Perry

Alternates

Vacancies

Minutes of a Meeting held on Tuesday, November 14, 2023 5:30 pm at the Essex Town Hall. Zoom was offered but did not appear to be working.

1. Call to Order: Chairman Brette Fitton called the meeting to order at 5:30pm.
2. Attendance: Carolyn Field, Brette Fitton, Dan Needleman
Essex Park & Rec Director Mary Ellen Barnes.
Absent: John Bean, Jr., Anthony Mosa, Chris Perry
3. Approval of Minutes: September 14, 2023 Regular Meeting: 3 Corrections. Page 1, Section 6. Financial Reports & Budget Updates: Company name should be corrected to **Finkeldey**. Page 3, Section 7. Parks Update: Park name should be corrected to **Dickinson**. Page 4, Section 7. General Discussion: Spelling should be corrected to **aerating**. With a motion by B. Fitton and a 2nd by D. Needleman, the minutes were accepted with corrections.
4. Public Comment: There were no public comments.
5. Financial Reports & Budget Updates: ME Barnes said that it costs close to \$100,000 to take care of the parks every year. The Department of Parks makes sure that nothing is overgrown. Barnes said she was grateful to the Essex Garden Club for the pruning and cleaning that they do. Barnes said the summer camp programs were very successful and that the goal is to break even. Three scholarships were awarded: One to a player on Travel Basketball and two to participants in Recreation Basketball. Barnes thanked Chairman Fitton and her law firm for her generous donation to the Ginny Willetts-Johnson Scholarship. With a motion by D. Needleman and a 2nd by C. Field, the financial report was accepted.
6. Directors Report, Parks & Program Updates
Park Events

Ivoryton Illuminations begins on Saturday, Dec 2. The lights will run throughout December.

Looking Ahead March 23rd – Essex go Bragh Irish Parade & Easter Egg Hunt

Commissioners discussed that the two events are on the same day (at different times) but it is the best way to offer the two events considering the way the holiday calendar falls; they will assess the success of both events afterwards.

Pumpkin Festival Recap – Although the rain put a damper on the event, ME Barnes thinks all and all it was a success in so many ways. People still enjoyed all the festivities; we had many pumpkin carvers and carved pumpkins dropped off. The Lions Club still gave away over 300 hot dogs and the Witches still Danced!

Commissioners said that they loved the Pumpkin Festival and were pleased with how many people showed up despite the rain. The witch dance was very well received. ME Barnes thanked the Ivoryton Playhouse for their partnership. Some commissioners would like to go back to holding the event on a Saturday. ME Barnes said she would work with the Playhouse on this. B. Fitton said that she would love to see more signage at the event (hot dogs, parade).

Fall 2023 Programming

Programs include: Yoga (ages 16 +), Cupcake Decorating (ages 6-16), Archery (ages 8 and up), Zumba, Running Rams (grades k-8), Basketball(k-8), Tennis (ages 7-15), Tennis (Adult 16+), Zumba (k-6), and Men’s Basketball. We have had a great turn out for the fall season of programming. Our current focus is on Youth Basketball with over 60 already registered. Our Travel league has commenced with Recreation League starting after Thanksgiving. Also returning this year will be our K-1 coed league starting in January. In between, we are hosting indoor conditioning clinic with Coach Capezone again this winter as well.

ME Barnes said that the basketball travel team is at the UCONN basketball game tonight at the XL Center in Hartford and that our travel team would get to play during half-time.

ME Barnes wants to continue to ask parents what kinds of events they would like to see.

D. Needleman asked if email notifications could include program sign-ups and age-group scheduling, within the text of the email itself, in addition to the PDF document, as it is difficult to navigate otherwise.

D. Needleman discussed the current scheduling of Pickleball, and wished there was more play time for students.

Parks Update

All Parks –Essex Garden Club completed fall cleanups for Main Street Park and Dickinson Park. In addition to our volunteers, Professional Field Care is in the midst of completing our fall park clean-ups. We were able to do some additional updates to the parks around the Gazebos and planting beds with the monies that were encumbered from fiscal year 2022-23.

Commissioners discussed that Professional Field Care did a great job.

Hubbard Park - STEAP GRANT UPDATE – NO NEW UPDATES

7. Old Business
 - a. Update on Fitness Trail Project: Tabled.

8. New Business: D. Needleman said that more field space is needed to expand programming. He would like to explore if the Grader Field, managed by the Essex Fire Department Alumni Association, would ever be up for sale as it is not used often.
9. Commission Overview: It was discussed that the parks look fantastic. With a motion by C. Field and a 2nd by D. Needleman, the 2024 calendar was approved. (Please refer to separate calendar document.)
10. General Discussion: D. Needleman and C. Field already have or need to get sworn in again. More commissioners are needed.
11. Adjournment: With a motion by D. Needleman and a 2nd by C. Field, the meeting was adjourned at 6:23pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Susan K. McCann
Clerk