



TOWN OF ESSEX
Park and Recreation Commission

29 West Avenue • Essex, Connecticut 06426

Regular Members

Brette Fitton, Chairman

John Bean, Jr.

Carolyn Field

Anthony Mosa

Daniel Needleman

Chris Perry

Alternates

Vacancies

TOWN OF ESSEX

29 West Avenue Essex, CT 06426

ESSEX PARK AND RECREATION COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES

Tuesday, March 7, 2023 5:30 pm - Essex Town Hall, Room A, & Zoom

1. Call to Order: Brette Fitton called the meeting to order at 5:30pm. The meeting was held in person and via Zoom.

2. Attendance: Mary Ellen Barnes (Town of Essex Park and Recreation, Director), John Bean, Carolyn Field, Brette Fitton, Anthony Mosa, Dan Needleman

Absent/excused: Chris Perry

One member of the public signed on via Zoom.

3. Approval of Minutes: With a motion to approve by Dan Needleman, and a 2nd by Anthony Mosa, the minutes of January 11, 2023 were unanimously approved.

4. Public Comment: There were no public comments.

5. Financial Reports & 22/23 Budget Updates: The Director reported that the budget was presented to the First Selectman.

The Director said that she has not been happy with the service or cost by the company that is currently servicing the portable restrooms. She and the Director of Public Works will contact Finkelday.

All restrooms need to be handicapped accessible at each park.

The Director discussed the February 28, 2023 Park and Recreation General Fund Report, which shows that 61% or \$126,039.87 of the General Budget of \$206,336 has been used; \$80,296 has not yet been used.

The Recreation Programs Fund shows \$77,726.74 total revenue YTD; \$70,849.64 total expended as of March 1, 2023.

For Spring start-up, the parks need mowing and will be pristine. The chestnuts that have fallen on Main Street Park and Grove Street Park will need to be picked up.

Brette Fitton suggested that we seek sponsors, which is a good opportunity to have external support. Banners, signs, and t-shirts, etc. can raise our visibility and create more revenue other than that coming from taxpayers. Banners, for example, can be used for the 10 concerts this year. Dan Needleman suggested that sponsors can donate to a certain level or donate items, such as equipment or graphic services; restaurants could donate food. The Director recommended to not ask for national brand sponsorship. Dan also suggested that golf outings make for good fundraisers.

With a motion by Anthony Mosa, and a 2nd by Carolyn Field, the financial reports were approved.

6. Directors Report, Parks & Program Updates

Park Events

Dates

2023 Essex go Bragh Parade takes place on March 25; 11am stepoff. There is no rescheduling due to weather.

The Egg Hunt is Sat. April 1, 10am.

EEL baseball season begins April 1.

We need all commissioners available to volunteer for both events.

Essex go Bragh

There are about 25 parade participants thus far; including a bagpiper and the Sailing Masters.

Commissioners should plan to arrive no later than 10am

Commissioners will be assigned to the parking lot and Grove Street Park.

The Director stated that two Commissioners are needed for Grove Street for Antique Cars and two Commissioners for the Parking Lot.

DPW at Grove Street at 10am then Main Street Park @ 11.

DPW at TOE Parking Lot @ 10 then Silent Policeman @ 11.

Tim LaChance will be stationed at Main Street and Ferry @ 11.

Summer Camp Staff _Confirmed - Naomi Clark – Town Hall Auditorium 10-12:30.

Egg Hunt

Commissioners who are able to volunteer should plan to arrive at 8:30am to disperse the 2500 eggs. The egg hunt starts sharply at 10am. Participants register ahead of time. The Essex Library will host a storytime.

Programming this Spring includes Yoga, Youth & Adult Tennis, Archery, Track & Field, Boating, and Zumba. The Director said that the majority of the programs are taught by coaches in their field.

Summer 2023 – Summer Day Camp at EES, Specialty Camps, Concerts, Family Day at the Hartford Yard Goats. There may be a trip to the Aquarium.

Parks Update

All Parks –We are planning for spring clean ups and any other maintenance issues that may have sprung up over the winter months. We'll need to get ready for baseball season.

Tennis Courts will have several lights replaced with LED lighting sensors this Spring.

Hubbard Park

See STEAP GRANT: The Director is looking at stand-alone buildings via Country Carpenters.

Brette Fitton inquired about the Essex Garden Club ongoing involvement in maintaining park plantings in town.

The Director said that we have a contract with a horticulturist who takes care of the circle at the bottom of Main Street and the Department of Public Works does the mowing.

Brette Fitton inquired as to whether there was a plan for planting greenery given that in Hubbard the town will be paving over greenspace and whether there can be a requirement that the plants be native plants.

The Director indicated that there can't be plantings that require maintenance or watering. Brette Fitton noted that the point of having native plants is that they don't require the same level of care as non-native species, as they are used to the climate. The Director indicated she would look into this.

With a motion by Carolyn Field, and a 2nd by John Bean, the Director's report was unanimously approved.

7. Old Business

Pickle Ball Courts updates: The Director reported that placing pickleball courts by the land near Sunset Pond will not work due to lack of space, etc. Currently, the best place for pickleball in Region 4 would be at the high school. Larry Freundlich who has written a letter in support of developing pickleball courts in the area, and also presented at a prior Park & Rec Commission Meeting, has been in touch with Region 4 Administration and the Board of Education.

The Director said that a new company, Homefield, LLC, is exploring location opportunities in Essex. Dan Needleman said they are conducting a traffic study right now at a particular location. Perhaps they would consider pickleball courts.

Dan, the Director, and Anthony discussed other locations for pickleball, such as tennis courts or an indoor site in the Town Hall auditorium. Issues include: noise levels, and costs of nets and balls, etc.

8. New Business: Dan Needleman said that two days were spent at Hubbard Park to get it ready. He noticed that there are many unleashed dogs. The Director said there is a town ordinance on leashes for dogs. Brette suggested that there be more signage to this effect. Perhaps dog walkers could scan a QR code for directions to the Dog Park.

Dan said that the outfield at Hubbard is bumpy and inconsistent, and needs to be top dressed.

Brette reported that girls and boys have different basketball uniforms (girls have t-shirts; boys have pinneys); they should have the same in the future.

John Bean reported that the 6th grade basketball was somewhat disorganized with the scheduling of games and practice.

John Bean mentioned again the idea of linking parks to a fitness activity; which he saw at Holden Beach in North Carolina. For example, one park may feature a pull-up station. Dan suggested these stations could be offered as challenges.

9. Commission Overview: There was no overview.

10. General Discussion: There was no general discussion.

With a motion by Anthony Mosa, and a 2nd by Dan Needleman, the meeting was adjourned at approximately 6:40pm.

Respectfully submitted by

Susan K. McCann
Essex Park & Recreation Clerk

Next meeting: May 2, 2023 5:30 p.m.