

TOWN OF ESSEX
29 West Avenue
Essex, CT 06426

PARK AND RECREATION COMMISSION

SPECIAL MEETING

Monday, March 17, 2014

6:30 pm / Essex Town Hall Meeting Room A

(Please note these minutes have yet to be approved)

Bob Russo called the meeting to order at 6:37pm

Members Present: Bob Russo (Chair), James Rawn, Cathy Bishop, John Bauman, Ed Burleson
Peter Sarner & Tony Mosa

Park and Recreation Director Rick Audet was also present.

A. Essex Little League request for batting cage at Comstock

At the previous regular Commission meeting, Essex Little League President Casey Metz presented to the Commission the idea to install a batting cage at Comstock Park. ELL had obtained a quote for the equipment, and discussed using the player use fees from 2012 for funding. After that meeting, Bob Russo and Rick Audet met 2 reps from Little League on site to discuss the project and possible placement of the batting cage. Bob Russo summarized the walkthrough for the Commission and stated there is not a lot of room at the park or many options for its placement. The walkthrough showed 2 possible spots the cage could be placed. Bob stated he felt the best location is behind the Babe Ruth field backstop, outside the second fence, we could avoid it being placed under shade trees, and its reasonably and had no standing water at the time, and conditions were wet that day. To protect the cage, we would place 2 boulders off the parking lot to avoid a car being able to access the area.

Jim Rawn stated that we must be sensitive to the creek that runs through the park and how close the cage would be placed to it and that we may potentially need to obtain a permit from IWWC. Bob Russo agreed stating we would need to approach the IWWC agent before we proceed for approvals.

Rick Audet stated that we should require ELL to use a certified and experienced contractor with the required levels of insurance to perform the work and not allow ELL parents or

volunteers to try and install. Tony Mosa stated that the consensus of the Commission from the last meeting was that it would be a good piece of equipment to install at the park if all other requirements and funding could be met. Ed Burleson stated that the history of the player use fees was for projects such as this and the fees initially were meant for even clay and basic maintenance of the fields.

Rick Audet stated that funds for maintenance of the fields is now set in our general fund budget and player use fees sinking funds are for more capital projects. John Bauman stated we could use future player use fees funds for ongoing maintenance and repairs. Cathy Bishop stated that there has been a history of vandalism at the park due to its remote location. Rick Audet stated that we should include signage at the cage where it can not be used during a Babe Ruth game. Bob Russo asked if we have any further risk management concerns or questions and seconded the notion of obtaining wetland approval.

It was further discussed how installation would be funded and what level of support in funding would be required from ELL.

Motion was made by Jim Rawn to approve in principle the installation of a batting cage at Comstock Park in the spot as decided by Bob Russo and mandate the cage be installed by a certified contractor, and that Essex Little League should obtain quotes for installation and come back to the Commission for further discussion and review the planning and funding of the project. Tony Mosa seconded, all voted in favor.

B. Tennis Courts in the Civic Campus Enhancement Project

Bob Russo opened the discussion by giving each Commissioner a chance to ask any questions on the information that had been disseminated to date and if anyone was seeking clarification on the decisions being discussed on the tennis court. Ed Burleson stated that a quick summary of the current discussion between asphalt versus post tensioned concrete tennis court boiled down to obtaining a longer court life in the future for higher costs now. John Bauman stated that some of the items being presented and items shown in the project budget are confusing, and he asked why new lights had not been pursued from the outset of this project as the current lights are substandard and new lights would better match the new courts being built. Bauman also stated his family was specific in their donation being used for new lights, concrete curbing or another such improvement that had not been funded in the project.

Bob Russo confirmed that new lights and a concrete border around the asphalt pad had not been part of the original project plan. John Bauman stated that to do a new tennis court and not do new lights with it was a mistake by the Town. Jim Rawn stated that it is a financial decision we are examining here and asked if it makes sense to have a discussion on building the best possible court. Bob Russo stated that in his conversations with the First Selectman, only Park and Recreation Sinking Funds are available for any additional court costs being discussed and that project contingency funds and town reserves funds are not able to be secured. Jim Rawn stated that project funding is ultimately the decision of the Board of Selectman and Board of Finance and not the First Selectman. Tony Mosa stated we should settle the issue of which type of surface we want for the court first and then continue discussion on lights and other matters.

Jim Rawn stated that our decision is driven by the numbers and that the \$40,000 more in costs now will double the life expectancy of the court thus saving over \$100,000 in 20 years. Cathy Bishop stated that we don't know what product will be on the market in 25 years. Jim Rawn reviewed the costs he had compiled on the curbing, fencing, and lights.

Further discussion continued on the project budget, tennis court costs, and lights costs. The project costs for the tennis court on paper are in the \$77,000 range and the Commissioners discussed why Park and Recreation sinking funds were being used to pay for fencing, when the project allotted \$100,000 for the courts. Jim Rawn discussed how we make the most out of the money we have and the various sources of funding that could be leveraged. Bob Russo stated that instead of placing a concrete curb around the court, the asphalt pad could be extended to envelop the fence posts. Bob Russo stated that he would seek a meeting with the First Selectman and discuss how the grant monies have been used and see if court lights can be a viable option for us due to how the tennis court costs have been less than planned for.

A motion was made by Jim Rawn that the Commission move forward by our Chair setting a meeting with the First Selectman and ask that court fencing funding be moved from Park and Recreation Sinking Funds to the STEAP grant project funds and to modify the project budget to secure new lights for the court that would be funded by a combination of the Town funds, Park and Recreation Sinking Funds, and the donation we have already received.

Motion was made by Tony Mosa to adjourn at 8:04 pm. Ed Burleson seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved. Motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,

Rick Audet
Essex Park and Recreation