

ESSEX PARK AND RECREATION COMMISSION

**Town of Essex
29 West Avenue
Essex, CT 06426**

**Meeting Minutes*
Wednesday, January 7, 2015
Meeting Room A**

**Please note these minutes have yet to be approved.*

1. Call to Order

Chairman Bob Russo called the meeting of the Essex Park and Recreation Commission to order at 7:01 p.m.

2. Attendance

Betsy McLaughlin was introduced as the Recording Secretary for this meeting.

Members Present

- John Bauman
- Tony Mosa
- James Rawn
- Bob Russo, Chairman
- Douglas Senn
- Ginny Willetts

Others Present

- Mary Ellen Barnes, Interim Park and Recreation Director
- Betsy McLaughlin, Recording Secretary
- Norm Needleman, First Selectman
- Kelly Sterner, Finance Director

3. Approval of December 3, 2014 Regular Meeting Minutes

The December 3, 2014 regular meeting minutes were reviewed.

A motion was made by Ginny Willetts to accept the December 3, 2014 regular meeting minutes. Tony Mosa seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved. Motion carried.

4. Public Comment

It was noted that Kelly Sterner was present and that no one else from the public was present to offer comments.

5. Financial Reports and 2015-2016 Budget Review

First Selectman Norm Needleman arrived at this point in the meeting, so the agenda was rearranged to discuss the 2015-2016 budget and the Park and Recreation Department transition next. The budget packets were presented, and Norm described his goals and objectives related to the budget. He noted that the Park and Recreation Commission budget is separate from the Park and Recreation Department budget so there is a clear separation between the two.

Bob Russo suggested that a budget workshop meeting be held from 6:00 to 7:00 p.m. on the date of the next regular meeting to discuss and finalize the budget.

Norm presented his suggested transition plan in light of Rick Audet's departure. The open position for a Park and Recreation Director will be posted internally, and Mary Ellen will serve as the Interim Park and Recreation Director.

The situation at Viney Hill Brook Park was also discussed. Norm stated that a report has been issued by a beaver expert about contamination in the water due to the blocked pipe. After investigating the issues, it has been determined that this was a one-time event and that with proper maintenance of the pipe it should accommodate the habitat, the beavers, and also swimming. He will forward a copy of the report from the beaver consultant to Park and Recreation members for their review. The need for ongoing maintenance of the damn was discussed, and Mr. Rawn suggested that whatever technique is used to manage the beavers should be monitored by hired staff and doesn't think it is a good idea to have volunteers responsible for this. Norm stated that volunteers will be relied on to monitor and do the work initially, and the situation will be monitored. If someone sees a problem the Town should be notified, and Norm is prepared to dedicate Town resources if needed to make sure the problem doesn't get out of hand. It was also suggested that the gate remain open all year rather than incur the cost of someone opening and closing it, and ask the police to add it to their schedule for monitoring. Bob asked about the embankment that surrounds the pond, and Norm stated that there are no threats related to the damn.

Doug Senn arrived at 7:32 p.m.

John Bauman left the meeting at 7:54 p.m.

Norm stated that he is trying to relieve the burden on taxpayers in any way that he can, and that he and Kelly Sterner are available to discuss the budget further with the Commission if needed. They left the meeting at 8:13 p.m.

6. **Park and Recreation Department Transition Report & Updates** – See discussion above.

7. Director's Report, Parks & Program Updates

Mary Ellen Barnes presented the Director's Report as summarized below.

The basketball program has resumed and games begin on Thursday, January 8, 2015. One of the referees, Brandon Woodcock, has agreed to act as the Referee Coordinator for the games at EES. He is also helping Peter Sarnier with Kindergarten BB.

Bob Russo asked Mary Ellen to send Commission members the game schedule so they can attend the games and provide some Commission presence.

Student Assistant Allyson Clark will be helping in the office part time temporarily until further notice. She has been a great asset to the department and to the summer camp program, and the Park and Recreation Department is happy to have her assistance for the spring semester.

As already discussed, a budget workshop will be held from 6:00 – 7:00 p.m. on February 4, 2015 to discuss and complete the budget. Mary Ellen will provide members with background information prior to the meeting, and everyone should be prepared with suggestions or changes at the budget workshop meeting. The budget will be voted on at the regular meeting immediately following the budget workshop on February 4th.

Correspondence – None.

December Park Permitted Events – None.

Parks Update – November & December, 2014

Main Street Park

A proposal that was approved by the Commission for Greenscape of Clinton to spray for clover in early November was not completed because the leaves were still on the ground at that time and it's too late to do it now. Mary Ellen spoke with Frank Byrne of Greenscape who suggested that we plan to do it this year in late October when it is less active.

Dickinson Park – No new updates.

Hubbard Park

Fence repair is planned for the Spring. Mary Ellen contacted Atlas Fence and is meeting with them on Monday, January 12, 2015 to obtain a quote and get on their calendar for the repairs to be completed by mid-March. A suggestion was made to ask them for an estimate on relocating the post as an alternative to the fence, and maybe relocate the sign as well. There was also discussion about what we can do to make the park look more appealing.

Grove Street Park

The tennis courts were closed in the beginning of December and are scheduled to reopen in the Spring, date to be determined. The opening date has been April 1 in the past, but an opening date of March 16 for 2015 was suggested depending on the weather.

As indicated in last month's report, Rick Audit planned to use the majority of park funds in the Spring for an entrance pad on the north side of the tennis court, replacement wood fiber mulch for the playground, and a 5-bike bike rack. Mary Ellen will check with Sullivan Paving to confirm if the quote received from them for this is still valid. She has also requested a timeline for installation.

Sunset Pond – No new updates.

Ivoryton Green - No new updates.

Comstock Park – No new updates.

Clark's Pond

Rick Audet had spoken with Bruce Glowac about further improvements to the pond. He suggested taking down some of the smaller trees and growth along the roadside to open up the view, make it cleaner and more attractive, with the hope that Public Works could perform this work order. Joe Budrow, Zoning Enforcement Official, had noted that this is a wet area but there are no delineated wetlands, and that an application should be made to the IWWC. He also suggested that the Park and Recreation Commission visit the Conservation Commission about this since the land on each side of the driveway has been identified as meadowland with important species there, and any proposed clearing may encroach on this area. Bob Russo will walk the site with Joe Budrow and Mary Ellen and talk about some selective cutting of the invasive species that would not necessarily be regulated by the IWWC.

Viney Hill Brook Park

There were no new updates by the Director. Reference is made to the discussion held earlier in this meeting.

Doug Senn asked if the netting has been taken down from the batting cages at Hubbard Park. Mary Ellen will check into this.

Financial Report

Mary Ellen presented the Park and Recreation Commission General Fund Budget Report which is current as of December 31, 2014. The report was reviewed and discussed.

A motion was made by Ginny Willets to accept the financial report as presented. James Rawn seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved. Motion carried.

8. New Business – Approval of 2015 P&R Commission Meeting Calendar

The 2015 calendar of meetings of the Park and Recreation Commission was reviewed. Mary Ellen reminded everyone about the summer meetings, which will be kept on the schedule in case they are needed and cancelled if they are not.

A motion was made by Ginny Willets to approve the 2015 Calendar of Meetings. James Rawn seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved. Motion carried.

Bob Russo asked that for future meetings members let him or Mary Ellen know of any new business items so they can be added to the agenda in advance.

9. Old Business

a. Ivoryton Village Main Street Park Grant

At this point, we are waiting for final paperwork from the engineering firm. The design was approved and the ball is in their court. The target for construction is still May. They are going ahead with a request to the State about the fence and the little corner to make sure that is in the plan. Mary Ellen will make sure we do as much as we can. Other than that, there has been not another grant meeting.

b. Viney Hill Brook Park Awning Project Updates

Since Tom Clerkin was not present, there was no new update. The roof is not yet on because it needs to be stained first. The staining might be a project for the Commission to do, and this will be discussed further.

c. Capital Fund Request Update

The Commission's approval to utilize the Capital and Sinking Fund for Main Street Park Seawall repairs and the Hubbard Baseball Field fencing has been approved by the Board of Selectmen. It will go before the Board of Finance on January 18 or 20, and a Town meeting has already been set. Funds will be available on or about January 23rd, and calls have been made to get a quote for the seawall.

d. Commission Overview - None.

e. Public Comment - None.

f. General Discussion

There was discussion about the live fence planned for the Ivoryton Green. James Rawn expressed safety concerns about plans for a live fence since it is so close to the road, and keeping the split rail fence as an option to address those concerns was discussed.

James also asked if the safety skating signs are up at Sunset Pond. It was confirmed that signs are up at Comcast Park and Sunset Pond.

With regard to the beaver/dam situation, Doug Senn suggested that we use Geocast to get a message out telling people to send an email to the Park and Recreation email address to let us know if they see any problems there.

Doug Senn left the meeting at 8:54 p.m.

There was further discussion about the suggested replacement plans for the Park and Recreation Director position and what the Commission has been asked to consider. It was suggested that the process for this be done in an orderly fashion. This will be discussed further at the next meeting, and the Commission's decision will be reflected in the budget that they approve and submit. Mary Ellen will obtain and circulate a copy of the job description for the position prior to the next meeting.

A motion was made by Tony Mosa to adjourn the meeting at 9:03 p.m. Ginny Willets seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved. Motion carried.

Respectfully Submitted,

Betsy McLaughlin, Clerk