

ESSEX PARK AND RECREATION COMMISSION
MINUTES
March 7, 2012

(Please note these minutes have yet to be approved)

Mike Holmes called the meeting to order at 7:05pm

Members Present: Anthony Mosa, James Rawn, Robert Russo, Mike Holmes, Jack Spangler, Doug Senn

Park and Recreation Director Rick Audet and Program Coordinator Mary Ellen Barnes were also present.

Approval of Minutes

Motion was made by Robert Russo to accept the minutes from the January 4, 2012 and February 1, 2012 regular meeting. Tony Mosa seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved. Motion carried

Motion was made by Doug Senn to amend the agenda for the March 7, 2012 meeting. Bob Russo seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved. Motion carried

Old Business: A: Essex Basketball Center:

Jim Rawn introduced himself as he reviewed the history of the Basketball Center Project, naming the members of the subcommittee. Mr. Rawn then summarized the facts in regards to the proposed change of location of the project. See attached: "Hubbard Park-Existing Basketball Court Repair Profile" Mr. Rawn stated that the goal is to maintain the current use of the park, while improving the Basketball Court.

Public Comment:

Mike Holmes opened the floor to comments and requested that comment where limited to the point of concern and directed to the commission, and would be responded to by the Commission Chair.

Elizabeth Pendleton, 3 New City Street, stated her concerns regarding quality of life and property values. She is concerned about whistles, profanity, and overall noise levels. Mr. Holmes commented that the commission would place signage that would have rules of use of the park. He also addressed the limited amount of clinics that would be scheduled annually.

John Parunak, 22 Laurel Rd, would like to see the volleyball court filled in with grass and return the park to a "green" pocket park. He also feels that we should expand the recreational facilities at Viney Hill Brook Park. Mr. Holmes stated that neither Comstock Park or Viney Hill Park are a good location for a basketball court due to limited visibility and that they are off the beaten track. There is also an issue with utilizing the Essex Elementary School grounds as there is limited use during school hours and during the summer. No one is allowed on school grounds during school hours and during the Park and Recreation Summer Camp.

Ed Tucker, 67 W. Main Street, feels that restoring the basketball court at its present location within Hubbard Park is a wonderful idea. He would like clarification on the comments in regards to

"limited clinic" He also offered his Doctors Office parking for any overflow parking that may be needed after 5pm. Mr. Holmes stated that Park and Recreation has no clinics scheduled at this time and would be limited to less than 1 a month and even that would be excessive as presently there are no clinics planned or scheduled that would require the use of the Basketball Court nor are there any plans in the near future. Mr. Audet spoke and clarified that organized basketball programs such as a clinic would amount to a maximum of 1 or 2 per year and possibly none as Park and Recreation uses the school facilities for its organized basketball programs and would continue to do so.

Michael Pace, 25 Maple Ave, is concerned about safety of the players on the courts with in the park. He wanted to ensure that when his children are on the courts they will be safely out of the way of the parked cars and cars entering the park.

Susan Malan, 34 Grove Street, is also concerned about safety of pedestrians along Grove, Main and North Main as there are no cross walks. Mr. Holmes appreciated her concern and stated that any improvements to the sidewalks/cross walks should be addressed to the Board of Selectman.

Carol MacElwee, 54 Dennison Rd, is concerned about noise levels and commented that she believed most children lived in Ivoryton. Mr. Holmes stated that he did not know the demographics between the villages.

Bill Reichenbach, 29 New City, spoke on how he is very reassured that there will be no lights at the park. He did question why the High School or Junior High was not considered as a location for the courts. Mr. Holmes stated that it would be a great addition if the schools chose to place a basketball court at either location, but neither is under the Town of Essex jurisdiction as they are located in Deep River and under the jurisdiction of the Region 4 Board of Education.

Elise Kressley, 70 North Main Street, stated that the Essex Board of Education has not been approached in regards to placing the courts within the school property. She also stated that she feel the Park and Recreation Commission's actions were a horrific example of Due Process. She feels their actions created tension within the community. She also questioned the Park and Recreation Commission's jurisdiction. She would like the Commission to reconsider utilizing Essex Elementary school as a location for the courts.

Mike Holmes reiterated that there is a state law that states that the public is not allowed on school grounds during school hours, defined as a limited use facility, and that the Park and Recreation camp that is held at EES also doesn't allow the public on the grounds during camp hours. Camp runs for 8 weeks during the summer from 8a – 4p Monday – Friday.

John Weikart, 78 Lynn Rd, was a donor to the project and was concerned about the accessibility for the residents of the three villages. Mike Holmes gave a history of the project which dates back over 15 years with the proposal of placing the court at Clark's Pond. At that time it was an environmental concern that stopped the project. Several other locations have been considered and it has been determined that the location of Hubbard Field allows for the improvements of the existing court with the funds that were donated.

Patrick Callahan, 16 Grove St, he commented that considering the low use of the volley ball court, why does the Commission feel that the basketball court is necessary and will be used? Mike Holmes stated that the proposed project was a result of a request from a large contingent of residents to put in

a basketball court. He stated that Essex was the only town in the shoreline without a full size basketball court. Mr. Callahan feels this is a great idea in the wrong location. He believed Hubbard is a "Green Jewel" and he doesn't support taking over green space. He feels this is a too intense use of the park.

Harry Bird, 22 Maple Ave, feels that the Commission has been very receptive to the neighbors' concerns and that there is a lot more basketball today.

Andy Kressley, 70 N. Main St, asked the Commission if they officially made a decision regarding the proposed courts, ie are no longer pursuing the previous location, and did the Commission officially withdraw their application for the use of the former park and ride lot and/or officially inform Essex Fire Engine Co. #1 of this change in plans. Mr. Kressley also wanted to know if the plan included digging up the volley ball court. He also questioned the use of the Department of Public Works to help with the project as it would be utilizing town funds for the project when in fact the Commission stated that no public funds would be used for the project. He also questioned the funding for the maintenance of the basketball court. He also questioned the proposed trimming of trees near the courts; he wanted to make sure we are following proper protocol. He is also concerned about the cost in association with any legal fees.

Mr. Holmes responded, stating that there is a notice that will be going out to the Fire Department in regards to the official withdrawal of use for the former park and ride lot. Mr. Holmes addressed the Department of Public Works role in the project. This would not be an option if it violated our fundraising commitment to not use town funding for the project. We are improving an existing amenity within the park and maintenance would be covered under the Hubbard Park line item.

Mary Reynolds, 68 N. Main Street, stated that this is a great idea, wrong place. She feels the noise level would be excessive. Mrs. Reynolds stated that people have not been notified of the project. She also questioned the hiring of an attorney by the Commission. She stated that the neighbors were not notified. She believes the basketball courts should be centrally located.

Mike Sperzel, Essex Little League Representative, his primary concern is for the safety of the kids and feels the court will be a distraction to the players on the field. He is also concerned with parking. He also wanted to know if the Commission did a site plan. Mike Holmes stated that the commission did not do a site plan as the improvements are to an existing court. We are using the present court lines.

Mr. Sperzel also stated that he feels that the court will provide a positive activity for siblings during baseball games; he is worried that the infield will get heavier traffic with kids playing on the field.

Mr. Sperzel asked if the Commission considered placing the court at Grove Street Park, he feels this is a high visibility location, there is an existing fence and it is a large enough area.

Ted Barry, 11 Fordham Rd, stated that a Basketball Court in any town would be a normal idea and that the idea has not been sprung on the community. The Commission has been working on bringing a full court to the town for many years. He is not stating that the concerns are not valid however what does it truly mean when residents say "I support the Basketball Court"

Thad King, 14 Book Hill Rd, stated that when his nineteen year old son was in fourth grade he came to the commission to request they make improvements to the basketball court at Hubbard. He feels it

is time to move forward on the decision. It is important to make recreational activities available to the town and supports the improvements to the existing court.

Beth Pendleton, 3 New City St, her concern is that the park is located "directly in her back yard" and it directly affects her property values. She is not against the plan because she "hates children"

Mike Holmes moved to close the session to public comment.

Motion was made by Tony Mosa that in the interest of selecting an appropriate basketball site for the young people of Essex, and at this time recognizing the concerns expressed by some residents moves that the existing basketball court located at Hubbard Park be repaired to provide families and kids a basketball court in Essex, in accordance with the long standing commitment by the Park and Recreation Commission. The motion was open for discussion

Doug Senn stated that as a lifelong town resident, he played baseball at Hubbard. He also coached baseball and basketball. He then questioned audience member Chris Poulo, a Valley Regional High School basketball player on the lack of availability of gym time and places to play basketball. Chris Poulo stated that it has been a long standing issue to not have enough places available to play basketball. Mr. Senn then stated that each resident's concern should be reviewed and addressed. He thinks we should also move forward with utilizing the school and that the Commission needs to work directly with the Essex Little League on the project. He does support the improving the existing courts, however he does want the commission to address the concerns that were present this evening.

Bob Russo stated that with in the capital improvement program it is the plan of the Park and Recreation Commission to restore the tennis courts at Essex Elementary School and it was presented to the selectman and the budget workshops. He feels that there is limited land available that after a review by the commission that the best option is to restore existing basketball court at Hubbard Park.

Tony Mosa stated that his motion expresses his opinion on the proposed project.

Jim Rawn stated that this Commission along with many town residents worked extremely hard on this project. The improvement to the basketball court is a separate issue from the improvements needed to reopen the Tennis Courts at Essex Elementary School. As much as the Park and Recreation Commission would like to repair and reopen the Tennis Courts it is the Town's responsibility to fund the capital improvement projects requests made by the Commission. At this time the decision has been made by the Town to not fully fund the Park and Recreation Capital Improvement Projects, specifically the EES tennis courts.

Mr. Rawn also stated that the contractor that builds the courts stated that no one will hear the ball bouncing. The only sound you'll hear is of kids laughing and having fun.

Jack Spangler stated that we should renovate the existing basketball court. He also appreciated the communities input.

Bob Russo called the commission to vote on the motion presented by Tony Mosa; it was reread by Mary Ellen Barnes.

Motion was made by Tony Mosa that in the interest of selecting an appropriate basketball site for the young people of Essex, and at this time recognizing the concerns expressed by some residents moves that the existing basketball court located at Hubbard Park be repaired to provide families and kids a basketball court in Essex, in accordance with the long standing commitment by the Park and Recreation Commission. James Rawn seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved. Motion carried.

Financial Updates

Financial Reports were reviewed by Rick Audet. *Motion was made by Doug Senn to accept the financial statements as presented. Jim Rawn seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved. Motion carried.*

Program Manager's Report:

Mary Ellen Barnes reviewed the present programs, discussed the future planned programs. She summarized Winter Basketball League stating that there were 150 participants with approximately 50 parent & student volunteers assisting with the program.

Parks Update:

Rick Audet distributed a Spring Park Update list, the Commission was instructed to review at home and any questions should be directed to Rick Audet.

New Business

Doug Senn feels that the commission should address the concerns of the neighbors and that we should look into the cost to remove the volleyball court and reseed. He feels it is the town fiscal responsibility to maintain or remove the volleyball court.

Mr. Rawn is also concerned about the costs to remove the court as there is a tremendous amount of sand that would need to be removed. Mr. Senn asked if we could use the sand at Viney Hill Brook Park. Mr. Rawn stated this is a possibility.

Mr. Senn also wanted to make sure we worked directly with Essex Little League to coordinate the accessibility of parking during the baseball season. He asked what the dimensions were for the existing basketball court. Mr. Rawn stated that the court is 84 x 50 and is to accommodate an apron of 6 feet to the south and east. Mr. Senn thanked the subcommittee for all their hard work.

Mr. Russo asked Mr. Rawn if the guard rail would be staying. Mr. Rawn responded that it was. He also asked that the tree work be reviewed as well.

Mr. Mosa again wanted to recognize the EBC Sub-Committee for all their hard work.

Commission Overview:

None

Public Comment

None

General Discussion

None

Motion was made by Tony Mosa to adjourn at 9:15 pm. Jack Spangler seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved. Motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,

Mary Ellen Barnes Essex Park and Recreation

Hubbard Park – Existing Basketball Court Repair Profile

Existing Court Repairs –

- New acrylic clear backboards & refinish surface with green paint like material
- Security camera for basketball court & baseball diamond
- No lights for court ever
- Fencing around court with large gates allowing parking on court during special events
- Court closes at sunset
- Bicycle rack at basketball court
- Parking in lot and on grass
- Limited scheduled basketball clinics for kids by Park & Rec

Basketball Participants in Essex –

- 170 kids / families in fall and winter Park & Rec basketball each year
- 60 – 70 kids participate in Slam & Jam basketball program
- 30 plus adults participate in winter basketball evening program
- 20 to 30 Essex kids participate on Travel Teams Basketball

Hubbard Park –

- One of two “Active Parks” as compared to “Passive Parks”
- Over 101 years old as an active park
- Park closes at sunset
- Park usage with organized programs all scheduled thru Park & Rec 110 days a year with remaining usage, 70% of the year for pickup basketball on existing court to dog walking etc
- Park & Rec records do not show any complaints concerning Hubbard Park going back at least five years and Essex Police Department records for past two years also show no reported Issues

New Basketball Court Paid For By Donation Exclusively –

- 135 families and a few companies have donated money for the original site next to the Fire Department; all have been advised of the change in location and were offered refunds of their donation and four families have requested a refund.

Essex Park & Recreation Commission Basketball Subcommittee Contacts -

The following members are those responsible for the current stage of this project:

Tony Mosa, Co-Chair	Jim Rawn, Co-Chair	Dennis Robida, Co-Chair
Steve Luster	John Bauman	Jack Splangler Jack Lima

Rick Audet, Essex Park & Recreation Director, Essex Town Hall 860-767-4340 ext 148 raudet@Essex,CT.gov

Hubbard Park – New Basketball Court Profile

New Court –

- Sited at existing Volleyball Court which will be eliminated
- Security camera for basketball court & baseball diamond
- No lights for court ever
- Not fencing around court
- Court closes at sunset
- Bicycle rack at basketball court
- Parking in lot and on grass
- Green court surface with acrylic clear backboards
- Limited scheduled basketball clinics for kids by Park & Rec

Replacing Existing Basketball Court At Hubbard Park With New Court -

- Existing Basketball Court at Hubbard Park for over 35 years in parking lot area
- Relocating existing court to new site represents more optimum location
- Close existing basketball court in parking lot

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