



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

PARK AND RECREATION COMMISSION MEETING

Tuesday, January 11, 2022 5:30 pm - Essex Town Hall & Zoom

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

2. Attendance: Mary Ellen Barnes (Staff), Carolyn Field, Brette Fitton, Tony Mosa, Chris Perry

Absent/excused: John Bean, Jr., Dan Needleman

One member of the public, Larry Freundlich, was present in person. Three members of the public participated through Zoom.

There was one correction to the Agenda: the last meeting was held on November 1 (not on September 6).

3. Approval of Minutes: One correction needs to be made to the November 1, 2022 regular meeting minutes. The correct spelling of Commissioner's Tony's last name is Mosa. With a motion by Tony Mosa and a 2nd by Carolyn Field, the minutes were approved with the correction of Tony Mosa's last name.

4. Public Comment: Larry Freundlich was given 3 minutes to speak in support of developing pickleball courts in Essex. He said that he has been actively sending emails, writing to the BOE, and talking to First Selectman Norm Needleman for the last 6 months to a year about the popularity of pickleball and how it is available in the local towns of Westbrook, Old Saybrook, East Haddam, and East Lyme. Youth even do a lesson about pickleball in gym class. As a Director of Youth and Family Services for 30 years in Old Saybrook, he recognizes the need and desire for this activity. Via Zoom, public comment came from Liz DeFelice, who supported L. Freundlich's comments, and the fact that many other towns offer pickleball. Public comment came from Kay Tucker, who said that she just became a pickleball enthusiast using the courts in Westbrook, and

there is a nice drop-in program on Sundays at Old Saybrook Racquet Club. She added that Westbrook has added some helpful screens to help with noise control. L. Freundlich suggested that an option is to create multi-use courts, such as tennis and pickleball. He thinks that 3 towns working together on this project is helpful. As for ideas for location, he gave two suggestions:

1. The land next to Exit 3 near the firehouse and 2. Vineybrook Preserve. Larry would like to see this project developed.

5. Financial Reports & 22/23 Budget Updates and review and approval of 23/24 Budget: Mary Ellen Barnes noted that the majority of the budget is spent during the Spring.

Tree trimming was discussed. Mary Ellen said that this comes under the purview of tree warden, Augie Pampel.

The cost of waste processing portalets has increased.

For Fiscal Year 2023-2024, Mary Ellen said that Essex Park & Rec is right on budget. There is no need for a line-item increase.

Brette Fitton asked about the status of a truck for Park & Rec. Mary Ellen Barnes said this would come under a master capitol plan.

With a motion by Carolyn Field, and a 2nd by Tony Mosa, the budget was unanimously approved. With a motion by Tony Mosa, and 2nd by Chris Perry, the monthly budget was approved.

6. Directors Report, Parks & Program Updates

The Viney Brook Preserve Fall cleanup has been completed.

March 25, 2023 is the Essex Go Bragh Parade featuring fife and drummers, bagpipes, Irish Dance teams, antique cards, and Anthony Mosa as the Parade leader. 11am step-off. This needs to be coordinated with the State Trooper as the Essex Steam Train half-marathon takes place first.

Saturday, April 1 is the Easter Egg Hunt with the Easter bunny (snow, rain, or shine). 2500 eggs will be distributed. This event does not last long and volunteers are needed.

Winter yoga and basketball are going well.

Mary Ellen is already planning fieldtrips.

Mary Ellen has met with a designer about restrooms and concessions regarding Hubbard Park.

Travel team is in progress.

With a motion by Tony Mosa and a 2nd by Chris Perry, the Recreation Director's report was unanimously accepted.

7. Old Business: There was no old business.

8. New Business Pickle Ball Courts: Brette Fitton said that many people have expressed enthusiasm about pickleball.

Mary Ellen said that she asked to attend the Essex Elementary School Board of Education meeting.

Discussion took place about resurfacing part of the tennis courts to give access for pickleball.

Using one or two of the tennis courts at VRHS was discussed.

Discussion took place about the access issue of repairing tennis courts and limited usage at the schools. School courts can't be used between 8am and 4pm; there is limited use during the summer due to summer school.

Another option is to find a stand-alone facility nearby. There is an area between EES and Spencer's Corner that could be used but there are access issues.

Tony Mosa discussed finding a suitable location that is accessible to the public at various times during the day. He said that Senior Citizens like to play pickleball in the morning; thus having pickleball at EES or VRHS would not work. Chris Perry agreed.

Discussion took place if Viney Brook would be a suitable location; some members felt it was not centrally located. Tony suggested looking at Essex Town Hall and the Commuter Parking Lot, the location near the Fire Department. Concerns were expressed about placing the courts near the power grid near the Fire Department due to safety and renovation.

Mary Ellen discussed researching if an area could be leased by Sunset Pond. Brette Fitton and Chris Perry agreed that it is worth exploring.

9. Commission Overview: It was agreed to get information and research both the commuter lot and Sunset Pond as potential sites for pickleball courts.

Tony Mosa, Mary Ellen Barnes, and Brette Fitton thanked the public for their participation.

10. General Discussion: It was agreed that the Town Green looks beautiful.

The next meeting will be held on March 7th at 5:30pm.

With a motion by Carolyn Field and 2nd by Tony Mosa, the meeting was adjourned at 6:40pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Susan K. McCann

Clerk