



## **PARK AND RECREATION COMMISSION MEETING Minutes**

Tuesday Nov. 1, 2022

5:30 pm - Essex Town Hall (Room B) & Zoom

1. Call to Order: The meeting was called to order at 5:30pm.
2. In attendance: Mary Ellen Barnes, Brette Fitton, Tony Mosca, Dan Needleman (via Zoom)  
Public Guest: Brant Smith  
Absent/excused: John Bean, Jr., Carolyn Field, Christopher Perry
3. Approval of Minutes: Regular Meeting – September 6, 2022: With a motion to approve the minutes by Tony Mosca, and a 2<sup>nd</sup> by Dan Needleman, the minutes of September 6, 2022 were unanimously approved.
4. Public Comment: Brant Smith gave a presentation regarding bringing pickleball, the fastest growing sport, to Essex. He advocated for placing 3 pickleball courts at Hubbard Field. He said that while there is interest by some to place them at Essex Elementary School, this is problematic in that the scheduling would be limited and many people like to play pickleball during daytime hours. Smith said that Hubbard Field is an excellent choice for the following reasons: 1. Hubbard Field is centrally located. 2. Lights would not be needed. 3. There are only 3 houses in the vicinity. 4. The volleyball courts are rarely used. 5. The baseball fields are only used 2-3 months per year.
5. General Fund Budget (as of 10/31/22): Mary Ellen Barnes reported that of the revised Park & Rec Budget of \$206,336, \$72,344.25 has been expended, \$133,992 is available, 35.10% used.

Discussion took place about the budget for waste removal; Olsen, the Town's former waste removal company was bought out by Reynolds, a company located in MA, which is charging \$15 more. This needs to be explored.

Program Revenue Fund (as of 10/31/22): Mary Ellen reported that Park & Rec is on budget. Revenue and Expenses have been 100% met. Expense total: 50,931.66. Revenue total: \$48,249.42.

Mary Ellen said that the basketball program was a huge success with over 100 participants. Participants came from across the Tri-Town, including Chester and Deep River, which is wonderful.

With a motion by Tony Mosca, and a 2<sup>nd</sup> by Dan Needleman, the financial reports were unanimously approved.



## 6. Directors Report & Parks Update

### Director's Report – November 1, 2022

**Pumpkin Festival In Review** – the 2022 was extremely successful and very well attended. Estimates were approximately 1500 visitors. We had 150 pumpkins carved an excellent turn out for the Pumpkin Carving party. The Ivoryton Alliance hosted a party Friday night as well and VRHS carved pumpkins too. The parade had over 100 participants and was a wonderful addition to the festival along with the selfie station. The Lions club gave away over 500 hot dogs. The Ivoryton library went all out and had great feedback. Leaving the pumpkins until Monday morning was awesome and we will continue this moving forward. Wagon rides were a big hit as well – the only negative is that so many people wanted to ride, and we had to close the line at 6:15 to finish for 6:30. There was discussion about having an end of the line site supervisor to close the line at 5:45 to ensure all in line get on board. Plan for next years date Oct 21, 2022

### Park Events

#### Ivoryton Illuminations December – Jan 6

#### Fall 2022 / Winter 2023 Programming – Looking Ahead

We have gotten a great response to our Basketball League with over 100 kids registered. Tim Lachance is the Program Supervisor – we have included both Recreational & Travel programs open to all Tri-Town Area Youth

We are offering a Saturday Running Program for all ages including adult that starts Saturday at Comstock. Yoga continues to be very popular, and we offer ongoing sessions throughout the year.

Mark the Date for the 2023 Essex go Bragh Parade March 25. Mary Ellen Barnes nominated Tony Mosca as the Grand Marshal. With a motion by Brette Fitton, and a 2<sup>nd</sup> by Dan Needleman, the nomination was unanimously and enthusiastically approved.

The Egg Hunt will be Sat. April 1. 10am. Discussion of need for commissioners available to volunteer for both events.

### Parks Update

All Parks – Fall Cleanup is in process

#### Main Street Park

No Updates

#### Grove & Tennis Courts

Tennis Court and Playground were power washed

#### Dickinson Park



Essex Park and Recreation  
29 West Avenue  
Essex, CT 06426

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No Updates

Sunset Pond

Planning phragmites treatment asap

Ivoryton Green

No Updates

Comstock Park

Discussion of status of plans for mitigation of riverbank – working with DPW/Doane Engineering

Clark's Pond

No Updates

Viney Hill Brook Park

No updates

Hubbard Park: Dan Needleman noted that it costs \$700 to clean up the mound. Mary Ellen Barnes said that this needs to be added to annual maintenance.

Brette Fitton said that the invasive plant, Japanese Knotweed, is everywhere. Mary Ellen Barnes said that the best way to get rid of this plant, which is extremely difficult to prevent its growth and subsequent spread, is to dig the plant up, till the soil, and cover with a tarp for two years. Brette mentioned that some towns have organized groups that work together to remove the plant.

See STEAP GRANT

7. New Business a. Capital Committee Updates: Mary Ellen Barnes has participated in Dream Big planning, which is a wish list for what the Commission would love to see for the Town. Dan Needleman added that the Commission makes a case to the State for the requested items, and the State decides which items will be approved. The “wish list” currently includes the following: 1. Comstock – fencing, bathrooms, and area for concessions. 2. Build a Recreation Center, which would include a pool. 3. Viney Brook campus - fishing dock. 4. Sunset Pond - fishing dock. 5. Clark's Pond – fishing dock. 6. Main Street – full-functioning bathrooms. 7. Purchase a full-size pick-up truck as the current truck is 15 years old.

Brette Fitton expressed support for a Recreation Center with a pool and for upgrading the parks infrastructure.

Tony Mosca would like to see handball courts built outside.



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8. Old Business a. Update to STEAP Grant: Mary Ellen Barnes reported that we were approved for a State of CT grant for Hubbard Field, which includes fixing the parking lot with a properly designed entrance and exit; landscaping; a new equipment shed, and a new bathroom.

9. Commission Overview a. Regular Meeting Calendar 2023

Mary Ellen Barnes presented the following calendar for 2023 and the beginning of 2024. With a motion by Tony Mosca, and a 2<sup>nd</sup> by Dan Needleman, the calendar was unanimously approved.

Essex Park & Recreation Commission meets 6 times per year at 5:30 p.m. in Essex Town Hall.

January 11, 2023 5:30 p.m. \*

This is a change from the original date of Jan 4.

March 7, 2023 5:30 p.m.

May 2, 2023 5:30 p.m.

September 12, 2023 5:30 p.m.

November 14, 2023 5:30 p.m.

January 9, 2024 5:30 p.m.

10. General Discussion: With a motion by Tony Mosca, and a 2<sup>nd</sup> by Dan Needleman, the Commission unanimously agreed to add pickleball to the next meeting agenda.

Dan Needleman noted that the aerial map for Viney Brook on the Town website still mentions that a swimming area is available, which is no longer the case. This needs to be removed from the website. Mary Ellen Barnes said that there is signage that swimming is not allowed on site at Viney Brook.

With a motion by Tony Mosca, and a 2<sup>nd</sup> by Dan Needleman, the meeting was adjourned at 6:15pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Susan K. McCann  
Clerk