



TOWN OF ESSEX 29 West Avenue Essex, CT 06426

PARK AND RECREATION COMMISSION MEETING

Tuesday, September 6, 2022 5:30 pm, Essex Town Hall and Zoom

1. Call to Order: The meeting of the Town of Essex Park and Recreation Commission was called to order at 5:30pm.

2. Attendance: Present: Commissioners: John Bean, Carolyn Field, Brette Fitton, Dan Needleman, Christopher Perry (alternate), Mary Ellen Barnes (staff – Essex Park and Recreation Director)

A quorum was established.

Absent: Anthony Mosa

3. Approval of Minutes: Two sets of minutes discussed: Regular Meeting Tuesday, May 3, 2022 and Special Meeting Thursday, May 12, 2022

With a motion by Dan Needleman and a second by Carolyn Field, both sets of meeting minutes were unanimously approved.

4. Public Comment: There were no public comments.

5. Financial Reports & Budget Updates: Mary Ellen Barnes reported that the fiscal reports have not yet been updated. She will meet with the Finance Department shortly. With a motion by John Bean and a second by Dan Needleman, the commissioners agreed to table the approval of the financial reports.

6. Directors Report, Parks & Program Updates:

Director's Report –

Correspondence – See attached.

Park Events-

September – None

October – Wedding – 10/1/2022, Scarecrow Festival 10/8/2022 – Main Street Park

Pumpkin Festival 10/22/2022

November- None

Pumpkin Festival – The Pumpkin festival is planned for 10/22/2022 –Press Release –

Come out and celebrate on Saturday, October 22, 2022, at the 22nd Annual Ivoryton Pumpkin Festival. The event brings more than 1,500 visitors to the green for FREE festival activities! Enjoy all the best traditions of Autumn and Halloween. It is a great time for the entire family, and we encourage the Halloween spirit with costumes! So much so that this year's festival includes a Costume Parade.

Be sure to take the Great Pumpkin Challenge. We need families, groups, community organizations, and local businesses to bring carved pumpkins to the Ivoryton Village Green from 1pm – 3 pm.

The festival will be filled with exciting events and activities for the entire family to enjoy.

Start the morning off right with the Ivoryton Library's Pumpkin Chase, a 5k Walk or Run, through the Historic Village of Ivoryton. The Library will also host a Kids Fun Run. Registration starts at 7:30 am at the Ivoryton Green with the Fun Run at 8:45 am and the Pumpkin Chase at 9:15 am.

Then join Bushy Hill Nature Center 10 am to Noon on the Nature Center front lawn located at 253 Bushy Hill Rd., Ivoryton, CT, for a Pre-Festival Pumpkin Carving Party. All ages and abilities are invited to create a carved masterpiece that will be displayed at the festival's lighted Pumpkin Stroll. Special thanks to the Ivoryton Business Alliance and Bushy Hill Nature Center at Incarnation Center for providing pumpkins.

NEW this year: a Costume Parade! Although the parade is open to everyone it is geared to ages 12 & under. The first 48 little marchers who registered ONLINE ONLY will receive Pumpkin Festival swag and goodie giveaways so register ASAP at www.essexct.recdesk.com (use the programs tab).

The Parade will step off from the corner of Walnut and Main Street in the Ivoryton Village. We will march down Main Street to get to the Pumpkin Festival. The fun will start with live music from the FEDERATION from 4:30 pm -6:30pm. At 4:30pm The Painted Smile will be at Brickside Pizza's side patio to add the finishing touches to your costume with facepainting! Alongside The Painted Smile there will be a Selfie Station and tabletop games for friends and families to enjoy.

Satisfy your sweet tooth with cookie decorating with the volunteers from Child & Family Services of Southeastern Connecticut starting at 4:30 pm at the Ivoryton Village Green.

Enjoy a not so scary horse-drawn hayride sponsored by the Park & Recreation Commission. Rides will leave from the Village Green from 4:30 pm-6:30 pm. Get ready to be spooked by the Haunted Happenings at the Ivoryton Library from 4:30 pm -6:30 pm.

We will have special guest appearances. Local horror novelist Frank Larson will be on hand for his new book signing of INFEST. His books will be available on site for purchase.

Enjoy free refreshments while they last along Summit Street starting at 4:30 pm, courtesy of local nonprofit community organizations.

Don't forget to take a stroll around the village and take in the sights of the beautifully carved pumpkins on display. The Pumpkin Lighting begins at 5 pm and the pumpkins will stay lit through the night (pumpkins must be picked up before 9 am Monday morning).

For more information regarding the Ivoryton Village Pumpkin Festival please call 860-767-4340 x148 or visit www.essexct.gov. or stay up to date by visiting our FACEBOOK Page

https://www.facebook.com/IvorytonVillagePumpkinFestival/about/?ref=page_internal

Pumpkin Festival Commission Assignments – volunteers needed

Pumpkin Carving – Bushy Hill Nature Center 10-12 (Commissioners please plan to carve a pumpkin)

P&R Table – hand out goody pages to those PRE-REGISTERED for pumpkin fest parade 4:30-6:30

P&R Table – hand out water bottles and chips to all visitors until supplies are depleted 4:30-6:30

Horse & Wagon Rides – Monitor line and Assist Allegra Farms – 4:30-6:30

Face Painter – Monitor line and Assist Painted Smiles -4:30-6:30

Selfie Station, lawn games – site supervisor 4:30-6:30

Set Up Pumpkin Displays – 1pm-3 (As many commissioners as possible)

Light Pumpkins – 3-4 (As many commissioners as possible)

Organize Parade Participates at corner of Walnut and Main 3:30-4pm (step off at 4pm)

***Pumpkins will be left until Monday morning – approved by the Resident State Trooper

End of Festival – all tables, chairs, displays, supplies must be removed from site at 6:30 (As many commissioners as possible)

Summer 2022 - We have an amazing Summer at Essex Park and Recreation – We hosted 7 weeks of summer camp awarded over 35 weeks of scholarships. Scholarships were funded by the Essex Garden Club and the Middlesex Community Fund, and we were at capacity limit for most weeks. Same with Running Rams, Tennis, Yoga, and basketball camp. We hosted 9 out of the 10 concerts that were scheduled. Attendance was high for all weeks. Our parks hosted weddings and community events throughout the summer as well. Local Groups that utilized the parks were the Essex Garden Club, The Lions Club, Local scout troops, the Libraries. Spectrum Art Association, the Essex Land Trust, the Paul Foundation, and the Essex Pre-school. Our baseball fields hosted Essex Little League and Shoreline Baseball as well.

I want to express my deep appreciation to the Summer Camp Staff – We were fortunate to have 6 full day counselors with Recreation Assistant Tim LaChance as Camp Director. Their commitment to our program and especially their dedication, support and kindness provided the best camp experience for our campers and we look forward to Summer 2023

Parks Update - All parks will have a fall cleanup provided by a combination of in house maintenance DPW and Professional Field Care

Main Street Park-no updates

Grove Street Park – scheduled power washing of playground and tennis courts – Sept 20th

Tennis Courts – Rebounder Status – see New Business

Dickinson Park – no update

Sunset Pond – working with DPW on a plan removal of phragmites

Ivoryton Green – no updates

Comstock Park – no updates

Clark's Pond – no updates

Viney Hill Brook Park – scheduled maintenance of dog park in cooperation with DPW

Hubbard Park – Grant Proposal – see New Business

7. Old Business a. Tennis Court Rebounder. Mary Ellen Barnes reported that resident Mr. Callahan was happy to see progress on the rebounder. Ryan and his workers will be moving the rebounder as it is not used much. Discussion took place about locking the tennis courts from December 1-March 1. If the tennis nets come down, then the courts will be locked. This issue will be addressed at the next meeting.

Carolyn Field asked if ice can cause problems on the courts. Mary Ellen said that the ice can cause cracks on the nets.

Mary Ellen noted that in 2023, the courts may have to be resurfaced, This cost is between 22-25,000.

b. Hubbard Park Planning: Mary Ellen Barnes discussed the grant application for the 2022 STEAP Project through the State of Connecticut Office of Policy and Management, which is a \$500,000 grant. The grant has the support of the Selectman's Office. The budget for Hubbard Park is \$627,000. Since the grant is for \$500,000, a plan will need to be in place for the additional monies. A Capital plan is usually put in place in January.

8. New Business: 1. Brette Fitton noted that on the Next Door App, a participant asked if swimming is permitted at Viney Hill Brook. Since swimming is not permitted, this needs to be made clear across any sites. (Fishing is allowed; swimming is not permitted). 2. Dan Needleman reported that grass seed has been purchased. Discussion took place about irrigation of Hubbard Park. Needleman noted that there is a sprinkler system smart gadget that the Commission may consider purchasing. Mary Ellen asked who would control the gadget. More research is needed. 3. Refer to letter below about pickleball from resident Larry Freundlich:

From: Larry Freundlich <larry.freundlich@gmail.com>

Sent: Thursday, August 25, 2022 7:24 AM

To: bwhite@reg4.k12.ct.us

Cc: Norm Needleman <nmn@towerlabs.com>; lseidman@reg4.k12.ct.us; Maryellen Barnes <mbarnes@EssexCT.gov>

Subject: Letter for September Board of Education Meeting

Below is a letter which I would like to be read at the September Board of Education Meeting. Please let me know it has been received and that it will be read. Thank you.

Good evening Board of Education Members,

Unfortunately, I cannot attend tonight's meeting, but have requested this letter be read at the Board of Education's September Meeting.

My name is Larry Freundlich. I have been an Essex resident for 38 years and have 2 children who have attended our schools and are doing quite well.

Over the last 3 years I have been playing pickleball which has come to be known as the fastest growing participation sport in America. It has become extremely popular in CT with new courts being constructed in Old Saybrook, Westbrook, Durham, East Haddam, Madison and Guilford. Despite the growth of courts in our area, it still remains difficult to get court time to play a game. On any morning you will find 25 players on the Westbrook Courts and their 3 courts will remain pretty full with players of all ages throughout the day and evening.

I have talked with many players from the tri-town area who would like to see the development of pickleball courts locally. We all know that the sport is engaging with many positive outcomes including emotional, social, physical and mental benefits and can be played by all age groups and skill levels. Valley students have also indicated that pickleball has become one their favorite classes in the Physical Education Program; unfortunately there are no courts available for them to play after school.

As I can understand the cost of new courts can be steep and “not in the budget”, I think there is a wonderful opportunity for Region 4 Schools to work collaboratively with our citizens and parks and recreation programs to develop a plan for multi-use courts. The timing seems to be right as the tennis courts at Valley HS are in desperate need of repair and our District has been approved for large funding support from the State of Connecticut. With proper planning, we could meet the needs of many at a nominal cost to our taxpayers.

I would like to suggest that a committee be formed to explore all the options before construction begins on new tennis courts. I would be more than happy to serve on the committee and can bring different models of how communities have been able to accommodate both pickleball and tennis at the same venue. Many communities have done it and many communities are in the planning stages right now. Committee members could include: Selectmen, Park and Recreation representative, Physical Education teacher, Board of Education members and student representation.

To jump start the process, I am including an article of how communities are converting their tennis courts to accommodate the growing need for pickleball courts.

<https://blog.pickleballcentral.com/2014/10/29/how-to-convert-tennis-courts-to-pickleball-courts/>

I thank you for the opportunity to bring this forward and hope we can work together to be creative and develop cost-effective solutions for the benefit of our tri-town residents and its students.

I look forward to your response and working collaboratively on this project.

Larry Freundlich
14 Sheagren Hill Rd
Centerbrook, CT 06409
860 662-0054

Dan Needleman echoed the popularity of pickleball with the idea that perhaps two courts could be used at Essex Elementary School; one night a week, 2 hours; 2 courts. Mary Ellen suggested that perhaps this could take place on Wednesday nights before basketball. She will discuss this with Tim.

9. Commission Overview: 1. Christopher Perry discussed the idea of building a mountain bike park, which is popular in some other towns, and a good way to keep kids safe while bike riding. He will put together pictures and a proposal. 2. Mary Ellen noted how, 15 years ago, when she first began in Essex Park and Rec, she hosted events in the parks, such as cookouts and bands. 3. John Bean shared that he had seen fitness stations at Holden Beach in North Carolina, which may be a good idea for Essex. Mary Ellen supported this idea and thought it would be a good idea to have the stations throughout town.

10. General Discussion: Mary Ellen Barnes asked if Zoom should continue to be offered. Brette Fitton thought it was a good idea to continue.

With a motion by Carolyn Field, and a second by Dan Needleman, the meeting was adjourned at 6:10pm.

Next meeting: November 1, 2022 5:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Susan K. McCann

Clerk