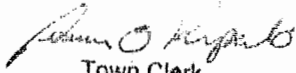


NEWINGTON PARKS & RECREATION
BOARD MEETING
TUESDAY, JANUARY 18, 2022

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I. CALL TO ORDER

Jay Bottalico called the meeting to order at 7:17 PM.


Town Clerk

II. ROLL CALL

Board Members Present: Jay Bottalico, Bill DeBlasio, Eileen Francolino, Ed Marchion, Jennifer Win-Johnson, Don Woods

Board Members Absent: Roberta Byron-Kolej, Michael Karanian, Anthony Kulowski, Matthew Kulowski, Nicole Pane

Council Members Present: Tim Manke

Staff Members Present: Bill DeMaio, Superintendent, Sam Lostocco, Administrative Secretary, and Melissa Miller, Administrative Secretary.

III. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

IV. ELECTION OF OFFICERS

Jay Bottalico asked Bill DeMaio about bypassing the election of officers at this meeting. Bill DeMaio suggested to table the motion.

- **Motion:** A motion was made by Don Woods to table the election of officers. Eileen Francolino seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

V. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES - OCTOBER 19, 2021 MEETING

- **Motion:** A motion was made by Eileen Francolino to approve the minutes of the meeting on October 19, 2021. Don Woods seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.
- **Motion:** A motion was made by Don Woods to add an agenda item. Ed Marchion seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Don Woods began a discussion regarding the Charter revision and considering reducing the size of the Parks & Recreation Board to 7 members. That would give a 4-member quorum, which the Board should be able to achieve. Jay Bottalico asked what the breakdown of Board members would be. Don Woods responded that it was the same breakdown of members: the majority would be 4 and the minority would be 3. Tim Manke agreed that it would be that way. A discussion was started by Don Woods regarding over the past few years, it has been harder and harder to even get people who are interested in volunteering for the Board. If there are people who finally agree to volunteer, they don't come to the meetings. There have been more meetings cancelled for a lack of quorum than Don Woods can remember for his time on the Board. He isn't sure if it is just this Board, but it needs to be addressed. We are constantly cancelling meetings for various reasons and one of the major ones is lack of a quorum. Don Woods suggested that by shrinking the size of the Board, we will keep people who are interested in the Board, and have regular meetings like we used to. Eileen Francolino asked if there was a reason why we would not go down to 9 members. He feels that 7 members would be more manageable. Jay Bottalico agreed and asked if the Charter has to be changed for this. Tim Manke responded that Charter revision is on the docket for the next meeting and it's probably going to happen. The committee will look at all things in the Charter and this is one of the things that can be looked at. Tim Manke had the Charter open in front of him and shared that the Parks and Recreation Board is the only Board with 11 people. In this day and age, to get 11 volunteers is difficult. Tim Manke is going to put it on the list of things to talk about. Eileen Francolino stated that she never thought the Board had a problem finding volunteers. Don Woods shared that it's always the same people and that one day, those people aren't going to be here. Eileen Francolino shared that she thinks there are people who would like to be on the Board. She then asked if the whole Charter was going to be opened, or just part of it. Tim Manke responded that you have to open the whole Charter. Once it is open, it is open. Bill DeMaio shared that it may make sense to have the Parks and Recreation Board also be the over-seer of the cemetery. People think they are already, you get all of the reports, and oversee the Parks Division which oversees the cemetery. Tim Manke shared that once the Charter is opened, he believes that Keith Chapman would be asking all of the department heads for their input. Bill DeBlasio made a comment, specifically to Tim

Manke, that on every organization he has been involved in, there has been a minimum requirement to volunteer. You would have to make 70% of the meetings and we should have a guideline in place. It's not fair to the people who show up and it's not fair to the people who need our support. Even 50% of the meetings would be better than we have done over the past couple of years. Eileen Francolino shared there are guidelines, but nobody enforces them. Tim Manke believes it is 70% of the meetings, although he did not have the information in front of him at the time. Don Woods shared his concern of who would be a replacement if someone was kicked off due to lack of attendance. There are very few people who want to volunteer to do anything. Don Woods shared that going month after month of having no meetings is just not right. Bill DeMaio shared that people don't want to commit a long-term of volunteerism. This is not any different from any other group.

- **Motion:** A motion was made by Don Woods to suggest to the Town Charter Revision Committee to reduce the number of Parks and Recreation Board members from 11 to 7. Ed Marchion seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

VI. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

NONE.

VII. CORRESPONDENCE

a. Letter from the Newington Bocce Players Club

Bill DeMaio shared that Donna Morgan organized an adult bocce league at the new bocce courts at Beacon Park. Everybody seemed to like it. The Department is addressing her concerns.

b. Letter from Sophie Glenn

Sophie Glenn had sent a letter to Bill DeMaio, thanking him for his presentation at the Senior and Disabled Center. Bill DeMaio said that at the time of her letter, the news of the dog park on the Hartford Hospital property was not yet official. That is why he did not mention it as part of his presentation at the Senior and Disabled Center.

c. Thank you letter – Nutmeg Holiday Basketball Festival

Bill DeMaio reported that we had over 50 youth basketball teams, over 2 days during Christmas vacation week, at the Mortensen Community Center Gymnasium. The teams came from all over CT, RI, and MA. He shared the good news that Don King's team, from Newington, won the whole tournament in his category. There were about 4-6 teams from Newington in the basketball tournament.

VIII. SUMMARY REPORTS

The Monthly Reports and Tree Warden Reports for October, November, and December of 2021 were given to the Board to review. Bill DeMaio reported that there was no additional information that needed to be shared regarding the summary reports.

IX. OLD BUSINESS

NONE.

X. NEW BUSINESS

a. Board Meeting Dates and Times for 2022

Bill DeMaio reported that, by the Town Charter, the meeting schedule has to be submitted to the Town Clerk. Melissa Miller had submitted the schedule to the Town Clerk and this is a confirmation of the Board meeting dates for 2022.

- **Motion:** A motion was made by Eileen Francolino to approve the Parks and Recreation Board meeting dates for the 2022 calendar year. Bill DeBlasio seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

b. Winter Program Guide

Bill DeMaio reported that the Winter Program Guide was given to the Board for their review. There are hundreds of programs and the Department is excited to open up again.

- **Motion:** A motion was made by Don Woods to accept the Winter Program Guide, including the fees and charges associated with each event and facility. Ed Marchion seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

c. Challenger Youth League

Bill DeMaio reported that the Challenger Youth League is a group of kids and young people with disabilities that parents help organize. They have been playing in our gyms, in our schools, and in the old Mortensen Community Center. Upon

doing some research, Bill DeMaio found out that some of the kids are from out of town since they need more kids to fill a full team. They weren't officially under the umbrella of Parks and Recreation and in an effort to be consistent with our umbrella plan for youth sports, he would like to make it official so that they can get better rates. We have been doing this for about 30 years.

- **Motion:** A motion was made by Eileen Francolino to add the Challenger Youth League to the Newington Parks and Recreation Department's umbrella of youth sports organizations. This will entitle them to Town of Newington insurance, as well as reduced school rental fees. Bill DeBlasio seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

d. CIP Budget

Bill DeMaio reported he had a CIP budget meeting with Keith Chapman, Janet Murphy, and Lisa Rydecki. With the discussions with the Town Manager, the Department is probably going to put off, for one more year, the \$333,000.00 for fixing the irrigation system at Newington High School. Bill DeMaio believes we can fix the broken pipes, broken sprinkler heads, and any other leaks that we have for another year in an effort to be team players. They are trying to reduce the CIP budget to a certain number. Bill DeMaio supported it and that is the only change, to his knowledge, and he wanted the Board to look at the CIP budget and consider endorsement. Bill DeMaio also reported that the CIP budget will include funding to finish the other three light poles at Legends Field. Jay Bottalico asked for clarification about the Newington High School athletic field irrigation. Bill DeMaio reported that it is almost a one-million-dollar project to do everything. It has been divided up into three years of \$333,000.00 each. The project is going to start with the four soccer fields on the north of the high school. The second year will be the two softball fields and the field hockey field. The third year will be the stadium, the practice football field, and the lacrosse fields. This is all with knowing that there has been a push by the Board of Education and others to put in a turf field at the football stadium. Eileen Francolino asked where Mill Pond and Churchill pools fit into the CIP budget. Bill DeMaio responded that the pools don't fit in the CIP budget at all. Anything over \$975,000.00 has to go to a referendum. The Town Manager is interested in trying to resurrect something to bring a solution to the pools. They put one-million dollars for each pool in the Facility Director's budget. It was reduced to \$500,000. That amount of money wouldn't be enough to make it worthwhile. Eileen Francolino asked about the \$1 million 5-year project for parks, pools, playgrounds, and green spaces. Bill DeMaio clarified it is \$200,000.00 each year. That money is for playgrounds, broken slides, vandalism, patching of pools, etc. We're halfway through the year and there is less than \$5,000.00 or \$10,000.00 left for the year. Don Woods asked about the synthetic turf field. He asked if the money being put aside for that field will eventually be sufficient to replace that turf field when the time comes. Bill DeMaio responded that it would not cover the cost. He believes there is roughly \$150,000.00 in there and we are asking for \$50,000.00 more. The real number from Field Turf is \$575,000.00 to replace the grass on top, with the sand and the rubber. It's guaranteed for 8 years and this is the 12th year of it. Bill DeMaio went on to say that he put \$10,000.00 a year into it to maintain the turf field. He brings in Field Turf from Texas, twice a year, for this maintenance of the turf field. We hope to get maybe 15 years out of the turf field.

- **Motion:** A motion was made by Jennifer Win-Johnson to approve the Capital Improvement Projects (CIP) proposal presented to the Town Manager and the Finance Department. Don Woods seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

e. Mobile Veterans Memorial

Bill DeMaio reported that this topic is a little bit controversial. There were two people who took offense to the Veterans trailer this year and wrote editorials in the newspapers and on Facebook. Their opinion was that we should honor every Veteran and that they shouldn't have to pay for it. We had tremendously positive comments about it from the people who loved it. The Mobile Veterans Memorial traveled a lot of places in town. Before getting another sponsor for 2022, Bill DeMaio wanted to bring this topic to the Board's attention to see if the Department should continue with this yearly fundraiser. Jay Bottalico commented that he wouldn't let the comments of two people bury this program. Bill DeMaio explained how the fundraising groups receive half of the money that they bring in through the registrations for the memorial. All of the rest of the money raised goes toward the fireworks for the Life. Be in it. Extravaganza. A lot of people benefit from it and a lot of people love it. Eileen Francolino commented that people should not have to be paying to keep their name up there. She said that we should not be asking families, who lost loved ones in a war, to pay to be recognized. She likes the idea of it, but not how it is paid for. Bill DeMaio responded that he has to pay for the flags and other parts of the trailer for upkeep. He gave examples of people who are paying to honor their loved ones. Don Woods expressed his support of the program and how proud he is of it, as a Veteran. It is a good way to support the town and community's efforts. He went on to suggest that maybe it can be advertised more clearly. Don Woods sees this as an honor and he will continue every year that it is available to do so.

- **Motion:** A motion was made by Don Woods to accept the recruitment of sponsors, construction, and continuation of the Veterans Memorial Trailer Fundraising Program for the year 2022. Ed Marchion seconded the motion. The motion passed 5:1.

f. Water Lantern Festival – September 10, 2022

Bill DeMaio reported that the Water Lantern Festival was another successful event. He believes they want to come back again on September 10, 2022, as long as the edge of the pond is cleared so that participants can launch their lanterns with more ease.

- **Motion:** A motion was made by Bill DeBlasio to approve the Water Lantern Festival at Mill Pond Park on September 10, 2022 with details to be negotiated by the Superintendent and to approve the Department to apply for a state liquor permit and sell refreshments at the event. Jennifer Win-Johnson seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

g. Potential Girls Youth Lacrosse Tournament at Newington High School – June 23-24, 2022

Bill DeMaio reported that Corrigan Sports would like to negotiate coming to Newington for a girls youth lacrosse tournament in June 2022. It's a win for the town of Newington. Mike Gaydos is the president of Newington Youth Lacrosse and he works with us. Corrigan Sports pays a lot of youth lacrosse members to keep score, to referee, and other tasks for the tournament. It also follows the Town Manager's thinking of economic development by bringing people to Newington from out of town, staying at hotels, eating at restaurants, buying gas, etc. Bill DeMaio shared a "thank you" for the support of the Board.

- **Motion:** A motion was made by Jennifer Win-Johnson to authorize the Superintendent of Newington Parks and Recreation to continue negotiations with Corrigan Sports to host a girls youth lacrosse tournament at Newington High School on June 23-24, 2022. Don Woods seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

h. Beechwood Park Playground

Bill DeMaio reported that with the CIP Program, the Town Manager is interested in redoing a neighborhood park each year. Beechwood Park is our next park in the plans. We have a design and have worked over the past few months with the designer of the playground company Landscape Structures. This playground has a sports theme. Beacon Park had an insect theme and bocce courts. Beechwood Park is going to have permanent concrete cornhole boards. We think it is a very attractive, handicap accessible design. We think it will give a big boost to that neighborhood and hundreds and hundreds of households will be able to use it or bring their grandchildren to use it. We are working with Public Works to build a handicap accessible bump-out for a drop off for vans. There is also one handicap parking space in the plan, as well as a handicap accessible path from those spots to the playground. The basketball court was recoated and resurface-cracked, so that had a facelift. Beechwood Park will have a nice, neighborhood feel to it. Bill DeMaio shared that hopefully, we can move forward with the plan, on July 1st, if the Town Council approves the CIP Program.

- **Motion:** A motion was made by Don Woods to accept the designs and construction of the new handicap accessible Beechwood Park Playground. Ed Marchion seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

i. Maintenance and clearing of brush around Mill Pond water's edge

Bill DeMaio reported that this is an effort to take back the pond. The Town Manager fully endorses this and it is a priority for him. Bill DeMaio endorses it and agrees with the Town Manager. Bill DeMaio is trying to get this done while the pond is frozen. That way, the edges can be done and anything that is cut can land on the ice and it will be easier to rake up and clear away. The Wetlands Rules and Regulations will be followed.

- **Motion:** A motion was made by Don Woods to accept the proposal to maintain the unsightly growth of brush around Mill Pond water's edge. Bill DeBlasio seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

j. Lavery Ride Rental Fee Waiver Request

Bill DeMaio reported that this request comes up every year and the Board endorses it.

- **Motion:** A motion was made by Jennifer Win-Johnson to authorize the Newington Parks and Recreation Department to waive the \$710.00 non-resident facility rental fee for the 3 pavilion rentals at Churchill Park on Sunday, September 18, 2022 for the Lavery Memorial Ride. Eileen Francolino seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

k. Tentative 150th Anniversary Celebration – June 9, 2022

Eileen Francolino reported that the 150th Anniversary Committee has had a difficult time planning events and finding volunteers, due to COVID. One of the things that has been missing is a family event. As part of the June 9-11, 2022 events, the committee would like to collaborate with the Department on the event and plan a family-type of day where we

can get together as a community. Plans are really rough and in the works at this time. Bill DeMaio added that the Parks and Recreation Department is fully capable of planning an event and having the 150th Anniversary Committee support it, at whatever level they want to. The Parks and Recreation Department is open to ideas and is planning 6 months ahead of time. The 150th Anniversary Celebration would be a great event for the Town of Newington. A lot of fun things can be done with the 150th Anniversary Celebration theme. There will be a band, like the Department usually has at Mill Pond Park on Thursdays, so it won't cost much for the committee. The Parks and Recreation Department will work with Eileen Francolino and the 150th Anniversary Committee to make this a special event for the Town of Newington. Eileen Francolino brought up the idea of a fishing derby. Bill DeBlasio responded that he can help find out some information regarding fishing derbies and where to get the fish from.

- **Motion:** A motion was made by Eileen Francolino to approve the tentative 150th Anniversary Celebration, in cooperation with the 150th Committee, on June 9, 2022 at Mill Pond Park and approve Department staff to apply for a state liquor permit to sell refreshments at the event. Bill DeBlasio seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

l. Food Truck Friday – June 10, 2022

Bill DeMaio reported that Food Truck Friday was the Board's idea last year and it was a wonderful one. The Department wants to do it again because people liked it.

- **Motion:** A motion was made by Ed Marchion to approve the hosting of Food Truck Friday on June 10, 2022 at Mill Pond Park, sponsors to be forthcoming. Also, to approve the staff to apply for a state liquor permit to sell refreshments at the event. Jennifer Win-Johnson seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

m. Motorcycle Madness – June 11, 2022

Bill DeMaio reported that the Motorcycle Madness event will be the same as last year. It was nice having this event on a Saturday, at the end of three days in a row of events at Mill Pond Park. It was hard to evaluate events during COVID.

- **Motion:** A motion was made by Bill DeBlasio to approve the hosting of Motorcycle Madness on June 11, 2022 at Mill Pond Park, sponsors to be forthcoming. Also, to approve the staff to apply for a state liquor permit to sell refreshments at the event. Ed Marchion seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

n. Life. Be in it. Extravaganza State Liquor License – July 13-16, 2022

- **Motion:** A motion was made by Jennifer Win-Johnson to approve the Parks and Recreation staff to apply for a state liquor permit for the Life. Be in it. Extravaganza from Wednesday, July 13, 2022 through Saturday, July 16, 2022 to sell refreshments at the event. Eileen Francolino seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

XI. REPORTS

a. Beacon Park Playground Grand Opening

Bill DeMaio reported that many of the Board members came to the event. It was very successful, a lot of fun, and people enjoyed it. The Mayor, Town Manager, Town Council members, and commissioners came to the event. It was very nice.

b. Night of Lights

Bill DeMaio reported this was another great night. He couldn't say enough good things about the staff. The Department wrote an editorial for the paper to recognize everyone who was involved in the event. It took a team effort. Thousands of people showed up and it was a ton of fun. The weather was perfect.

c. Budget Update

Bill DeMaio reported that there was a minimal increase, predominately due to the union salary increases. The Enterprise Budget is over \$2 million now for the Recreation side. We really are running a successful business. The Parks side is \$1.9 million and then you add another half-a-million dollars for cemeteries. It is a four-and-a-half to five-million-dollar budget that we are operating with. It is no small task. It is a pretty impressive task for the staff.

d. Building a Strong Community Awards

Bill DeMaio reported that this awards ceremony was done "COVID-style" again on Zoom. The Town Council honored each of the groups. Then, the award winners came in on different days to have their pictures taken, when it was convenient for them. The pictures will be displayed on the Wall of Honor in the Mortensen Community Center. The New Britain Herald did an article on it, which was shared with the Board. The groups got some good publicity and they feel really good about the recognition. It is a good way to encourage continued sponsorships for the Department.

e. Paige Bueckers' Visit to the Mortensen Community Center

Bill DeMaio reported that Paige Bueckers is a superstar at UCONN and she is the first college athlete to sign a paid sponsorship. The production company rented the Mortensen Community Center for \$3,500.00 for the day. They brought in 60 people from Los Angeles and Oregon – videographers, TV people – bringing in mirror balls and spotlights for filming. They had wardrobe and makeup experts and security people there throughout the day. It was a learning experience for our Department. Paige Bueckers signed a basketball for us, so that we could raffle it off and make some money for youth sports. It was a fun day for the Department and it put Newington on the map. It opened up the doors for some future commercials to be made in our facility. Everyone loved the sound system and the concrete bricks in the gymnasium that don't allow for an echo in the gymnasium. Bill DeMaio went on to say that the Department is very proud of the Mortensen Community Center and other people think it is the best facility they have ever seen.

f. Renovation of two softball fields at Newington High School

Bill DeMaio reported that both girls' softball fields at Newington High School were renovated with DuraEdge which is the professional product they use in Major League Baseball. In the next month, he believes that two concrete dugouts are being delivered. They will be pre-casted dugouts with a little utility room and electricity. It will be absolutely gorgeous for the girls to play on. Bill DeMaio went on to say this is very exciting and he is happy with how it turned out.

g. Renovation of Badger Field

Bill DeMaio reported that all of the silt was dug out and DuraEdge was put in at Badger Field. Sod was put in at the infield and around the horn. A new, complete irrigation system was installed. A trench was dug in right-center field for a new scoreboard. It was tied back to the Concession Stand electricity. He went on to say we are trying to find some money to get a new scoreboard in there and a new scoreboard at the soccer fields and the lacrosse fields at Newington High School. Bill DeMaio shared that things are really coming together with the Parks system and is pleased with what is going on.

h. Installation of Lights at Legends Field

Bill DeMaio reported there are three poles up, all of the underground is done, all of the electricity is done, and the computer system to Iowa is hooked up. We are waiting to see if the Town Council approves the 2nd half of the funding and then we will have them ordered. He suspects that in July or August, the three poles will be up and we will have the full 90-ft. baseball field finally lit. Bill DeMaio went on to say that the Town has been trying to do it for about 26 years and this commission can be proud that they finally completed it. Bill DeBlasio requested to put on the radar about a new scoreboard at that field. It will now be a state-of-the-art field and that scoreboard is about 40 years old and it is crooked. Bill DeMaio made a correction that his plan was to put a scoreboard at Badger Field, but that Jim Trommer, President of Newington Little League, wants the new scoreboard at Legends Field instead. He also shared that the new scoreboard will have a pitch count. Jay Bottalico suggested having Jim Trommer reach out to Coke-a-Cola since the two scoreboards at Legends Field and Memorial Field were donated by Coke-a-Cola in the past.

i. Hiring of Creative Playtime Preschool Director

Bill DeMaio reported the Department advertised, recruited, and interviewed quite a few candidates for the position. The Department offered the job to a woman from Portland, CT and she is going to start on February 7th. She has tremendous experience. She has turned around a preschool in Bristol from a complete disaster, and in over 15 years, has turned it into one of the most successful preschools in the country. He went on to say that, in fact, China came and visited five preschools in the country and the preschool in Bristol was one of them. The Department is very excited to be bringing on this new person.

j. New Adult Education Offerings

Bill DeMaio reported that at the state conference, he met a company that does adult programming. He sees it as a plus to add more programs and it is all done online. The Department would do the advertising and the registration, and would get 25% or 30% of the revenue. They provide the instructors and the computer system. There are probably 50 different new programs, with just a few examples: health care, law assistant, pharmacy technician, auto mechanic, welding, and plumbing. It is quite impressive. There is nothing that we are risking and we get the profit from it from anyone who signs up. The Department is going to try it, as an experiment, and see if it works.

XII. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

NONE.

Jay Bottalico asked the Board if any members had comments before the end of the meeting. Don Woods thanked Jennifer Win-Johnson for being a terrific Board member for many, many years. She has been a terrific partner and personal friend of Don Woods and she will be missed on the Board. Jennifer Win-Johnson shared that she really enjoyed being part of

this team. Jay Bottalico added a thank you to Jennifer Win-Johnson for all of her volunteerism. Bill DeBlasio added that he has worked with Jennifer Win-Johnson for a long time and that she will be greatly missed. She responded by sharing that the Board's proudest accomplishment was seeing the Mortensen Community Center being built. Jay Bottalico congratulated her and wished her well in the future.

XIII. ADJOURNMENT

Jennifer Win-Johnson made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Jay Bottalico seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 8:55 PM.

Respectfully submitted by,

Melissa Miller

Melissa Miller