

**NEWINGTON PARKS & RECREATION
BOARD SPECIAL MEETING
TUESDAY, JULY 20, 2021**

RECEIVED FOR RECORD
IN NEWINGTON, CT

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I. CALL TO ORDER

Jay Bottalico called the meeting to order at 5:31 PM.

II. ROLL CALL

Board Members Present: Jay Bottalico, Eileen Francolino, Anthony Kulowski, Matthew Kulowski, Ed Marchion, Jen Win-Johnson, and Don Woods.

Board Members Absent: Roberta Byron-Kolej, Bill DeBlasio, Mike Karanian, and Nicole Pane.

Council Members Present: Carol Anest and Tim Manke.

Staff Present: Bill DeMaio, Superintendent, and Kelly Dickinson, Administrative Secretary


Town Clerk

III. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

IV. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES MAY 18, 2021 MEETING

- **Motion:** A motion was made by Eileen Francolino to approve the minutes of the meeting on May 18, 2021. Don Woods seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

V. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

NONE.

VI. CORRESPONDENCE

a. Thank you letter from Corrigan Sports Enterprises

Bill DeMaio reported that Corrigan Sports Enterprises hosted the first national youth lacrosse tournament in Newington during Memorial Day Weekend and they were so pleased that they want to host another tournament in 2022.

b. Thank you letter from Mr. Bernie Rooney

Bill DeMaio reported that resident, Mr. Bernie Rooney, was thankful for the mowing and maintenance of the circle on Winding Brook Lane.

c. Ms. Linda Therriault fireworks donation

Bill DeMaio reported that the Department received a \$100.00 donation from Ms. Linda Therriault to be put towards the Extravaganza fireworks display.

VII. SUMMARY REPORTS

The Monthly Reports and Tree Warden Reports for May and June of 2021 were given to the Board to review. Bill DeMaio stated that there was nothing unusual to report regarding the Monthly Reports and he invited to the members to ask any questions. Jay Bottalico inquired how tree maintenance was proceeding. Bill DeMaio responded that the weather has been causing tree limbs to fall and keep them busy, but the Department is addressing them. Eileen Francolino asked about the status of Mill Pond Pool. Bill DeMaio responded that the pool is currently open and running. Eileen Francolino asked if the pool would hold through the end of the summer season. Bill DeMaio responded that he could not promise that. Jay Bottalico inquired about the pool being inspected recently. Bill DeMaio responded that Mill Pond Pool was closed for three days due to filter issues, but they were able to find used parts that brought the system back into compliance for now.

VIII. OLD BUSINESS

a. Little Free Library at Anna Reynolds School

Bill DeMaio reported that the Little Free Library that was discussed and previously approved was being constructed. Pictures of the library being constructed and the location they plan to install it at Anna Reynolds School were shared with the Board members. He added that the location of the library may change due to the planned renovations.

IX. NEW BUSINESS

a. Handicapped Accessible Parking Spaces

Bill DeMaio reported that there are no handicapped parking spaces in front of the Mortensen Community Center entrance. He added that this is not in compliance with the Federal ADA Law. He added that there are handicapped accessible parking spaces in front of the Town Hall entrance, however this will be a problem since entrance doors to the Town Hall are only open between 8:30 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday and the Department hosts most of its programs/events in the evening or on weekends. He went on to say that when designing the new building, the architect did not know that people would not be able to enter the Town Hall doors after office hours to get to the Community Center. He added that he brought this to the attention of the Town Manager, Town Engineer, and Public Works. He reported that they are devising a plan to make some type of adjustment. This would mean converting the current seven parking spaces in front of the Community Center to one handicapped accessible van space and three or four handicapped spaces. He added that these changes will accommodate the needs of program participants as well as visitors. He added that there are program participants who need the Department's assistance getting into the building for their classes, from the parking lot with the current status. Jay Bottalico asked about the available parking during the summer concert series on Thursday nights. He added that he was unable to find a parking spot for a scheduled meeting on a Thursday night recently and asked if the Town will be addressing this issue. Bill DeMaio responded that parking is limited some times and the Departments will need to work together to plan meetings accordingly.

b. Volunteer Fire Dept. Charges

Bill DeMaio reported that he asked the Fire Department if they would be willing to waive the approximately \$1,400.00 fee for the four volunteer firefighters they require for the fireworks display. He added that according to state fire regulations, only one firefighter is required. However, the new Fire Chief indicated he would still require four volunteer firefighters. He noted that the Parks and Recreation Department cuts the grass, maintains the trees, and performs snow removal and salting for the Fire Department and he wished they could have come to an agreement for "in kind" services. He added that the Fire Department follows a "two in, two out" philosophy for fire calls for safety. The Parks and Recreation Department has to fundraise the money for the town wide fireworks show, but yet the Department is always charged fees involved from other Town Departments. Jay Bottalico inquired where the money for these Fire Department charges come from. Bill DeMaio reported that money comes out of the Enterprise Fund and that the fees are based on an hourly rate calculated for the Fire Department. Eileen Francolino inquired whether the deposit for the fireworks would be retained for a later date. Bill DeMaio responded yes.

c. Anna Reynolds Elimination of Little League Field

Bill DeMaio reported that the new plans for Anna Reynolds School's renovations may include the elimination of the Little League fields. He noted that he truly believes this may cause a problem in the future and the Parks and Recreation Board and the Board of Education (BOE) will need to find a solution going forward. He went on to say that he recently brainstormed with the Supervisor of Parks and Grounds and one idea they came up with was to use the field located at the old Center School or Beechwood Park, however this would require the Department to spend a considerable amount of money to ready the field for use. He added that the Little League organization have expressed they will have a difficult time operating the way they do now, with the loss of those two fields. He added that the Department has improved the field at John Paterson School in hopes of alleviating some of the strain caused by this change. Don Woods asked specifically which field at Anna Reynolds would be eliminated. Bill DeMaio responded that he spoke with the Anna Reynolds Building Committee Chairperson that day and the BOE is now considering eliminating not just one field, but both fields depending on how the BOE votes. This change in plans is due to the BOE considering building a new school instead of renovating like originally planned. He added that he feels it's important that the Department continues communication on this issue with the BOE and Little League. Eileen Francolino asked whether Center School currently has one field or two fields. Bill DeMaio responded there is only one at that location. Eileen Francolino asked if there is room for another field at that location. Bill DeMaio responded no. Jay Bottalico noted that when the parking lot was expanded, some of the field area was lost. Don Woods inquired whether the field at Elm Hill School was being used for soccer. Bill DeMaio reported that the softball field at that location was turned into soccer fields. Don Woods stated he was under the impression the soccer organization does not use that field. Bill DeMaio replied that to his knowledge there are now eight fields at that location including irrigation. He added that another idea would be to use Seymour Park, but that would require the Department to put money into it and there is limited parking. Jay Bottalico asked if Seymour Park experiences a lot of vandalism. Bill DeMaio responded not any different than any of the other parks.

d. Downtown Music Series

Bill DeMaio reported that there is a movement for the Department to offer concerts on Saturday nights at the Municipal parking lot at Constitution Square from 5:00 to 8:00 p.m. He stated that he hopes to be able to offer these concerts starting this Saturday if all goes according to plan. He added that these concerts help promote economic development and the businesses downtown. The funding will be a combination of donations, government money, and

grant money. He reported that the Department is currently trying to book bands for this 10 week series. Picnic tables will be setup and the use of a tent may be donated by the Sequin Level Lodge.

e. Corrigan Sports Enterprises Lacrosse Tournament for 2022

Bill DeMaio reported that the NCAA Lacrosse Tournament will be at Renchler Field in East Hartford next year as well and that since Corrigan Sports Enterprises had such a pleasant experience of the fields and facilities at Newington High School and Clem Lemire Complex, they would like to come back next spring to host another tournament in Newington. He added that the agreement brought in approximately \$20,000.00 in profits and was a huge success besides the weather. He noted that these profits don't include the economic impact of the 2,500 people who traveled to the tournament and visited restaurants, businesses, and hotels in the area.

- **Motion:** A motion was made by Don Woods to accept and fully endorse the Corrigan Sports Enterprises Lacrosse Tournament rental agreement at Newington High School's lacrosse fields, and possibly Clem Lemire fields if necessary, from May 27, 2022 to May 30, 2022 and to allow the Superintendent to continue negotiations of the terms. Ed Marchion seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Bill DeMaio reported that the Department worked closely with Mike Gaydos, President of Youth Lacrosse and Principal of John Paterson School, and that Corrigan Sports hired about 20 of the Youth Lacrosse kids to be runners, referees, or scorekeepers at the tournament.

f. Water Lantern State Liquor Permit

Bill DeMaio reported the Department is planning to host the Water Lantern Festival for the second time at Mill Pond Park on September 25, 2021. He added that the first event was very successful and the Department hopes to sell liquor at this year's event.

- **Motion:** A motion was made by Ed Marchion to approve and authorize the Superintendent to rent Mill Pond Park to the Water Lantern Festival Organization on September 25, 2021 as outlined in the letter of agreement. Also, to approve the staff to apply for state liquor permit to sell liquor at the event. Don Woods seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

g. T-Mobile Grant for Pavilion at Constitution Square

Bill DeMaio reported that in an effort to be transparent, he wanted to share the information regarding the T-Mobile grant with the Board since he was unable to discuss it with them before the grant's deadline. He added that he did discuss it with the Town Manager and some of the Town Council members who all were in favor of submitting the application. The grant award would be \$50,000.00 and the Department hopes to hear news regarding this by the end of July. He added that the estimated total project will cost approximately \$158,000.00 and the remaining funding will come from commitments from private companies and local government to make the project whole. He went on to say that this pavilion will be used for all different types of special events, instead of the current tents the Department has to put up and take down as needed and for bad weather. Some examples of these events include farmers markets, tag sales, flea markets, concerts, Halloween parties, and Christmas events. Jay Bottalico asked if the pavilion would be installed on the grass area. Bill DeMaio responded yes, the area where they currently put up the tent for the concerts on the island. Don Woods asked how big the pavilion will be. Bill DeMaio responded the dimensions are to be determined, but it will be roughly 30 x 60 ft.

- **Motion:** A motion was made by Eileen Francolino to approve the Superintendent to apply for the T-Mobile Hometown Grant Program for the construction of a pavilion at Constitution Square for special events. Jen Win-Johnson seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

X. REPORTS

a. Town Hall/Community Center Update

Don Woods reported that the project is basically complete and he attended the final Building Committee meeting. He noted that the only things left to be addressed are vibration on the roof, landscaping, and retainage. He added there was a tremendous amount of trouble regarding the flag pole. The current flag pole can only be accessed from the roof, but the mount for the pole hits the building. There was discussion of installing a conventional flag pole in the ground outside the building and abandoning the rooftop flag pole since it is not functional. He added that he is very pleased with the new building and community center and that we should all be proud of it.

b. Custom Aquatics Analysis

Bill DeMaio reported that the professional opinion of Custom Aquatics shows that Mill Pond Pool is not going to last much longer, it is in very bad shape and it will only get worse. He reported that the Department spent approximately \$60,000.00 on crack repairs of Mill Pond Pool this spring, in addition to \$15,000.00 spent on the drains and \$8,500.00 spent on the used parts needed for the filter. Jay Bottalico noted that the report states there are lots of cracks and asked if there is a possibility of the pool caving in. Bill DeMaio responded it's not likely, but it is possible. He added that the real problem is we don't know how hollow the concrete walls are. He referenced a recent conversation with

Mike Fortuna where they discussed how the scary part is that if the concrete walls on the inside of the pool are this bad, they can only imagine what the dirt side of the concrete walls look like which is very concerning. He added that there are many hollow pieces in the concrete walls that each year are flicked away, patched, and repainted, but this process can only be done so many times before it's obsolete. Jay Bottalico asked when this issue will be discussed by the Town Council. Carol Anest responded that the pool will be discussed at the meeting on August 10, 2021 and confirmed it is on the agenda. Jay Bottalico asked if the Custom Aquatics report has been shared with the Town Council. Bill DeMaio responded that he does not know how much of this information the Town Manager shares with them. Carol Anest confirmed that she did not receive this information. Eileen Francolino referenced the recent closure of the Mill Pond pool and asked why the Department was not allowed to hand feed the chlorine to the filter as they have done in the past. Bill DeMaio responded that in 1972 the State made a health code that allowed for manually pushing a button to add chlorine to the filter, but hand feeding is discouraged because it doesn't mix properly and the swimmers can potentially get burned as a result. He added that the Department was able to fix the filter to the level that it would allow for manually feeding the chlorine, but the Health Director would not allow it. He went on to say that the State Health Director would have allowed this, but the local Health Director can ask for more than the minimum requirement. Eileen Francolino asked what was the fear of the local Health Director. Bill DeMaio responded that he did not wish to speak for him. Jen Win-Johnson asked how the issues at Mill Pond pool can be communicated to the public before funding is needed to address it so the community is informed. Bill DeMaio responded that for the past 14 years there have been assessments done by pool professionals who all say the condition of the pool is terrible. He added that whenever he is asked about this issue he shares the information with the Town Council and Board of Education, but he does not make a point of telling people the facilities are lousy. Jay Bottalico noted that town residents are uninformed on many different topics and added that it can be hard to reach them. He added that the people who don't use the pool don't seem to care about it, but that if a disaster was to occur they would likely have something to say about it. Don Woods noted that the public doesn't seem to understand that if the Town's infrastructure isn't maintained, new families will not want to move to Newington if we have nothing to offer them and house values will drop. He added that if surrounding towns that invest in infrastructure have better facilities and services to offer, then the drive to move to Newington will diminish. He added that the Town of Newington often performs studies, but very seldom pulls the trigger, such as the new building taking seven years to come to fruition. Jen Win-Johnson noted that it might be helpful for the public to be presented with the information that shows all the maintenance and money that has been spent on repairing the pool each year. Don Woods noted the only way the Board could do that would be to form a committee, get donations, and send the information to the press. Ed Marchion asked if Board members could write an article for local papers. Eileen Francolino mentioned that they might reach more people through social media. Carol Anest suggested printing an article in the local newspapers such as the Rare Reminder, Town Crier, and New Britain Herald. Don Woods noted in the past they hosted a public hearing. Jen Win-Johnson noted that there needs to be a better way to publicize this information to the public. Eileen Francolino encouraged speaking on this issue at a Town Council meeting. Don Woods added that this may be a moot point if it does not even go to referendum. There was some discussion on the referendum process with James Krupienski, Town Clerk and meeting moderator, who confirmed that Board members can speak on their opinion of these issues as private individuals, but not as Board members during the 90-day neutrality phase. Bill DeMaio added that once the Town leadership addresses the issues and it goes to referendum, then the information can be shared with the public during the 90 days.

c. TLB Architecture Analysis

Bill DeMaio stated that the TLB Architecture Analysis was shared with the Board members and the Mill Pond Pool Building Committee in an effort to be transparent and promote communication. He noted that Carol Anest's idea for solar heating on the roof of the new pool house was a genius idea that will extend the new pool's season from April to October. He added that Mill Pond pool will be discussed at the Town Council meeting on August 10, 2021 and that it would be beneficial for Board members to attend and speak on this issue if possible.

d. Nutmeg State Games Update

Bill DeMaio reported that the Nutmeg State Games rent the fields in Newington which brings in revenue for the Department. There are 169 towns who are involved in this organization and the only difficulty has been the weather. He added that these rentals help promote the Town Manager's plan for economic development.

e. Veterans Memorial

Bill DeMaio reported that the Veterans Memorial was unveiled on at 3:00 p.m. on Saturday, July 17, 2021 at the Extravaganza. He added that the Department received about 130 name registrations for this year's memorial. He stated that he added all the names of the Newington Veterans that were on the Town's Veterans Memorial outside the new building as well this year. He added that the memorial was very well received and many families came to see it and take pictures with their families. He went on to say that the memorial will be touring various places around town

for other viewings soon, such as schools, fire houses, and the center of town. Jay Bottalico asked how much the name registration costs. Bill DeMaio responded that the fee to register a new name costs \$30.00 and to renew a name from the previous year costs \$15.00. He added that Hinding Tennis generously sponsors the memorial in the amount of \$5,000.00 each year, so there is no cost to the Department to construct it.

f. Kindness Counts Program

Bill DeMaio reported that the Department celebrated the Kindness Counts nominees at the Bring Your Own Cheese (BYOC) Party on Thursday, July 15, 2021. A large group picture was taken and the nominees were offered a free glass of wine sponsored by Happy Harry's Wine and Liquor Warehouse. He added that there were almost 500 nominations this year and the celebration was a great success.

g. Thank You to Volunteers

Bill DeMaio expressed his sincere thanks to all the volunteers who helped out during the week of the Extravaganza. He added that it takes a lot of people to coordinate and host these events successfully and he appreciated all the help from the staff, the Board, and the 90 volunteers. He stated that the Department saves approximately \$5,000.00 in staff costs with the help of the volunteers. Eileen Francolino asked if it would be possible for Kelly Dickinson to pass around a sign-up sheet for volunteers for the Water Lantern Festival. Bill DeMaio responded that he would rather email the sign-up sheet to Board members when he knows the specific time slots needed. Eileen Francolino asked if the Department will also need volunteers for the fireworks show on Friday, August 6, 2021. Bill DeMaio responded that he was not sure yet if volunteers were needed. He added that the Department has applied for insurance through CIRMA, they also need a state liquor permit for the event, and he was not sure if both of these will be approved in the necessary time frame needed to host the event. He added that if he needs volunteers for this event he will send out an email request. Don Woods expressed the importance of volunteering and how crucial it is to help the Department whenever possible. He noted that there are many new members and he feels it is part of their responsibility as Board members to volunteer when they can, to promote team work and help the Department save money. He added that volunteering at these events is actually really fun and allows the members to meet more of the Recreation staff. He asked the members to please give this consideration when asked to volunteer in the future. He added that his comments were not directed at any specific person, he just wanted to stress the importance of volunteering to all the new members. Jay Bottalico supported and confirmed Don Wood's statements.

h. Beacon Park Construction

Bill DeMaio reported that the contractor has started demolishing the old playground structure and construction of the new playground has begun. He added that the playground equipment was ordered from Landscape Structures and he is very pleased with the design of the new playground. He went on to say that the Department was able to add two bocce ball courts with money from the Enterprise Fund. The Department also had enough money to allow for Hinding Tennis to power wash the basketball court. He added that completion time for this project will be some time in September, weather permitting. He noted there has been some questions online regarding why this project is taking so long, and the reason is that the Town gets a better rate on asphalt from Tilcon when Tilcon comes to Newington to work on our roads and they are scheduled to come in September. This will save the Department a great deal of money.

i. NHS Softball Field Renovations

Bill DeMaio reported that these renovations will begin in late August and go into September once some of the large tournaments scheduled have passed. He reported that the Department is hiring two companies for these renovations. He noted that he is working in conjunction with the BOE who are adding two concrete dugouts. The path will be moved, electricity and lights will be added for safety, and the project should be complete by September or October.

j. Badger Field Renovations

Bill DeMaio reported that the Badger Field Renovations will about the same as the NHS Softball Field Renovations. Championship Turf has been hired for these renovations and new irrigation will be added as well as electricity in center field for a scoreboard. He stated the project should be complete by August or September. Jay Bottalico asked if there was currently electricity at center field. Bill DeMaio responded he did not believe so. Jay Bottalico noted that there may be old underground wires. Bill DeMaio responded if so, they are likely ruined.

k. Extravaganza Report

Bill DeMaio reported that despite the weather, the Extravaganza events were a huge success. He made special mention of how well the Parks and Recreation staff worked together and displays great chemistry as a team under pressure. He added that he is so confident in his staff that he would put his team up against any other Parks and Recreation team in the country and he knows they would be successful. He added that the office hours are typically 35 hours per week and that during the Extravaganza week the staff works about 70 hours. He expressed his appreciation for all the extra hours the team puts in to make the events a success. He reported that he did not have the exact numbers yet as they were still being calculated, but he would provide them soon. He noted that he believes the

Department came very close to its goal of \$75,000.00 profit. He added that if the kid's carnival had not been closed at 5:00 p.m. due to the weather, he believes they would have made an additional \$40,000.00 as they have in the past. He added that due to the recent excessive rain, the park was very muddy, but he had six dump trucks of stone brought in and made a deal with the carnival owner to provide the Department with a triaxle of top soil delivered to the Parks Garage. The park grounds will be back bladed and rolled in an effort to squeeze the water out, then the grounds will be top dressed and over seeded. He added that he is hoping for some dryer weather in the coming days. He stated that for the first time, the Department went into the Extravaganza with corporate sponsorships in total amount of \$17,500.00 which is unheard of. He also expressed his thanks to all the members who helped sell tickets for the Craft Beer Night, he added that there were 365 tickets sold in advance of the event and an estimated \$10,000.00 in profits. He added that he was currently drafting a letter to the editor that he is planning to send to the press thanking all of the people involved in making the event a success. He added that the fireworks will be postponed to Friday, August 6, 2021. He went on to say there will be food trucks (in the parking lot), a magic show, costume characters, frisbee contest, a band, but no carnival rides. He added the Department is applying for a beer and wine permit to sell refreshments at the event. Eileen Francolino made special mention of the fabulous efforts of Hadeel Majdoub, Recreation Supervisor, she noted that this was Hadeel's first time being in charge of a large portion of Extravaganza, she did a great job and always maintained a positive attitude and did it with a smile. Jen Win-Johnson and Bill DeMaio confirmed that statement. He added that she is very quick, accurate, and precise. He also made special mention of the efforts of Kelly Tinkham, Aquatics Director/Interim Recreation Supervisor. He added that Joe Harvey, Recreation Supervisor, also did a great job of keeping everything running smoothly and noted that Joe always stays calm with an even keel and can make decisions quickly if needed.

l. Legends Field Lighting Installation

Bill DeMaio reported that these lights will be installed in two phases. The first phase will include a purchase order placed for \$205,000.00 which was the Town Council approved amount from the Capital Improvement Program (CIP). He added that the total cost of the project will be \$352,000.00. The second phase will include the remainder which will be included in next year's budget. The project will include 6 light poles, electricity, and communication to the satellite. For now 3 lights poles will be installed and then next July the other 3 light poles will be installed. He noted that Newington is the only town that does not have a lighted 90 ft. baseball field, so this will be a nice addition.

m. Groundskeeper I Resignation

Bill DeMaio reported Will Nichols, Groundskeeper I, resigned from the Parks Division due to an opportunity in another town. He added that at this point, he does not have permission to replace Will Nichols. This means there is less staff to meet the demands of the Department.

n. Creative Playtime Preschool Graduation on Tuesday, June 1st

Bill DeMaio reported that the preschool graduation was adorable and was hosted at the Mill Pond pavilion on Tuesday, June 1, 2021. The Department utilized the children's train to deliver the children to ceremony after riding through the park for all the families to see. The children sang songs and the 11 graduates who are moving on to kindergarten were celebrated. He made special mention of the efforts of the preschool staff and Diane Teevan, Preschool Director. He went on to discuss how the preschool was currently celebrating Christmas in July as the theme at the Summer Sunshine program for that week. He added that the children came to the office and sang Christmas songs for the staff and that Santa was making a special visit to them as well. He added that the brand-new preschool facility is second to none.

o. American Flag on Mazzoccoli Way

Bill DeMaio reported that the American Flag flower display is complete and is located at the end of Mazzoccoli Way. He was very pleased with the project. He made special mention of the efforts of Steve Tofeldt, Groundskeeper IV, as well as the other Parks staff, and stated he appreciated their efforts on the project. The display was planned to be the last stop of the Memorial Day Parade, but the event was cancelled unfortunately.

XI. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

NONE.

XII. ADJOURNMENT

Don Woods made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Eileen Francolino seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 6:23 PM.

Respectfully submitted by,

Kelly Dickinson

Kelly Dickinson