

MINUTES

Cromwell Recreation Commission Regular Meeting

Thursday, October 7, 2021

Present: Commissioners Dan Brisson, Ruth Checko, and John Schmaltz and Recreation Director Scott Kieras

Also Present: Town Council Liaison Jack Henehan

1. Call to Order

Meeting called to order at 5:05 p.m.

2. Approve Minutes:

a. June 6, 2021

Ruth Checko moved, seconded by John Schmaltz, to approve the minutes of June 6, 2021. The motion passed 3 to 0.

3. Program Report

a. **Director**

Recreation Director Scott Kieras reported that the Director of Public Works Lou Spina will be leaving on October 12 to take a position with another Town. Town Engineer John Harriman will be the acting Interim Director of Public Works as he has in the past.

Jack Henehan questioned if this position could potentially be moved from that department to another department.

b. **Parks**

Recreation Director Scott Kieras spoke on an issue with the Parks Supervisor being unable to get field paint for Fall sports but he was finally able to procure some. The Parks Supervisor continues to report that they are understaffed.

John Schmaltz felt that the issues with Parks staff and the fields comes down to supervision. He also spoke on the need for the WIS soccer fields drainage issues to be addressed.

Dan Brisson questioned who oversees the BOE fields. Scott clarified that the BOE fields are owned by the Town of Cromwell on BOE property and that the BOE has first priority use on these fields. He confirmed that he books all of the fields and that the athletic directors give him their practice and game schedules. However, there have been issues when the schools or PTOs have scheduled something on the fields and not notified him.

Dan spoke on the cancellation of school games. There was consideration discussion on the closing of the fields and the need to have checks and balances for this.

4. Old Business: None

5. New Business

a. Relocation of Recreation Department Offices

Scott Kieras advised the Commission that due to an ongoing issue with condensation and possible mold in the Recreation Department offices and adjacent rooms the department has been relocated to the Arch Room in the Town Hall. Maintenance has placed dehumidifiers in the office and rooms which seem to be helping. The Town is in the process of getting quotes to fix the issue with condensation from the air conditioning units. Scott also reported that OSHA will be coming in to do an inspection of the area. He has requested that an air quality test be performed prior to staff returning to the offices.

Scott reported on upcoming programs for the Fall and Winter. With respect to the Youth Basketball program which is typically run in the school gyms, the BOE has very strict COVID restrictions such as masks must be worn at all times, cleaning must take place between each practice/game, and a list of participants and attendees must be kept for contact tracing purposes. The department has moved some of the programming into the Town Hall gym to alleviate all of these procedures. The Men's Basketball and Coed Volleyball programs have also been moved from the Cromwell Middle School to the Town Hall Gym.

b. Update on Town Space Needs/Community Center Study

Scott Kieras spoke on the recent study done of the former Public Works building's suitability to be converted to a Senior Center/Community Center. He confirmed that the study showed that this is not a suitable site for that use. As an alternate location Watrous Park was mentioned.

There was considerable discussion on this issue between the Recreation Director and Commission members. It was noted that a Community Center would be a great asset for the Town and that there is the potential to increase fields or add a multi-purpose turf field as part of it. It was also suggested that funds toward a Community Center or field enhancement could be made a part of the Wayfair project that is supposed to be coming to Cromwell.

Scott spoke on COVID relief funds that the Town has received and the potential to use some of these funds for recreational and park enhancements. He suggested that one of those projects could be an additional pavilion, possibly at Riverport Park. John Schmaltz suggested Hoffman Farm as another location for a pavilion. Scott confirmed that once the committee comes up with suggestions for the use of these funds they would go to the Town Council for approval.

There was also discussion on the possibility of a turf field at Pierson Park, which the Commission also felt would help to revitalize the downtown area. It was suggested that if the user groups such as soccer, football, and baseball are on board it could be done.

Scott noted that things are getting back to normal and that the ECS/WIS PTO will be holding Trick R Trunk in conjunction with the Cromwell Children's Coalition on October 23. It will include decorated vehicles and pumpkins and a movie on the big screen.

Scott reported that pavilion rentals increased greatly over the summer and that revenue for these rentals were up significantly. He also noted that the concerts and movies were very well attended.

6. Commissioners Comments

Ruth Checko felt that the Town has an opportunity with the opening for the Director of Public Works to bring the Parks Department under the Recreation Department as it is in many other towns in Connecticut. Ruth felt that Scott is the conduit to programs run on the fields and books the usage for BOE, sports organizations and others. She stated that Scott needs to have the ability and authority to make calls on what needs to be done on the fields as he has a vested interest in them and is the face of the community with respect to their usage. Ruth did not feel that the parks maintainers had any skin in the game but suggested that if the Parks Department and its employees were under the Recreation Department it would be run very differently.

Jack Henahan confirmed that it should be a team effort and that currently it is not being addressed from the top down.

Scott suggested that all of the user groups should meet along with appropriate staff to go over the issues with the parks and fields.

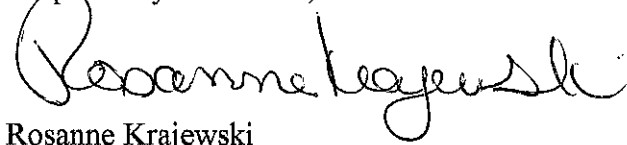
Dan Brisson questioned if there is a log of the number of times when the fields are closed. There was discussion on field closures and its effect on the BOE, parents and student athletes.

Scott confirmed that there is a field maintenance fund that has money for field maintenance needs. There was some discussion on field maintenance by the Commission.

7. Adjournment

Motion was made by Ruth Checko to adjourn the meeting at 6:10 p.m. Motion seconded by John Schmaltz. Motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Rosanne Krajewski".

Rosanne Krajewski