

PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION TOWN OF HAMDEN

A Meeting of the Parks & Recreation Commission, Town of Hamden was held on Tuesday November 8, 2011 at 5:30 PM in the Parks & Recreation Department Conference Room, Hamden Government Center, 2750 Dixwell Avenue. The following items were discussed:

MINUTES

Commissioners in Attendance: Sarah Morrill, Tad Watson, Richard Leonardo, Arnold Mann, Mike McGarry

Commissioners Absent:

1. Call to Order

Tad Watson called meeting to order at 5:35 p.m.

2. Approval of Minutes of the August 2011 Meeting

Ms. Morrill made a motion to approve the minutes of the Commission's August meeting. Mr. Leonardo seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous in favor.

Mr. Watson introduced new Commission member Arnold Mann, who has been involved in sports in Hamden for more than 20 years. He coached Scott Burrell, the only first round draft pick selected for two sports, baseball and basketball. There was additional discussion regarding Mr. Mann's involvement in local sports.

3. Correspondence

Ms. Coleman said at the last full meeting the commissioners indicated that they would like to discuss correspondence that comes in to the office. Ms. Coleman said she hears reports and sees people in her office, but issues regarding parks and fields get directed to Frank Cooper. The head of Greater Hamden Baseball came in to her office and complained about their field. Mr. Mann asked why she (or a delegate of hers) shouldn't see the correspondence to get the flavor of what comes in. Ms. Coleman said what goes on on the fields is essential to the recreation programs. Mr. Watson explained that the parks crew and its responsibility have been turned over to Public Works. Mr. Mann said it goes to them as far as action is concerned. Ms. Coleman should be aware of the field conditions and what the problems are.

Mr. Watson said Ms. Coleman meets with Mr. Cooper twice a week. The charter didn't address any but the core municipal departments. It didn't mention Arts, Elderly, Parks, Community, Youth, etc.

Mr. Watson said Curt Leng attended a Commission meeting and the commission would like to invite him to another meeting. This Commission has always been Parks & Recreation. Mr. Watson has been involved since Bob Ciccolini was here. Ms. Coleman spoke to Mr. Leng asking for some clarification of this Commission's focus, and his response indicated that this Commission might be refocused toward recreation programming. There will be further discussion of establishing a Public Works and Parks Commission to focus on the physical conditions of the parks, among other things. Ms. Coleman said when she talked to Mr. Leng, he said if there were people on this Commission that would rather be on the Public Works and Parks Commission, that could be discussed. Ms. Coleman said if the problems have to do with maintenance, she reads it and passes it on to Mr. Cooper. If someone from the public comes in, she would listen to them, give them Mr. Cooper's contact information, and then forward the complaint to Mr. Cooper.

Mr. McGarry said what happens with this Commission got lost along the way. The chain of command and communication has been lost.

4. Department Head Report

Mr. Leonardo said we knew that there was a possibility that approx \$300,000 might be cut from the BOE 2011-2012 budget, which would affect all after school programs. He didn't think that would happen, but on September 10th, the BOE explored closing some of the schools and buildings afternoons and evenings due to the cost of keeping the buildings open and paying overtime.

Hamden Fathers Basketball Association and Hamden Regional Basketball also approached the BOE Operations Committee at their October meeting to find out if they could be part of the solution. They brought their board members and reported that the BOE would shut out between 1,000 and 1100 kids in those two programs alone if they went forward with this plan. Many others would be affected as well. Hamden Fathers did a media blitz and a text blitz. It costs the BOE about \$1 million per year for people to use their buildings after hours and on weekends. They also had a list of phone numbers and email addresses to get in touch with people. As an organization, they wonder if they might have to go through this every year. Mr. Mann said he isn't in favor of cheating the custodians, but he said sometimes they open the door and lock up at the end of the event, but in between, they read the paper. He feels the BOE is looking for the Mayor's Office to pay for these uses.

Mr. Leonardo said Hamden Fathers wants to be part of the solution. Ms. Coleman said she attended a meeting at the BOE and she had the list of all the programs. She was asked to move two programs to save \$3,000, and she was able to accomplish that. There was further discussion on the cost of overtime.

5. Approval of 2012 Meeting Schedule

Mr. Leonardo made a motion to approve the 2012 meeting schedule as presented. Mr. McGarry seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous in favor.

6. Old Business

Ms. Coleman said she is looking to be enlightened. She asked if this Commission was interested in the nuts and bolts of how the Department works. She said she ran in to Senator Crisco, who has been a big help to the Arts Commission. She mentioned to him that our fields and parks need some help. He called her and said he is looking for information to put together a bond package. If she wants to ask for some help for fields and parks, what area should she be looking at. Mr. McGarry said the Soccer Association is doing some work on the Middle School fields. Mr. Mann said the kids are being transported to Rochford Field for practice and then bused back to the Middle School. Mr. McGarry said Aquaturf is working on the fields and the Soccer Association is putting in about \$20,000

Ms. Coleman said they might have to focus on municipal parks as opposed to BOE properties. Mr. McGarry said the field the Soccer Association is working is on the Town Center Park property.

Mr. Watson requested that we bring Curt Leng back to one of our meetings to discuss the Public Works and Parks Commission and the Parks & Recreation Commission. Mr. Mann feels this has some urgency.

7. New Business

Mr. Watson said he spoke to Frank Cooper regarding horseshoe pits at DeNicola Park. We just need to make a formal request to Public Works/Frank Cooper to install them. Mr. Mann asked how much use they would get. Mr. Watson has been discussing a horseshoe tournament with Rick Gentile, and they think there would be interest.

Mr. Leonardo said after Hurricane Irene, he went through Brooksvale Park, which should be the Town's pride and joy. He felt maintenance was lacking. Also, they need a place to house animals in inclement weather. He said money was spent on the Veterans Building and on the Pavilion, but the Barn needs attention. Mr. Mann said perhaps Brooksvale should take precedent for Mr. Crisco's bond issue. Ms. Coleman noted that Public Works got the Park in shape for the Brooksvale Fall Festival. Ms. Coleman said what the commissioners said is compatible with what Mr. Cooper said when she met with him today.

8. Adjournment

Mr. McGarry made a motion to adjourn. Mr. Leonardo seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous in favor. The meeting adjourned at 6:35 p.m.

Submitted by:

Gerry Tobin, Acting Clerk of the Commission