

Somers Parks & Recreation Board

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Kevin Westerman
Chairman



MEETING MINUTES **December 4, 2019**

Chairman Westerman opened the meeting at 6:35 p.m.

The members present were: Jim Boniello, John Papalia, Don Penzine, Michele Sanz, Michele Werney, Kevin Westerman, and John Zattola.

Stephen Krug and Chris McCormack were absent.

Parks and Recreation Superintendent Steve Ralston and Town Councilman Tom Garrity were also present.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Public Comment was covered under New Business.

MINUTES

A motion was made by Mr. Penzine to approve the minutes of the October 23, 2019 meeting. Mrs. Sanz seconded the motion. All were in favor.

MR. RALSTON'S REPORT

There were no questions about Mr. Ralston's report.

NEW BUSINESS

Old Bet Statue – Historic Properties Board Chairman and Somers Historical Society President Emil Antonaccio, as well as Historic Properties Board member and Town Historian Doris Smith addressed the Board. The Old Bet elephant statue that is in front of the Town House is technically located in Bailey Park. The original one was made of wood and rotted, the second was eaten by insects, and the third statue, made of cement, is currently standing, but starting to deteriorate. Resident artist Luigi Badia created a drawing of a bronze replacement based on the original design and it was shared with the members. After getting prices from three different businesses, the most favorable cost for the artist and foundry work is \$45,000.00. The Historic Properties Board is in agreement to proceed forward in pursuit of funding for the project. Mr. Antonaccio and Mrs. Smith are hoping that the Parks and Recreation Board would support issuing \$20,000.00 of Recreation Fees for the artist work as it is located in a Town Park and Old Bet symbolizes Somers. As this project would fit in nicely with the Board's plans to improve Bailey Park, the Parks Board members present were generally in favor of providing

support. If a decision is made to provide Parks and Recreation funds for this project, the Board would look to the Somers Historical Society to conduct a fundraising campaign to raise the balance needed to complete the foundry work. It is the hope to have the model by the spring. Fundraising ideas discussed included soliciting Town organizations and businesses, surrounding the new statue with bricks and selling the bricks, and applying for a grant. If the fundraising campaign generates more funds than needed for the project, the thought is that amounts raised in excess of the funds needed to complete the project would go to repay the Parks Board's outlay of Recreation Fee account. It is expected that a decision on this issue will be made at the next Parks and Recreation Board meeting.

Men's Softball Board – Men's Softball Board members, Steve D'Ambrosio, Andrew DelPozzo, and League Supervisor, Chris Radding, as well as Jim Magrone, attended the Board meeting. Mr. Radding indicated that they would like the option to have three non-residents on the roster of each team that don't qualify for any other current non-resident waiver. They anticipate that these will be players from neighboring towns and believe that this change will allow the League to stay competitive and meaningful. Last year, the Parks and Recreation Board changed the policy to allow former residents who graduated high school while living in Somers to play. Mr. Ralston reviewed some current statistics on resident versus non-resident players on the teams. It was suggested that perhaps non-residents pay an additional fee to play. Mr. Magrone said the number doesn't have to necessarily be three additional players per team, but three is what some other Towns allow. They just want to keep the league viable and localized. Mr. Westerman thinks that there are three options: to keep things status quo; to allow for a certain number of non-residents to be added to each team as requested; or allow the additional non-residents, but make adjustments through league fees to compensate for non-tax payers using Town fields and resources. He suggested that all think this through and return to the January meeting prepared to make a decision. Mr. Ralston reminded everyone that there has to be balance. In closing, Mr. Radding asked if the requirement for players to be 18 years old and graduated from high school could be changed. He requested that a player who is 18 years old and is scheduled to graduate high school during the year be able to play at the start of the season. The Board agreed with that request, so, starting next season, a player is 18, but not yet a high school graduate, can play in the league.

Land Donation Request Review – A review and discussion ensued regarding a proposed land donation of two parcels of property running along the North County Trail and Route 118. Mr. Westerman walked the properties with other representatives of the Town. In his opinion, if the Town were able to secure a third undeveloped parcel of land that is contiguous to Koegel Park, obtaining the other two parcels would make sense. Otherwise from a recreational point of view, the parcels appear to not be easily developed for recreation. Mr. Westerman has tried unsuccessfully to reach out to the owner of the third parcel. Mr. Boniello may have a contact he can talk to. This item will be placed on the agenda of the January meeting.

2020 Fees – Mr. Ralston presented the members with a chart of program fees for 2020 which were reviewed and discussed.

OLD BUSINESS

2020 Summer Camps – At a recent meeting with some of the Somers School District folks, Mr. Ralston and Mr. Westerman learned that, due to the numerous projects planned for the summer and an uncommitted calendar, the schools may not be able to be used as a rainy-day location for Somers Day Camp. In past years, there was an average of 300 campers in attendance when it rained. Assistant Superintendent, Andrew Johnson, has inquired about Lincoln Hall, but there is not enough room. He has a call into Kennedy Catholic High School and is exploring other options as well. Cancelling on rainy days will be the worst-case scenario.

There are numerous key summer day camp positions available for next year. Mr. Ralston has utilized all possible known resources available to spread the word in hopes that some viable candidates will apply, but unfortunately there has not been a great response to date.

Reis Trails

Last month, resident, Pat DeSena, requested an update from the Board regarding the trails in Reis Park. He had attended a meeting a year ago, was assured that trail cleanup work would be done and, in his opinion, no improvements were made. Mr. DeSena shared black and white photocopies of some pictures of the trails' inner loop with the members, which Mr. DeSena said showed evidence of rocks and parts of the trail that are completely blocked. He feels that the trails are a fantastic resource for the Town, they should be returned to their original state which requires a base of 4" of fine compacted gravel so that one can walk and jog on it. Mr. Ralston stated that the park staff had spent a considerable amount of time cutting, trimming, pruning and removing rocks and fallen tree branches. All were reminded that returning the trails to their original state would be a costly project, regardless of whether it is done in stages, therefore it would have to be done by Parks and Recreation staff with the help of the Somers Lions and Leos. The consensus is that the intent was for the trails to be in a natural setting and, as long as they are safe and passable, they should remain as such. Mr. Ralston spoke to the park staff concerning the items in the pictures that Mr. DeSena shared and the issues were resolved. Mr. Westerman asked that all Board members walk the trails in an effort to assess the condition of the trails and to determine whether the trails can remain as is, or if they should be returned to their original state. An updated discussion ensued. Several of the Parks Board members walked the trails since the last meeting and all agreed that the condition of the trails was not as described by Mr. DeSena. The consensus was that the trails are in good condition. Mr. Westerman will reach out to address with Mr. DeSena.

Reis Tennis Courts – The subject of the condition of the Reis Park tennis courts also came up at the recent meeting with the Somers Central School District (SCSD) folks. There has been an outcry of concerns from a few parents and there was an article in The Somers Records criticizing the courts. The complaints were anecdotal and without sufficient specificity to confirm or address. The courts were found to be in an acceptable condition and they are authorized for play by high schools and the USTA. Another meeting will take place on December 9th with the SCSD and parents present. There is a sign posted at the courts indicating that they are closed when they are wet. Mr. Ralston's office has not received any calls regarding these concerns.

Parks Master Plan Review Update – Mary Ann Rivera from Landscape Concepts and Mr. Ralston have been in touch regarding a proposal for improvements to Bailey Park.

MR. RALSTON'S COMMENTS

Mr. Ralston had no comments.

BOARD COMMENTS

None of the Board members had any comments.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:30 p.m. and the next meeting will take place on Wednesday, January 22nd at 6:30 p.m. in the Recreation Center in Van Tassell Park.

Respectfully submitted,

Denise Schirmer, Secretary
Parks & Recreation Board

cc: Parks & Recreation Board
Superintendent of Parks & Recreation
Town Board
Town Clerk