

Somers Parks & Recreation Board

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Kevin Westerman
Chairman



MEETING MINUTES January 22, 2020

Chairman Westerman opened the meeting at 6:30 p.m.

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

Stephen Krug and Michele Werney were absent.

Parks and Recreation Superintendent Steve Ralston was also present.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Public Comment was covered under New and Old Business.

MINUTES

A motion was made by Mr. Penzine to approve the minutes of the December 4, 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

Eagle Scout Project Proposal – Brunon Kaminski, a Scout from Troop 228, met with the Board to discuss his Eagle Scout Project of installing 7 to 10 bluebird houses in Reis Park next to the Pony League baseball field. He and Mr. Ralston have met twice to discuss this project. The houses will point toward the fencing on the perimeter of the property. The boxes provide more safety than a nest in the wild. They will be made of self-sustaining cedar and will require little, if any, maintenance. Brunon hopes to begin the project soon as the bluebirds start nesting in March. Mr. Penzine offered his assistance as he has bluebird boxes on his property. A motion was made by Mr. Penzine and seconded by Mr. Papalia to accept Brunon Kaminski's Eagle Scout Project as submitted. All were in favor.

SYSO Baseball Board – SYSO Baseball Commissioner Jeff Hopper addressed the Board regarding a few issues. He shared literature about the new baseball bat rules. The organization is in need of a lighted 50'/70' field and, to that end, a request is being made to extend the infield three feet into the outfield on the Reis #4 field. There were no objections.

Mr. Ralston said it will be worked into the maintenance schedule based on priority. Mr. Hopper also shared a picture of a sign he saw posted at the fields in Putnam Valley that the Board may want to consider for Somers. At the request of Chris Radding, Mr. Hopper asked if the dugouts could be painted gray and the word Somers added. The supplies and labor will be provided by SYSO Baseball. All were in favor of this proposal. Years prior, then-State Senator Ball promised that money in the form of a grant would be made available for new scoreboards. Mr. Hopper wondered about the status of that money. It was suggested that before coming to the Board with a proposal, that he speak to the Senator's office about the status of that money and then to local architect Dave Sammel, as he was involved with the High School scoreboard project. In closing, there was a question about starting a Friends of Reis Park not-for-profit. Mr. Penzine explored that option a while back and determined that it is a complicated task to undertake.

OLD BUSINESS

Men's Softball Roster Request – Men's Softball Board members, Steve D'Ambrosio, Andrew DelPozzo, and Chris Swee attended the Board meeting. Last month, a discussion ensued about Somers Softball having the option to add to the roster of each team three new non-residents that don't qualify for any other current non-resident waiver. The Softball Board wants to keep the league viable and localized. Mr. Westerman summarized the 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. The conversation continued this evening. Mr. Papalia made a motion that was seconded by Mrs. Sanz to allow 3 new out of Town residents on all Softball team rosters, with the proviso that at least 50% of each roster must be comprised of either current Somers residents or people who currently work full time in Somers, with maximum of 25 players per team. All were in favor.

Historic Properties Board Elephant Request – Last month, the Board met with Historic Properties Board Chairman and Somers Historical Society President, Emil Antonaccio, and Historic Properties Board member and Town Historian, Doris Smith, concerning the Old Bet elephant statue that is in front of the Town House. Though appearing to be part of the Town House property, the statue is technically located in Bailey Park. The original statue was made of wood, which rotted, the second was eaten by insects, and the current statue, made of cement, is 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. A cost of \$20,000 for the initial work to create the elephant was presented. The foundry work should be about \$25,000.00, totaling approximately \$45,000.00 to complete 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, reasoning that the statue is located in a Town Park and Old Bet symbolizes Somers. This evening there was further discussion. A motion was made by Mr. Penzine and seconded by Mrs. Sanz that the Historic Properties Board get three quotes in writing for the art and foundry work. A fundraising collaboration between the two Boards should take place, and after the \$20,000.00 is raised, the Parks and Recreation Board will match it with Recreation Fees. All were in favor. A memo will be sent to the Historic Properties Board.

Land Donation Request – At the last meeting, 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, and 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 provide future opportunities for the Town and Parks and Recreation. Otherwise from a recreational point of view, the parcels appear to not be easily developed for recreation. Mr. Westerman tried unsuccessfully to reach out to the owner of the third parcel. Mr. Boniello was able to contact him, but unfortunately, he is not interested in doing anything with the property. A memo will be sent to the Town Board.

Parks Master Plan Review Update – Next week, Mary Ann Rivera from Landscape Concepts and Mr. Ralston will be meeting regarding a proposal for improvements to Bailey Park.

Angle Fly Preserve Conservation Easement Modification Update – On December 17, 2019, Bill Rudge of the NYSDEC updated Supervisor Morrissey as follows: I have been working on this and a final package is in Albany, awaiting a “Commissioner’s Determination”, after which we will get approval from the Attorney General’s office to proceed to filing. Mr. Ralston has been asked to meet with Joe Barbagallo to update the plans that were done some time ago that included the construction of a road from inside Reis Park by the tennis courts to Plum Brook Road. If and when the easement modification is filed, providing another ingress and egress for Reis Park will be a priority. Mr. Ralston expects to have an update at the next meeting.

Reis Park Tennis Courts – Resident, Paul DeFeo, attended the meeting to discuss the condition of the Reis Park tennis courts. This topic was talked about at the last Parks and Recreation Board meeting and has also been addressed with the Somers Central School District (SCSD). Both Mr. Ralston and Mr. Westerman attended meetings with SCSD and Town residents on this issue. Mr. DeFeo’s wife has spearheaded a campaign to address this situation. It has been communicated that some of the High School tennis players do not like using the Reis Park courts. They claim that there have been incidents when people slip when the courts are wet. Residents further complain that the courts are not sufficiently maintained and that the tennis balls don’t have a true bounce. They want the ability to play on hard courts. Mr. DeFeo was reminded that the courts at Reis Park, from a Recreation Department view point, are perfectly suitable for the type of use they get. They provide a versatility that allows them to be used for tennis, basketball, skating, rollerblading and various uses at Summer Day Camp. They also make tennis balls for the type of courts at Reis Park that should hopefully address the bounce issue. Hard courts were not what the majority of the users wanted when they were first installed. The installation of hard courts now would be extremely expensive and would reduce the versatility of their use. These style courts have been used for eighteen years without any serious problems. There has always been a mutual sharing of facilities and, since the SCSD has been using those courts, Mr. Ralston has never received a complaint about them – safety or otherwise. There may be an opportunity down the road to put in different courts after the Conservation Easement Modification is completed. The overall feeling of the Board was that there is no pressing need to incur the significant expense of changing the surfaces of the tennis courts, especially given the likely changes to the park when the easement modification is filed. The Board recognizes that the SCSD is also satisfied with the

current arrangement, understanding that the SCSD maintains the option to find different courts for the students to play on.

2020 Summer Camps – Mr. Ralston was happy to report that a Camp Director has been secured, but there is still a need for Division Heads, an Arts and Crafts Director and a Nurse. Mr. Papalia suggested that local colleges be contacted. Alternative rainy-day sites were researched to no avail. Mr. Ralston will reach out to the SCSD again to see if they have finalized their summer construction schedule yet.

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, February 26th 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