

Somers Parks & Recreation Board

PO Box 46 Somers, New York 10589

OFF: (914)-232-8441

FAX: (914)-232-8548

Kevin Westerman
Chairman



MEETING MINUTES

May 25, 2022

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

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

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

Architectural Review Board members John Alfonzetti; Rich Nash; Kate O'Keefe; and Tony Sutton were also present.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Public comment was covered under New Business – Bailey Park Project Discussion with the Somers Architectural Review Board.

MINUTES

A motion was made by Mrs. Sanz to approve the minutes of April 27, 2022, meeting as submitted. Mr. Penzine seconded the motion. All were in favor.

MR. RALSTON'S REPORT

All is coming together for the Independence Day Celebration to be held at Reis Park on Saturday, June 25th, with a rain date of the 26th. Festivities will begin at 4:00 p.m. with an opening ceremony, food, bands, basketball tournament, hot dog eating contest and fireworks at 9:30 p.m. The Chamber of Commerce, Lions Club and Sons of Somers are co-sponsoring this event. The flyer should be ready for distribution soon.

The second session of pickleball lessons filled up quickly and overall participation continues to be very active. Additional nets and equipment are at the courts for residents to borrow at their convenience.

NEW BUSINESS

Bailey Park Project Discussion with the Architectural Review Board – As a result of the discussion that took place at the January meeting regarding the Bailey Park Project, a unanimous decision by the Board as to the next steps was as follows: The Parks Board will draft a public statement of facts regarding the project to be sent to the Town Board and, perhaps, outlets such as The Somers Record. Meetings will be scheduled with the Landmarks Committee, Architectural Review Board and Open Space Committee/Tree Board for their input. Changes will be made to the design as deemed appropriate by the Parks and Recreation Board based on the feedback received from those boards and committees.

The Somers Architectural Review Board (ARB) was invited to the meeting this evening to discuss their concerns shared with Mr. Westerman and documented in their meeting minutes of June 24, 2021. They were welcomed and appreciated the opportunity for discussion.

Mr. Westerman shared the plan that was approved by the Town Board twice, included a walkway into the park; a patio at the base of the gazebo; expansion of the Unity Garden; a fence along The Lane and café tables with chairs that are bolted down. The two items that the Parks and Recreation Board has unanimously agreed on at this point is to make the patio area smaller. Two trees deemed as dangerous in two different arborist reports done will be removed regardless of what happens with this project.

Councilman Garrity said that although the Town Board approved the plan twice, in his opinion, some people who were against the project spoke out and the knee-jerk reaction was to stop the project, which ballooned into a petition full of misinformation and lies. Mr. Westerman said despite this, the Parks and Recreation Board decided to move forward with the enhancements planned for Bailey Park as the Board continues to believe that an enhanced Bailey Park will be good for the Town.

Mr. Alfonzetti said that when the project was presented to the ARB, they thought it was a done deal. Now that there is another opportunity to comment, he reminded the Parks and Recreation Board that the ARB is concerned about aesthetics and how what is planned will blend into the Business Historic Preservation District (BHPD).

Mr. Westerman explained to the ARB that before this all began, the Parks and Recreation Board decided to review all the parks in terms of improvements that should be made. Bailey Park was small, manageable and the enhancements would not be an outlandish cost as compared to the other parks in Town. The goal is to maintain the character to attract daily use, as more people now work, live and shop near the park and sidewalks now lead to the park. An enhanced park that people could use daily would support local businesses in that area. The park can also be available to Town groups for intimate gatherings. Larger events would be held at Reis Park.

Mr. Alfonzetti asked that the ARB have an opportunity to look at the final bid before it is released. They would like to, as an example, make sure that café tables and chairs are included, not picnic tables. Mr. Westerman said picnic tables are not an option, as at the very least they are not easy to get in and out of, especially for someone who would like to eat lunch

there during their workday. Most likely the theme that exists at the Town House would be followed. It was suggested that if a decision is made in the future to add trash receptacles in the park, they follow that same theme. Mr. Westerman confirmed that the list of materials/colors, including visuals to be used for the patio/walkway/family gatherings, etc. will be shared with the ARB. Mr. Alfonzetti said that make and model numbers are important too. Mr. Ralston said the bid would most likely only include the need to install the amenities, not purchase them.

A question came up about the existing hanging banners in Bailey Park. They are not part of the project. Ms. O'Keefe shared some ideas of amenities that might tie in to the history of the park. She was asked to share them with Mr. Ralston.

It was confirmed by Mr. Westerman, that drainage in the park is not and the lack of water access will be taken into consideration when deciding on the plantings for the garden. A list of native plantings to consider has been provided to Mr. Ralston by the Open Space Committee/Tree Board. There is adequate access to the park from Route 202 and the St. Luke's parking lot, especially in the case of someone needing emergency services. Mr. Alfonzetti suggested that more grass and less plants may be a good option. Nothing is being done with the watering trough as it is not part of the project. During the project, wiring will be laid for future lighting if found to be necessary. Currently the park is open from dawn to dusk, and it is expected to remain that way.

As a result of limited parks staff and their time, Bailey Park was intended to have a carry-in, carry-out policy, so there would be no need for trash receptacles. Understanding the drawbacks and limitations of this, even with signage, the use of trash receptacles will be considered. Issues to address will be the ability to regularly empty them, the ability to keep them in place and to make sure that they have an appropriate aesthetic.

Mr. Westerman stated that, initially, there was plans to install a vinyl fence along The Lane side of the park to separate Bailey Park from the blight created by the stacking of wood and refuse along the property edge. It was recently learned that this land where the debris had been left is the Property of the Town. Accordingly, the Parks and Highway Departments have been working hard clearing that area, likely obviating the need for a fence there.

It was suggested that the walkway be able to easily accommodate two-way traffic. This suggestion underscores the difficulty of this trying to reconcile conflicting guidance from the different Boards and Committees involved in this process. The Landmarks Committee objected to even having a walkway, whereas the ARB wants to make sure that it is wide enough for two-way traffic. To the extent that a walkway is either required or included in the final design, ADA compliance will be required. There was a question about the gazebo staircase. Mr. Westerman said that, at the recommendation of Supervisor Scorrano, moving and widening the staircase to the expanse of the park is being considered. That design suggestion received strong support from the Parks Board.

In closing, Mr. Westerman thanked the members of the ARB for joining them and sharing their thoughts. The Parks and Recreation Board will take into consideration the comments made by the Landmarks Committee, Open Space Committee/Tree Board and Architectural Review Board when finalizing their plan to be presented to the Town Board.

Councilman Garrity opined that the Parks and Recreation Board has worked very hard and diligently on this plan and did their homework. He and Councilman Clinchy have watched it morph over the last few years. Councilman Garrity is in favor of this Bailey Park enhancement project and in his opinion, a handful of people who are against it, should not influence moving forward with it. He thanked all the members. Mr. Penzine thanked Mr. Garrity for his comments and support.

OLD BUSINESS

Day Camp Updates – As of today, there are 175 youngsters registered for Day Camp. As of now, everything is in place. Enough counselors were able to be secured and there is no one on the wait list. Not many older campers registered so those groups will be combined. It is anticipated that the final count will be around 200 and all those who want to participate can be accommodated.

Programs Updates – The flyer for summer specialty camps for tennis, basketball and multi-sports will be done shortly.

NEW BUSINESS

New Parks and Recreation Board Member – The Town Board will be meeting with a potential new member for the Board next week and hopefully will make the appointment. Her credentials are perfect, she has young children, is an engineer and an environmental scientist.

MR. RALSTON'S COMMENTS

Mr. Ralston didn't have any additional comments.

BOARD COMMENTS

After the last meeting, the Open Space Committee/Tree Board sent a follow up letter. Mr. Westerman had a conversation with a local nursery owner who contacted a very credentialed and skilled person regarding root systems of sugar maple trees. Based on what the Open Space Committee/Tree Board wrote about them, without source or attribution for the opinions, almost no planned enhancements could be done at Bailey Park, as they would interfere with the root system. The Landscape Designer, who lectures at both Columbia University and the Botanical Garden, said that root systems of sugar maples are sensitive and changes to grading and changes to water access should be avoided. If, however, bluestone or pavers are placed outside the canopies of the trees, then the trees will not be damaged. If appropriate or necessary, we will pursue a formal opinion or position from this person or another appropriately credentialed expert.

It was suggested by Mr. Boniello that the Board now consider consulting with a landscape designer rather than a landscape architect to move forward on the final plan to be presented to the Town Board. Perhaps the Board should meet at Bailey Park to have that discussion among other things. Mr. Boniello will mark out the gazebo stairs, as well as the patio and family gathering areas, making note to not approach the tree canopies. All agreed to meet on June 14th at 6:00 p.m.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:15 p.m. and the next meeting will take place on Wednesday, June 22nd at 6:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Denise Schirmer, Secretary
Parks and Recreation Board

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