

**Town of New Hartford
Recreation Commission
Wednesday, October 19, 2022
MINUTES**

Present: Chairman Joe Petrarca; Members Ed McCann, Linda Aquavia, Arnie Helt, Jeremy Schaller

Others Present: First Selectman Dan Jerram, Members of the Public Polly Pobuda, Shelley Lloyd, Rick Berneike, Administrative Assistant Christine Hayward.

Chairman Petrarca called the meeting to order at 6:41 PM.

Operations Updates:

Administrative Assistant Christine Hayward presented operations updates in the absence of Recreation Director Kara DeSantis. Ms. Hayward relayed apologies from Ms. DeSantis who was unable to attend the meeting due to illness.

A mask making program for school aged children was held at Berkshire Hall on Columbus Day. Local celebrity make up artist/mask maker Tyler Green instructed several participants on the art of mask making. First Selectman Jerram commented that this class is an example of the enthusiasm Ms. DeSantis has for offering unique programming through the recreation department. Having a program on a day off from school where parents can feel comfortable leaving their child for a good portion of the day is a great way to increase recreation program offerings.

Ms. DeSantis is presently coordinating a “fall festival” Jack O’ lantern display to take place in the pavilion area of downtown New Hartford on Saturday, October 29, 2022. The event is co-coordinated with Barden Farm Market and will include a decorated pumpkin contest, music, games and fun for the family. Another program, a youth basketball program is in the “interest phase” of development. A notice has been sent out via the internet and “Friday Folder” in the schools to ask people to sign up on the recreation website to gauge interest in basketball for children in grades K-6. Once interest level is determined, the next phase of setting up the program will begin. There are approximately 45 responses, which may not be enough for a “competition type program” – but may be adequate for skill building. Ms. DeSantis is investigating Ski Club options. She has received some preliminary information from Ski Sundown and will be working on this soon.

The Recreation Department was well represented at New Hartford Night. The art cabin was available for children/young adults to visit and spend some time being creative. Ms. DeSantis was on site throughout the evening speaking with parents and children encouraging them to watch out for future offerings from the rec department and also from the Senior Center. Mr. Jerram stated that this was another example of how Ms. DeSantis is “thinking out of the box” and trying to increase awareness of both areas she services – Seniors and Children.

Ed McCann updated the Commission with respect to the concert series. He stated that the attendance at all of the events was great. The weather cooperated and resulted in a terrific season. He also informed the Commission that Camp Brodie was also a success. Attendance was terrific and the staff did a great job with the program this year. Mr. Jerram agreed, adding that revenues were very good as a result of good enrollment.

A final tally of the numbers of beach stickers was shared with the Commission. A total of 679 beach stickers was sold. Of these, 112 were non-resident. The commission briefly discussed whether or not

there should be stricter controls on the “resident senior stickers” sold. It is evident that there are seniors who purchase stickers at the reduced rate and then allow family members the use of their vehicle to gain access to Brodie at the reduced rate. The Commission agreed that status quo of asking for the registration for the vehicle and comparing it with the name of the pass holder being listed on the sticker application is sufficient scrutiny at this time. If this gets to be a big problem that cuts into revenues and impedes the ability to pay expenses; further action can be taken, if need be. They did discuss that it may be beneficial to increase the non-resident rate slightly next year. The resident rate is discounted due to fact that residents/taxpayers pay taxes year round that pay for maintenance of the beach and therefore, they pay their fair share when it comes to paying for access to the beach area. Non residents only pay a one-time fee for their sticker and as expenses increase, it may be prudent to increase the sticker cost. This will be discussed further at a future meeting of the Commission. Browns Corner signage is in need of replacement. The Wolverines Football league has been asking to be added to the current sign for some time. Inspection of the sign has led to the conclusion that it would be best to have a new sign made – due to deterioration of the present sign. Jeremy Schaller has given a quote of \$2932 for the main sign along with an additional fee of \$248 for a ‘hanging shingle’ type of sign that announces “Home of the Wolverines” plus installation costs of \$525.00. The sign would match the style of the recently installed Brodie Park Signs.

MOTION: by McCann to approve new signage for Brown’s Corner as quoted; seconded by Helt.

First Selectman Jerram stated that there used to be a sign at the corner of Steele Road and Route 202 saying “Browns Corner” that was useful to those coming from out of town who didn’t know the location of Browns Corner. This sign was destroyed by a car accident a couple of years ago. The Commission agreed that such a sign would be beneficial and asked Mr. Schaller to provide a quote for a new sign at that location, too.

Unanimous.

Discussion of Veteran’s Sticker Rate:

Ms. Hayward read aloud correspondence that had been received from non-residents Jennifer and Liam Waring asking for reconsideration of a previous decision that was made regarding cost of a Brodie Beach Sticker purchased by them. Mr. Waring purchased a sticker at the non-resident rate and, after conversing with other beach goers, was made aware of the Veterans Discounted rate for a sticker. Mrs. Waring phoned town hall to inquire about a Veterans Discount and was informed that if Mr. Waring could provide proof of military service (DD-14 or Veteran ID Card), a request for a refund of the difference between non-resident and Veteran’s rate would be issued. Mr. Waring came to town hall and presented documentation identifying him as a former member of the British Military –not US Military. A decision was made that since he was not US Military, the discounted rate did not apply. The Warings were informed that if they wished to appeal this decision, they could take it up with the Recreation Commission.

The Members of the Commission discussed this situation and noticed that there has been a large increase in the number of Veteran passes being sold in the past couple of years. They stated that they are appreciative of all Veterans, but would limit the Veterans discounted passes to Veterans that are residents of New Hartford only. The expenses of running the beach continue to increase and there

needs to be the revenue to support operations. Limiting Veteran discounts to local Veterans is a financially sound decision.

MOTION: by Aquavia to limit the sale of Veterans Passes for Brodie Beach to US Veterans that are residents or taxpayers of the Town of New Hartford; seconded by Schaller.

Request from Soccer for Two Nights of Night Games at Browns Corner:

Rick Berneike, resident and long- time volunteer associated with Recreational Soccer, presented a request to the Commission on behalf of the Northwest Connecticut Recreational Soccer League seeking permission to use light towers for 2 nights of championship games to be held at Browns. The lights are being donated by O&G Industries and would be transported to Browns on Monday, October 31 for use on Tuesday, November 1 and Wednesday, November 2 with a rain date of November 3 if needed. The Commission discussed this request and saw no issue with this limited use. The Commission Members were concerned with setting a precedent and wanted to make sure that it was understood that this was a special approval due to the fact that current rules state that parks close at sunset unless authorized by Recreation Commission. They also were concerned that the lights be extinguished shortly after the conclusion of the games so that there would not be an issue of people staying too late at the field.

MOTION: by McCann to allow Northwest Connecticut Recreational Soccer League to bring in light towers to use on November 1 and 2 with a rain out date of November 3 if needed; with the understanding that games will end by 8:00 ish with lights off at 8:30; seconded by Helt.

The Commission members stated that since this will be ‘something new’ to occur at Browns Corner, if any members are able to be present at the games, they would like a report at the next meeting will review whether or not these type of requests should be honored in the future.

Unanimous.

Request for Posted Rules at Browns Corner:

Rick Bernieke reported to the Commission about an incident with metal detecting that occurred at Browns Corner a couple of weeks ago. Mr. Berneike relayed that a couple of men were doing some metal detecting on the fields at Browns and were digging up the turf. He confronted them and asked that they stop. He was met with resistance with the men responding that they had a right to be there since it was public property and they stated that they had permission to be there. A phone call to town hall confirmed that no permission was granted and the police were asked to intervene. Mr. Berneike claimed that a sprinkler head was damaged during this incident. He asked the Commission if they would consider adding some signage and posting some “basic rules” regarding use of the park that would be beneficial if there is a need to enforce unacceptable use. The Commission agreed to think about site specific rules and review the matter at a future meeting.

Discussion of recommendations for use of ARPA Funds:

First Selectman Jerram updated the Commission that there had been a meeting on site at Browns Corner to get an idea of how the youth sports leagues wanted to spend their allocation of funding from the American Rescue Plan Act funds that were distributed to New Hartford. Originally, a list had been

developed that was in excess of the funds available. Mr. Jerram asked that priority be given to the requests as he and the Board of Selectmen did not want to have to rank the use of the funding. They preferred that decisions regarding how the sports leagues wished to spend the funds be made by those who are active in the leagues. Mr. Berneike and chairmen from the various organizations using the fields met and ranked their wishes. The list consists of:

Upgrading irrigation on Little League Fields 1 & 2 - \$8500

Top dressing of ½ of the shared athletic field - \$17,800

Delivered load of clay for baseball- \$2600

Construction materials for football storage area - \$2000

Soccer barrier netting - \$1400

Normal yearly field maintenance - \$2700 (or remainder of funds of not used for the above)

Mr. Berneike gave additional information on some of the items. He noted that football has a lot of equipment that they use for food preparation at their games. They have grills, tents, a freezer and tables. They need a place to store these things. An agreement has been reached that storage could be added under one corner of the pavilion attached to the current snack bar. This addition would not impact use of the pavilion. Labor would be provided by volunteers; therefore it is materials that need funding.

Soccer netting is needed to prevent the soccer balls from being lost in the woods in the southeast corner of the soccer field.

The Commission was in agreement with this list and endorsed the requests.

MOTION: by Helt to endorse the proposed use of the APRA funds and forward the recommendation to the Board of Selectmen for approval.

Unanimous.

Continued Discussion of use of Cannabis in the Parks:

The Commission had a brief discussion regarding regulation of cannabis in New Hartford parks at the last recreation commission meeting. No decision was made at that time as the members preferred to take some time and think about how they felt. They did not feel that they had to make any formal decision and wanted to wait and see if there was any need to take formal action. They recognized that alcohol in parks is generally tolerated as long as there is discretion in use and there is no negative impact to others. Cannabis is a different matter due to the fact that the smoke can have an effect on others. Both cannabis and cigarettes/cigars and other smoking materials can be a health hazard to those in the immediate area of use.

The First Selectman stated that there were concerns expressed regarding cannabis use at the summer concerts. Commission Member McCann added that there have been complaints registered regarding cigar use at the beach and there have been a couple of instances where people have been asked to move to the parking lot to smoke.

Mr. Jerram informed the Commission that the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection

(DEEP) had banned the use of cannibas at State Parks.

The Commission agreed that the use of cannibas in some areas of the parks may not have a direct negative impact on others and agreed that discretion is the key, just as it is with alcohol. They decided that they will continue to work on rules for the parks and will formally address this at a future meeting. They did conceptually agree that cannibas and all smoking materials should not be allowed in parks.

Correspondence:

This was handled under Veteran's Sticker rate

Any Other Business to Come Before this Board:

First Selectman Jerram updated the Commission on the status of the basketball and pickle ball courts at Browns Corner. He stated that local contractor ME Carroll has been busy and will work on the courts as time permits. It will most likely be a spring project.

Ed McCann stated that renting Berkshire Hall during the summer months can be difficult when camp is in session. There has been a suggestion that the hall should only be rented on one of the weekend days.

This will allow the camp staff a chance to get into the hall and prepare for the next week on Sunday.

The Commission agreed that rentals can be limited as needed.

Ed also mentioned that there is a need for new chairs to be purchased for the hall. Many chairs have gone missing or have broken.

MOTION: by Helt to authorize the purchase of 75 new chairs for Berkshire Hall; seconded by Aquavia.

Unanimous.

Ed discussed the fact that visitors to Brodie Park continue to swim in an area where there is no swimming allowed. He wanted to confirm with the Commission that they remain in agreement that swimming is not allowed near the boat mooring area/dock area. They agreed that it is hard to keep people out of that area, but were in full support of continuing the current practice of telling the offenders that this is not allowed.

Resident Shelly Lloyd, present at the meeting, commented that the clearing of the trees on the town owned property at the corner of Niles and West Hill (the site of the former town owned house that was demolished a few years ago) looks great. She said that it opens up sightlines that intersection.

Commission Member Jeremy Schaller asked the Commission for permission to hold a Friday night disc golf league at Brodie Park South for 8 weeks. He stated that lighted baskets called "Glow rounds" are designed for night disc golf. There is enough of an interest to hold a series of games for the next 8 weeks from 6:00 pm – 8:00 pm. Mr. Schaller also asked if the Commission would pay for the 9 glow baskets needed. Schaller will take responsibility for placing and removing the baskets before and after each game for the duration of this league schedule.

MOTION: by McCann to allow Brodie Park South Disc Golf league to hold games on Friday nights at Brodie Park South from 6:00 pm through 8:00 pm for the next 8 weeks, ending on December 22, 2022 with the understanding that everyone will vacate the park by 8:30 pm; seconded by Helt.

Unanimous

MOTION: by McCann to authorize the expenditure of \$324.00 to purchase 9 sets of LED lights to be used for Glow Rounds for the disc golf league; seconded by Helt.

Unanimous

Members of the Recreation Commission agreed to meet at Brodie Park on Wednesday, October 26 at 4:00 PM to look at various buildings in the park in order to consider use of ARPA funds.

Jerram mentioned that New Hartford Youth Football and Cheer has offered to install mini-splits to provide some heat in the field house so that the cheerleaders are not so cold when they practice later into the fall. Jerram mentioned that he was of the opinion that money would better be spent on having some insulation put into the Field House. The Commission members will take a look at the field house during their tour of Brodie Park to see if ARPA funds should be used to help winterize this building.

MOTION: by Aquavia to adjourn at 8:25 PM; seconded by McCann.

Unanimous

Respectfully Submitted,

Christine Hayward, Administrative Assistant

No attachments to these minutes