East Haddam Recreation Commission
Regular Meeting Minutes
June 5, 2023

Attending: M. Davis (remotely); T. Goodie; C. Grillo; J. Kehlenbach; P. Laffan; M. Roberts
Absent: B. Free; J. Kehlenbach; T. Pisciotti; F. Tremblay
Guests: L. Conroy

1. **Call to Order** - Mr. Davis called the meeting to order at 7:04 p.m.

2. Approval of Agenda

Since this was a regular meeting and the agenda has been posted in advance, approval of the agenda was waived.

3. Approval of Minutes

The Commissioners reviewed the minutes of the April 3, 2023 meeting.

MOTION MADE BY MR. GOODIE, SECONDED BY MR. GRILLO, TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE APRIL 3, 2023 MEETING AS WRITTEN. MR. DAVIS ABSTAINED FROM THE VOTE AND THE MOTION PASSED BY A MAJORITY OF AYES.

4. **Committee Reports**

- **Music on the River (MOR)** - Ms. Roberts reported that this season's flier was printed and ready for distribution. She stated that the Committee is expecting some challenges this year due to the Swingbridge's scheduled closures and potentially limited police coverage.

  Ms. Conroy advised that Ms. Tozier has submitted articles about the concerts to the East Haddam/Haddam News, the New London Day, the Rivereast and Hartford Courant newspapers. She reported that, to date, approximately $8,000.00 in donations has been raised.

- **Disc Golf** – Mr. Laffan reported that work on the new 9-hole loop is going well and it should be opened by the end of the month. He stated that the sub-committee plans to utilize both loops to layout an 18-hole beginner's course. He noted that an outside group will be hosting a tournament at the course in August.

5. Director's Report

Ms. Conroy stated that she plans to survey families that participated in the spring soccer program and solicit their feedback.

A. **Summer Programs** – Ms. Conroy reported the following:

- Summer camp registration is almost full and registration for field trips is completely full; however, she may be able to open up some additional spots.
- She distributed a "Meet the Camp Staff" flier for the Commissioners' review.
- The Counselor-In-Training program was reinstituted this summer because she expects several of the seasoned camp staff will be aging out next year; 10 participants have signed up.
- The aftercare program is well staffed and registrations are averaging 20 per week.
- Noises Sports Academy is going well.
- Registration for some of the regular summer programs is running slightly behind last year's numbers but may pick-up just before the cut-off dates.
- The new track program for 4th-8th graders is very popular and the group recently participated in a meet in Old Saybrook.
- The Skyhawks program is full and has a waiting list.
- The CPR classes had a total of 24 participants.
- Registrations for and participation in the Babysitting, Volleyball, 18+ Basketball, Yoga and Bootcamp programs is strong.
- There is a new pony program this year at Dream Hill Farm where participants learn to care for and ride the ponies.

B. **Scholarship Fund Update**

Ms. Conroy reported that she received 14 scholarship applications for summer camp this year and several verbal inquiries. She stated that, to date, she has approved approximately $5,000.00 in scholarships. She is also reviewing requests for scholarships for some of the field trips.

C. **Budget Update**

Ms. Conroy advised that the Town's FY2023-2024 had failed at referendum. She noted, however, that the Board of Finance shifted some funds around to address the public's concerns without impacting the budget's bottom line. There was a general discussion regarding the low turnout for the referendum and the reason for the no votes.

Ms. Conroy reported that the department has an outstanding balance of funds in its FY2022-2023 Operating Budget and reviewed a list of purchases that she expects to make with the funds.

D. **Park Updates**

Dog Park - Ms. Conroy reported that there is still a problem with dog owners not cleaning up their dog's waste. Consequently, she can no longer have the area mowed

and will switch to having woodchips laid down at the park. She noted that Public Works will supply and deliver the woodchips at no cost to the Recreation Commission.

There was a general discussion about the future of the Dog Park. Ms. Conroy stated that if dog owners continue to refuse to police the park, this is the last option she has available to her to maintain the area and keep it open.

Skate Park – Ms. Conroy stated that the police will begin random patrolling of the park due to concerns about alcohol use there and recent vandalization of the Port-O-Potty.

She also reported that she had recently accepted an offer from Dunkin Donuts to hang an advertising banner at the skate park in exchange for a donation to the Recreation Department. She noted that the banner that was posted was for energy drinks, which she did not think was appropriate to promote to the young people using the park, so she returned the banner to Dunkin Donuts and told them she could not accept their donation.

Town Beach – Ms. Conroy reported that subsequent to the Memorial Day weekend opening of the Town Beach she had received several complaints from Town residents about loud, inappropriate music being played at the beach and the smell of cannabis. She stated that she had reviewed the complaints with the lifeguards and instructed them on how to handle similar incidents in the future.

Ms. Conroy advised that the lifeguards will be trained in waterfront rescues later this month. She noted that lifeguards are generally trained in pool safety/rescue, however, natural bodies of water present different safety/rescue challenges.

In response to questions from the Commissioners, Ms. Conroy reviewed the lifeguards' schedule and the use of resident and out-of-town parking passes over the Memorial Day weekend.

6. Unfinished Business

A. Playgrounds

Ms. Conroy advised that the supplies for the new climbing structure for Nicols Field had arrived and the instructions are very complex. Consequently, she plans to hire a professional installer for the project.

She reported that the Playground Sub-Committee had received 120 responses to its survey asking for input from the public on what they'd like to see included in a new community playground. She stated that the overall theme of the new playground will be nature inspired and that they are working with O'Brien & Sons, Inc. for a tentative design.

7. New Business

A. Naming of Municipal Gym

Ms. Conroy stated that she would like to revisit the proposal to name the gymnasium in the Municipal Office Complex after Brad Parker. She reviewed a list of Mr. Parker's many contributions to the Town's recreation programs. There was a general discussion regarding the naming of the municipal gym.

MOTION MADE BY MR.GRILLO, SECONDED BY MR. LAFFAN TO AUTHORIZE MS. CONROY TO DISCUSS NAMING THE GYMNASIUM IN THE MUNICIPAL OFFICE BUILDING AFTER MR. PARKER WITH THE FIRST SELECTWOMAN. ONE ABSTENTION, REST ALL AYE.

B. Rec Commission New Member Recommendation

Ms. Conroy stated that Barry Thiele has expressed an interest in joining the Recreation Commission. She reviewed Mr. Thiele's qualifications for a position on the Commission.

MOTION MADE BY MR GRILLO, SECONDED BY MR. GRILLO, TO RECOMMEND BARRY THIELE TO THE BOARD OF SELECTMEN FOR APPOINTMENT ON THE RECREATION COMMISSION. UNANIMOUS AYE.

8. Adjournment

THERE BEING NO ADDITIONAL BUSINESS TO DISCUSS, MR. GRILLO MADE A MOTION, SECONDED BY MR. LAFFAN TO ADJOURN THE MEETING. UNANIMOUS AYE.

The meeting adjourned at 7:59 p.m. Ms. Conroy stated that the next meeting of the Recreation will be August 28, 2023 at 7:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
/s/ Sharon R. Wheeler
Recording Secretary