

**Wallingford Parks & Recreation Department  
Parks & Recreation Commission Agenda  
Minutes for Wednesday, May 12, 2021  
8:00 a.m. at Parks and Recreation Department**

**Commissioners in Attendance:**

Don Crouch, Dave Gelo, Jason Michael, Steve Rossacci, and Mike Savenelli Sr

**Recreation Commission Members Absent:**

**Recreation Department Staff Present:** Kenny Michaels, Director of Recreation Parks & Recreation

**Special Guests:** Sean Doughty, YMCA CEO;

Pickleball Players: Bob Danielson, Sally Tremaine, Chuck Maynard;

Victoria Schunnann, Coalition for A Better Wallingford;

Lauren Takores, Record Journal Reporter;

Jason Zandri, Town Council

**Opening Remarks:** Chairperson Dave Gelo called the meeting to order @ 8:05 a.m.

**Minutes:**

A motion made by Mike Savenelli Sr seconded by Steve Rossacci to approved minutes from the April 21<sup>st</sup> meeting.

**Public Question/Answering:**

**Agenda Items:**

**1. The Recreation Commission meeting agenda from April 28, 2021 was not properly noticed.**

**At this meeting, no actions were taken on any agenda items.**

**The agenda items below are from the April 28<sup>th</sup> meeting. These items will be re-discussed at this meeting.**

**Special Guests: Bob Danielson – Wallingford Pickle Ball**

Bob Danielson, Pickleball speaker for the group, spoke about the number of tennis courts in the town verses the pickleball courts. There are far more tennis courts than pickleball, even though the number of pickleball players far exceed tennis players.

Pickleball is growing in popularity over the last several years. In 2014 at the Pickleball Championships they had 800 players in 2019 they had 22,090 players.

In surveying area towns there are about 28 towns in CT that have built pickleball courts over the last several years.

Nov 20, 2019, Bob presented a recommendation to turn Harrison Park into all pickleball court with one tennis court that would be dual lined.

Questions have been asked if the number of players are residents or not. Bob said he used two different forums to determine around 2/3-3/4 using the courts were residents.

The length of the Pickleball games are usually 20 minutes and allows more players to play than a tennis game that usually takes about 2 hours.

The Mayor has stated that he doesn't wanted dedicated facilities/fields, but there are a lot of dedicated facilities/field within Wallingford. When the new courts at Doolittle are completed

Pickleball players could move there to play, especially with the lights at Doolittle. Harrison Park's courts are in good shape with only minor repairs needed. Jason Zandri, Town Counselor, added \$60,000 for pickleball to the budget.

Kenny Michaels said Harrison courts were lined for Pickleball as a temporary fix for 1-2 years. This was less than a year ago.

Bob Danielson said the nets have been supplied and they are in a lockbox which only a few people have the combination. This makes it difficult for others to go and play without the nets being setup.

Councilor Zandri said, last night the Council passed the budget 6-3. The Pickleball funds \$60,000 were also approved. The Mayor has the option of vetoing the budget. Jason wasn't sure if the Council would have enough votes to overturn the Mayor's veto. Jason said if it is vetoed the Director always can bring items forward to the Council for consideration.

Jason Michael said he is concern with parking. Harrison Park has only 45 spots. He doesn't know what it will cost to expand the lot. Jason is concern that we might get into another Vietnam Vet parking situation. A lot of fields were created for soccer which is great and but parking is a nightmare. You build something very nice that will draw more people is a concern.

Dave Gelo said using the numbers that Bob just said we could have over 100 people there. That many cars could really be an issue. Bob said he was only using the number as an example, not that there would be that many people.

Jason Michaels asked if there were any plans to do fund raising. In the past, different groups like Kendrick park, Dog Park, and Disc Golf Course all raised money to demonstrate their commitment to the project.

Bob said the busiest time is mornings between 9:30-11:30am then most people leave. There are some people there in the evenings after work to play. If we knew the schedule for games, we could alert people.

Kenny said games are 9:30am and 11:30am on Saturdays and some evenings. They practice in the evening during the week. This field is the only 50/70 diamond in Wallingford and the intermediate true size field. They usually have 2 double headers on the weekends.

Kenny said Jason Zandri made a good point at the last meeting having more people in the parks deter unwanted behavior. It is good to have a lot of activity in the parks.

Jason Zandri said maybe blocking out times on the Pickleball scheduling app when games are being played. He said there is also an upper lot that cars can park and walk down to the lower section. He asked the Rec Commission to not look at this as a roadblock rather let's look for solutions. There is more space in the park that in a year or two add additional parking. Jason said he would definitely help with fundraising if the group decides to do fundraising.

No votes taken on any agenda items at the April 21<sup>st</sup> meeting.

**1. Discussion and review of parks and facilities waiver packet and requirements to be presented to the town council**

Kenny Michaels did not present to Council the waiver information as he was asked to remove it from the agenda for further review.

Steve Rossacci requested to discuss parking at Harrison under Open Discussion.

Kenny Michael read his April report.

In addition, Kenny said the A/C Heating unit is being installed in Gym 1. The unit in Gym 2 was done two years ago.

Alison Kapushinski, Town Engineer, is overseeing the tennis court project at Doolittle Park.

Community Lake fence bid will be submitted. Kenny is working with Rob Baltramaitis, Director of DPW, on this bid so the balls won't land on Rt 15 parkway.

Doolittle park building has been vandalized with graffiti and also rocks thrown through the windows.

At Grand Street park vandals wrote over the play equipment with a sharpie. Anne Gallagher, Ct Legislature, reached out to Park & Rec wanting to volunteer time to help clean up parks. She has been painting over the graffiti.

The Wallace park bordered was delivered this winter and will be installed this spring.

**2. Advertising signs in parks - Jason Michael & Don Crouch**

A letter needs to be submitted to Jim Seichter asking to be added to the agenda.

**5. Wallace Park – Legacy Gardens – May 15, 2021 Dedication @ 10 AM**

Dave Gelo contacted the 2020 group, Wallingford Community Women and the Wallingford Historical Society, to remind them of the dedication on May 15<sup>th</sup> at 10:00am. Kenny contacted the Mayor's office asking if he could attend.

Kenny is looking to do the 2021 dedication in the fall.

**5. Bench for Chuck Burghardt @ Pat Wall – Don Crouch**

Discussion on donating a bench or backing for a memory bench for Chuck.

**5. Community Pool update – Mike Savenelli – Kenny Michaels**

The meeting schedule for April 26<sup>th</sup> with the Mayor has been canceled. There is no rescheduled date. Mike and Kenny wanted to meet with the Mayor to determine if this project should go out to bid.

**End of minutes for the April 21, 2021 meeting**

**Agenda items for the May 12, 2021**

**Special Guest Speaker:**

**Ken Welch and Victoria Schunnann, Coalition for A Better Wallingford**

Ken Welch could not attend due to a conflict.

Victoria presented to the Rec Commission instead of Ken. The coalition is looking to become involved in park cleanup. They want to make the park a "Family Friendly Zone". They want to get a message to the people who are not using parks as they should. They would also like to put up sign within the park that states this is a "Family Friendly Zone". They would like to start with Doolittle Park as that seems to be a park that has been plagued with graffiti.

Jason Michael, said it has a for profit logo on the sign, the imagine on the sign. He is not sure that would be allowed.

Kenny Michaels, said Craig Turner, retired director of Youth & Social Services, started “Life is Good” in town. Craig saw it on TV and researched the program. Michelle and Kenny are currently taking the training to be Counselors.

Victoria said “Life is Good” founders thought Wallingford was a great location for their slogan. Wallingford is a larger town with a small-town feel.

Victoria said their goal is to get support from the people who use the parks/fields. They are looking to get volunteers from those organizations to help with park cleanup. Having people from groups that use the park will give them pride and willingness to keep it clean.

Victoria said they are looking to do this monthly. They would seek out volunteers to help.

Kenny is not opposed to letting the Coalition for A Better Wallingford organize monthly park clean ups. The next steps would be to put together a proposal of what you are looking to do how often and what groups you will be working with. Victoria will send Kenny an email.

## **2. Discussion and review of parks and facilities waiver packet and requirements to be presented to the Town Council**

A lot of time and effort went into researching park/facility waivers throughout the country. It is not a common thing to have non-profit’s fee waived. Kenny was asked to remove the agenda item from the Town Council’s agenda.

Kenny had met with Janis Small to review the waiver information Kenny did a lot of researched from National Park & Rec Departments. Kenny compiled the information to be relevant to our town.

Kenny and Janis had come up with a four-page waiver information and process. It was very clear for who qualifies and the process for a waiver. The revised version Kenny received from legal just bulleted 10 items which makes the waiver process very ambiguous.

Jason Michael, said this was really an insult to the Commission. Their role has been to advise and provide input and feedback to the Director. The commission was tasked with adjusting the waiver packet, but then was striped of that authority. The Commission took their private time to review and develop guidelines. The first revised version was clear and definitive to know the steps required. The second is very vague and a waste of time.

Sean Doughty, asked what the impact would be to the YMCA.

Kenny Michaels said the structure range was no charge to full fee. Completing an application to waive the fee will determine if there is a reduction in the fee or no fee at all. In the past there has never been a waiver fee process.

Sean said they submitted for a summer enrichment grant to help provide financial assistance. He should hear on Monday, May 24<sup>th</sup> on the grant money. If they did receive the grant that would allow him to provide much needed assistance to families with financial hardships. This would also expand the number of hours they would need Doolittle Park, specifically the following areas: pavilion, basketball, fields, tennis courts use for camp.

Currently the YMCA has approximately 200 – 215 registered per session. This number will increase when they get closer to the start of the program.

## **3. Advertising signs in parks- Jason Michaels & Don Crouch**

Jason said a letter needs to be sent to Jim Seichter. Jason said he received pictures from Kenny who was at a baseball game in Meriden only to notice that there were 4 out of 6 advertising slots from

Wallingford companies. The money that is being spent in Meriden could be spent in Wallingford providing a revenue stream to help with Wallingford facilities.

#### **4. Community Pool - Mike Savenelli & Kenny Michaels**

Mike said Councilor Testa made a motion to take \$1m out of reserves to put toward pool. Chairman Cervoni, Town Council, said allocating a \$1m is unnecessary.

Mike has been trying to reschedule the Pool meeting with the Mayor, but has been unsuccessful. He will reach out to Joan to schedule a meeting.

The Middletown and Bristol Park & Recs have continued to move forward with their pool project throughout the pandemic.

#### **5. Wallace Park- Legacy Gardens Dedication Saturday May 15, 2021 @ 10 AM**

Each organization, the Wallingford Historical Society and the Wallingford Community Women will have 4 people represent them at the dedication this Saturday. Kenny will speak at the dedication and has heard back that Councilor Fishbein and Tata will attend. Chairperson Cervoni will try to attend. A request has been submitted to DPW to cut the grass and edge up the area.

For recognition stone placement going forward will be discussed on Saturday after the dedication ceremony.

#### **6. Pickle Ball @ Harrison Park**

Jason and David both voiced concern over the parking at Harrison. They both know what a nightmare parking can be at Vietnam Vets when there are multiple soccer games and softball games going on at the same time. They feel waiting until it does become an issue is the wrong approach. They would like to know what the cost would be to add additional parking spots.

#### **1. Open Discussion:** (2/3 votes required to discuss item)

Jason and Dave wanted to discuss items not on the agenda. Don made a motion to have Open Discussion. Steve seconded and all members were in favor.

Dave stated that he wants to change how the agenda is compiled. He wants to send Kenny the agenda items for the next meeting. It would then be Park & Rec who is required to send the agenda to the appropriate people for posting. Dave said he is a volunteer and he **did** send the agenda on Thursday. Kenny said there was a technical difficulty because he nor the Recording Secretary received the email. Dave said he will send the compiled agenda items to Kenny. Kenny agreed that would be fine and his office will forward the agenda to the appropriate individuals.

Jason is there a sunset date on Doolittle tennis project? Kenny said there is no end date on the contract. Kenny said there is a delay in the supply chain. There has been really good communication with Alison on this project.

### **Directors Report: Ken Michaels**

#### **Current Parks and Recreation Projections/Maintenance/Facilities**

- Phase 2 of the Parks and Recreation Gym HVAC System replacement began on April 19, with the installation of a new heating and cooling unit on court one of the gymnasium. Phase 1 was completed last summer with the new HVAC unit installed in gym 2. Once completed it will give the gym AC as the original unit only provided heat in the gym. All day time gym programs were moved to gym 2 and there is no impact to evening usage of the gym. Project time frame for completion is about 6 weeks per the contractor. **Update: The interior portion of the project, redirecting the ventilation system to connect to the outdoor unit has been completed.**

**Exterior duct work and hook up to the unit has been completed. We are awaiting electrical connections**

- Doolittle Park Tennis Court project began on April 15, with the removal of the fence, posts, post for tennis nets. The contractor, RS Site and Sports estimated a two-month completion time on the project weather permitting. Alison Kapushinski, Town Engineer is the lead on this project and has been extremely helpful and great to work with on this project. I have been in contact with Steve Baker, Athletic Director at Lyman Hall since last summer in coordination with this project as well so he can plan accordingly for the Lyman Hall Tennis Season. **UPDATE: Process has been put down and grading has begun. Contractor is currently awaiting the shipment of the piping for the drainage being installed around the tennis courts and the tendons for the base of the court. From my conversation with Alison in engineering, there is a shipping backlog on these materials coming up from the south. The contractor has been in communication with Alison in engineering with updates.**
- Worked with Rob Baltramaitis, Director of Public Works and I have recently put together the bid specifications for Community Lake Baseball Field Fence Replacement. Anticipating the bid to go out in early May for the project. This project increases the height of the current back stop, replace the fencing fabric infant of the current dugouts and increase the height of the fencing down the right field line. This will alleviate many of the foul balls currently heading over the existing fencing and hitting cars in the parking lot and would alleviate the amount of fall balls bouncing close into the new on ramp on the merit parkway. **UPDATE: Recent conversation with Rob at PW, bid has been sent to purchasing and awaiting the bid to be posted.**

**Programs**

- Parks and Recreation Men’s and Women’s Softball 2021 season kicked off Monday April 19 after no spring/summer 2020 season due to COVID. **UPDATE: Season is underway with 37 Men’s Teams and 8 Women’s Teams – 45 total (15 teams less than our avg.)**

- **Updated Summer Playground Numbers**

Yalesville/Mary Fritz	Session 1: 101 FULL	Session 2: 101 FULL
Moses Y Beach	Session 1: 80 FULL	Session 2: 68
Stevens	Session 1: 100 FULL	Session 2: 90

Summer Pre School Camps Tiny Bubbles/Pop Shots

Tiny Bubbles Mon, Wed, Fri – 18 FULL	NEW 3 <sup>rd</sup> Class - 15
Tues/Thurs – 18 FULL	
Pop Shots Mon, Wed, Fri – 18 FULL	
Tues/Thurs – 18 FULL	

- Summer Brochure to be out in the mail third week of May. Online copy aiming for the end of this week to be email blasted to Parks and Recreation Data Base
- Spring 2021 128 Programs offered. As of May 11, 2021 we have 1,481 participants registered for 114 programs (14 have been canceled).
- Currently working with Rob at PW, Alison in Engineering, Erin in Environmental Planning and Mary Heffernon of the conservation commission to install the Urban Oasis Pollinator Garden at Grand St. Park. I will be reaching out to the Assessor’s office to find the owner of the Danvers building on Grand St. as the project will encroach the property line to the building, and discuss

the project and see if we can get the support to extend the garden to the building. The garden would be set up to the left of the mural that is currently painted on the building.

- Recently was contacted by Anne Gallagher of the CT Legislature Office and member of the Wallingford Elks Club. She is interested in doing volunteer park clean-up projects in town. She recently was at Grand Street Park and painted the white walls of the mural to remove inappropriate drawings and profanity that was written on the walls. She would like to further discuss the idea of a monthly park visit to do a voluntary community clean up. Was also recently contacted by Audrey Grove of Masonicare as they too are looking to plan and coordinate a volunteer park clean-up day for Masonicare employees.
- New field at Pragemann Park is open for use. Wallingford Tritons Lacrosse will be using this spring and Rob from Public Works is working with engineering to get fields pinned and lined. Lacrosse has requested the possibility of a fence around the field or at the very least on each end to prevent the balls from entering the parking lot and woods.

Kenny had a few additional items:

Tuesday, May 25<sup>th</sup> at 5:30pm there will be an Open Space User Group meeting. This group is open to hikers, mountain bikers, horseback riders, and others that use Wallingford Open Space.

There have been rogue mountain bikers braising new trails in Tyler Mill. If you go to Mountain Bike sites they show up as spaghetti trails or mapped as trails on mountain bike apps. The Conservation Committee closed up the trails on Saturday only to have them opened again by Monday.

Kenny is looking to have some Mountain Bike presence on the Conservation Committee.

Kenny is also looking into having the Ordinance changed so there would be a fine associated with creating new trails. Sleeping Giant now gives fines if you are doing something that is against their rules.

**Next Commission Meeting – Wednesday, June 9, 2021 @ 8:00 AM**

**Meeting Adjourned at:** 10:12 a.m. by Jason Michel seconded by Don crouch

Respectfully submitted,

Shirley Barillaro, Sr Clerk  
Wallingford Parks and Recreation