

TOWN OF FAIRFIELD  
PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION  
Minutes of March 29, 2012  
SPECIAL MEETING

A Special meeting of the Parks and Recreation Commission of the Town of Fairfield was held on Thursday, March 29, 2012 at 6:30 p.m. at the Eunice Postol Parks & Recreation Center, 75 Mill Plain Road, Fairfield, Connecticut 06824.

PRESENT: Ellery Plotkin, Chairman; Brian Nerreau; Alexa Mullady; Patti Dyer; Jessica Gerber (BOE); Barbara Rifkin and Jack Tetreau

ABSENT: Robert Seirup and Dante Gallucci

ALSO PRESENT: G. Lombardo, Director of Parks and Recreation and Press

Chairman Plotkin called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

**I. To rescind the previous vote taken on March 21 to close the Skate Park**

Chairman Plotkin explained to the members that because Mr. Lombardo had to leave last month's meeting prior to the discussion about the Skate Park, he was not able to let the Commission know that he had a supervisory plan in place. Because it was the Commission's intent to close the Park until a plan was in place, Mr. Plotkin recommended rescinding the vote and moving forward from there with input from Mr. Lombardo.

A. Mullady *moved*, and P. Dyer *seconded* to rescind the vote from March 21 to close the Skate Park.

*Motion passed 6-0-0 (J. Gerber not yet present).*

**II. To hear and/or take action on Skate Park Issues**

Mr. Lombardo apologized to the Commission for not giving them enough information to work with before he left the meeting last month. He explained with the assistance of a handout (see attached) that he intended to keep the park open only under supervision with the Hours of Operation as follows:

Monday-Friday	3pm-6pm
Weekends	10am-6pm
School Holidays/Early Dismissal	10am-6pm
Summer Hours	10am-7pm

He estimated that supervisory coverage would cost the Department an estimated \$20,000.

He further explained that he had locks on the gates and signs up explaining that anyone who violated the rules by attempting to enter when the park was closed would be considered a trespasser and subject to arrest.

While he stated that he would certainly go along with the Commissions decisions, he would prefer not to impose a fee, especially a per/day fee, explaining that having a cash box there might prove dangerous and that the three openings to the park make it difficult to monitor comings and goings of users. Mr. Lombardo explained that the users, while not respectful of the adults that are imposing the rules, are very respectful of each other while in the park. Mr. Lombardo distributed a survey completed by the CT Parks & Recreation Assn.(see attached) The survey showed that at one time all of the state parks did have supervisors but most were forced to cut them due to budget constraints. His felt that if the Commission went by the suggested hours and he had the supervisor take daily hourly counts, after a year they might see areas where they can tweak the hours and perhaps save money.

In answer to Mr. Nerreau's question as to where this \$20,000 might come from, Mr. Lombardo stated that he would take it from the Revolving Fund and if, in fact the Commission did decide to charge fees, the money would come from that revenue.

In response to this remark, Patti Dyer stated that she is in favor of imposing a fee as much to recoup the supervisory cost as to have the users take a financial responsibility for the park.

A waiver was discussed and J. Tetreau added the idea of a Parent's/Kids Code of Conduct similar to the one used in many league sports.

B. Nerreau had to leave for a previous commitment but asked that the record reflect that he is in favor of charging a fee of \$100 or more; sign both a waiver and a code of conduct and close off two entrances allowing for a membership card to be used effectively. (B. Nerreau left the meeting).

Mr. Lombardo explained that the main issue is the bikes in the park and the lack of helmet use. He added that all the kids have the helmets; they just choose not to use them until forced to.

### ***Public Input***

***Gerard Coulombe - 1816 Jennings Rd.*** – Mr. Coulombe identified himself as a grandfather raising 4 grandchildren, one of whom is a 14-year-old boy who uses the skate park regularly and Mr. Coulombe is at the park almost daily. He was pleased to hear Mr. Lombardo speaking positively about the kids and felt that the issue started as soon as the park opened when the Commission set rules but was not enforcing them. He added that the problems stem not only from the kids but also from the mothers who bring young children there as well. He is concerned that “the BMX-ers in the park is an accident waiting to happen.” He asked the Commission to trust the kids.

There was further discussion as to membership cards and the types of passes that might be sold. Most members felt that the Commission and Town had bent over backwards trying to make the park work as it is and they get little or no cooperation and no respect when the rules are enforced. A. Mullady distributed a handout showing the rules from five separate towns (see attached) and how they read. She felt that the fence needed to be heightened, that two entrances need to be closed off, that membership cards need to be used with a fee imposed. Ms. Mullady suggested a ‘3-strikes you’re out’ type of system as Greenwich uses. She provided waivers and registration forms also used in Greenwich (see attached).

Members agreed that the park, while a wonderful way for kids to exercise and participate in a sport, is a privilege and not a right and that something needs to be done in order to keep it safe for users while keeping it within the insurance guidelines set by the insurance company. They agreed to work for the next month under the supervisory plan set by Mr. Lombardo and he agreed to come to them with a plan for the possibility of charging a fee and /or using ID cards.

B. Rifkin *moved*, and A. Mullady *seconded* to temporarily open the Skate Park under the posted supervised hours only.

*Motion passed unanimously 6-0-0* (B. Nerreau no longer present).

ADJOURNMENT: There being no further business to come before the Commission, J. Tetreau *moved*, and B. Rifkin *seconded* to adjourn the meeting at 7:30p.m. *Motion passed unanimously.*