



TOWN OF OLD SAYBROOK  
**Parks & Recreation Commission**

*Susan Esty, Chairman  
Steven Pernal, Vice Chair  
Jim Henderson, Secretary*

[www.oldsaybrookct.gov](http://www.oldsaybrookct.gov)

*Star Rueckert  
Bror Ashe  
Nancy Gatta  
Kevin Lane*

**OLD SAYBROOK PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION  
REGULAR MEETING**

**Wednesday, April 8, 2020; 6:30 PM**  
Meeting Held Via Web Access/Dial In

**MINUTES**

1. **Call Meeting to Order** – Chair Susan Esty called the meeting to order at 6:30p.m.  
**Present were:** Director Ray Allen, Susan Esty, Steven Pernal, Nancy Gatta, Jim Henderson, Kevin Lane, Star Rueckert & Bror Ashe  
**Absent:** None  
**Also present:** Jonathan Paradis, Assistant Director & Tina Antolino, Recording Clerk
2. **Approval of March 11, 2020 Meeting** – MOTION to accept the March 11, 2020 minutes was made by Jim Henderson seconded by Steven Pernal and unanimously approved.
3. **Recognition of Guests** – Michael Spera, Chief of Police, was recognized and joined the meeting at 6:31pm. The Chief discussed current and possible future rules of the health crisis and its effects on parks and beaches. He recommended the Parks and Rec department plan for summer as normal. He stressed having a safety plan in place for each facility, including public bathrooms, in the event occupancy is limited and/or social distancing rules are still in place. The Police department will support any plan agreed on by the Parks & Rec department and Emergency Management. There is the possibility of funding or reimbursement from Emergency Management for additional expenses incurred because of the crisis. General questions were taken from Commissioners. Nancy Gatta thanked and expressed her gratitude to the Chief and the Old Saybrook police force. Chief Spera left the meeting at 6:56pm.
4. **Correspondence** – Susan Esty stated she was forwarded an email from the First Selectman from a resident who would like to see phase 2 of Main Street Park become a dog park. Ray also had two phone calls from the public in last 3 weeks suggesting a dog park.
5. **Review of Bills** – The Commission reviewed bills #416 through #470 dated April 8, 2020 in the amount of \$17,547.22. The Director noted the amount of refunds for the pavilion and programs because of the health crisis.
6. **Public Comments-** None
7. **Old Business**
  - A. **All Parks Review** – The Director reported on the following: that fields have been fertilized and mowing might begin next week, the Pavilion stone work has started and will be finished soon, water and electric will be turned on at the end of April and opening the public bathrooms needs to be discussed. He also stated maintenance at mini golf can begin in coming weeks, the beaches have been busy and the blown sand at Town Beach has been put back on the beach. Little League is canceled for spring, but they anticipate being open for July summer ball. Susan Esty noted parks could use more dog scoop bags- these are on order.

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**B. Preserve Update** – Susan Esty attended the Conservation Management meeting and noted the hunting assessment report was accepted and now a part of the memorandum of understanding. DEEP will undertake enforcement of hunting. The parking lot in Westbrook does not have a shield and the turn-around area in Saybrook is graded, but no tree cutting has begun in the parking lot area. Ray replied parking lot improvements are awaiting a secondary grant with possible funding by the Trust for Public Land, State of CT preserve fund monies or CT trails grant. Finally, the red trail bridge might be fixed by the State.

**C. Strategic Plan of Parks Update**- Kevin Lane reviewed an update from Fitzgerald & Halliday of work completed to date and discussion items for the Commission. There was discussion on the content of the online survey. He wanted Commissioners to pay attention to survey questions 11-14 and asked for their feedback in the form of an email to himself and Ray Allen by Friday, April 10<sup>th</sup>. The following questions were then posed to the Commission:

1. Given the current shut-down, when does the Commission feel comfortable in launching/promoting the online community survey?

Consensus among Commissioners was this is a great time to roll-out the survey and put posters at facilities advertising the survey. Fitzgerald & Halliday will create content to publicize the survey.

2. What is your top priority for each of the four parks?

Kevin Lane asked for responses to be emailed to himself and Ray Allen by Friday, April 10<sup>th</sup>.

3. How might our scope of work be amended to better address issues that might result from the shut-down?

Commissioners agreed to keep moving forward with the strategic plan as originally outlined.

4. Are we all agreed that in-person stakeholder engagement is still important to the project and are we comfortable waiting until summer (if needed) to conduct those discussions? Or should we plan on another method of having those conversations?

It was agreed it was still important to keep stakeholders engaged, but also keep the time-line moving forward. The late May meeting can be held virtually.

**D. 2020-2021 Budget Discussion** – Ray Allen reported the budget was approved in March by the Board of Finance with two capital project changes: Maple Avenue Field irrigation project was removed and P&R sinking fund was reduced to \$10,000.

**E. Any Other Business Regarding Programs, Facilities or Personnel** - None

### 8. New Business

**A. Covid-19 and Impact of Programs/Facilities Discussion** –Jona Paradis discussed the department's six virtual live programs. Highlights include: there were 55-60 participants in the first week and a YouTube channel geared toward children was created. All programs are currently offered for free, but moving forward, funding for instructor's pay needs to be investigated. Registration is scheduled to start April 28<sup>th</sup> for all programs May-August. The Fishing Derby has been moved to May. Social media campaigns are going well and T-ball season needs to be addressed, as well as, the impact of social distancing on summer concerts/movies.

**B. Beach Pass Discussion**- Ray Allen stated beach passes are in and online purchases begin May 1st. The in-office process is still being finalized with staff. No refunds are given for passes and there is no guarantee beaches will be open.

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**C. Any other Business regarding Programs, Facilities or Personnel-** The Harvey's Beach concession vendor contract was discussed including the \$500 fee per season and whether to consider a refund if beaches were not open this year. The Commission agreed \$250 of the fee is due by June 1<sup>st</sup> and the balance is due Sept 1<sup>st</sup>. Other grammatical corrections were made to the contract.

### **9. Reports**

**A. Chairman's Report** – Susan Esty reported she attended Board of Finance (BOF) March 17th, BOF March 24<sup>th</sup>, tele-media consult with Town Hall IT and Ray and she is visiting parks.

**B. Director's Report** – Ray Allen reported he is moving forward hiring summer staff. He recommended if anyone sees unsafe behavior in parks, to report it to the police. With the health crisis continuing, Parks and Recreation is still moving forward and exploring new ideas. He noted the Parks and Recreation Association has been communicating with towns.

**C. Liaison Reports** – Susan Esty, kayak liaison for the Harbor Management Commission, had nothing new to report. Nancy Gatta noted Frisbee golf funding was dropped from the budget. There might be a funding source in a matching grant program from Sustainable Connecticut.

MOTION to adjourn at 8:07p.m. made by Steven Pernal seconded by Kevin Lane and unanimously approved.

Respectfully submitted,

Tina Antolino, Recording Clerk

**\*NEXT MEETING MAY 13, 2020\***