

Meeting Minutes of the Parker Memorial Park Commission, Town of Branford, Connecticut

Special Meeting of February 24, 2021

via Zoom, with public access offered via the contact information in the published agenda

Present: Commissioners Masotta, O'Neill, Radulski, and Redman (Absent: Esborn). The meeting was called to order at 7:00 PM. The minutes were accepted, with the motion to accept by Commissioner Redman and seconded by Commissioner O'Neill.

Public Comments and Budget: There were no members of the public present, and no budget report, as the Commission's funds have been transferred to the Town's Board of Recreation.

Correspondence: Members of the public have been contacting Commissioners with various requests/input regarding memorial benches (two donations are pending) and personal gatherings in the Park.

Old Business:

1. Following the repaving of the Park's road, now completed, Commissioner Radulski has asked Director Palluzzi of the Town's Recreation Department to determine what actions are going to be taken to limit the space available for cars to park illegally in the turning circle near the flagpole – specifically, how much room is needed for emergency vehicles to maneuver around the circle and how the paved area will be restricted to the proper dimensions, using that amount of room as a guide.
2. Regarding dead/deteriorated trees, the Commission conducted a walkthrough after the December meeting and took notes as to those trees which appear to present a danger to Parkgoers. Much damage was noted to have occurred during the summer/fall windstorms. Commissioner Radulski is to work with the other Commissioners to develop a list of the damaged/fallen trees which should be sectioned and removed, to be transmitted to Director Palluzzi. Finally, Commissioner Redman reported that a tree near her house in the Park area in the southwest corner of the Park should be removed.
3. Mr. Walt Romblad, head of the Park's work crew, reported the following items at previous meetings (items addressed more recently by Director Palluzzi have been deleted):
 - a. The flagpole requires repainting and its halyard may require replacement; Commissioner Radulski is to work toward that end with Director Palluzzi.
 - b. The "No Parking" lines on the Town Dock require repainting so that Park maintenance vehicles have enough room to park to empty the trash barrels there (the Town Dock is, strictly speaking, outside the Commission's area of responsibility).
4. It was determined at a previous meeting that the gaps between the main gate's pillars and the easternmost ends of the fencing should be closed by planting thorn bushes in the appropriate spots; Director Palluzzi stated that his personnel would be planting them. It was discussed at the August 2020 meeting that a better method might be to add a section of wire mesh or other fencing material; no action has been noted to date, and Commissioner Radulski is to follow up with Director Palluzzi regarding that.

5. The smoking ban was discussed. Commissioner Redman has requested of the PWD that a "No Smoking" sign be added at the handicapped parking area near the bathrooms.
6. A "No Dogs" sign is needed at the handicapped parking spaces near the bathroom building. Commissioner Redman has requested that from the PWD and will report back when it's been installed. In addition, the Commissioners noted that, during the Winter, the no-dogs rule is routinely violated, and it was decided to restart enforcement efforts once that the gate guards are back on duty. As practicable, the Commissioners will individually remind violators of the rule when they see an infraction in the Park.
7. The Public Works Department ('PWD') has been requested by Commissioner Redman to place signs to notify drivers of the in-Park speed bumps; Commissioner Redman is to work with Director Palluzzi to have that request acted on by the PWD.
8. The lights at the main gate and dock are now operational and are to be checked by Commissioner Radulski periodically. Also, per a report from Commissioner Redman, there's a utility light out on Parker Park Memorial Drive, near the FitzGerald house, and Commissioner Redman is to contact the utility with that information.
9. Commissioner Radulski is to work with the PWD via Director Palluzzi to request further maintenance of the jetty on the main beach, which has several deteriorated areas as well as a section which has collapsed and must be repaired in the interest of public safety.
10. Commissioner Masotta reported at a previous meeting that he'd received a request from an East Haven resident for the resident's wedding to be held in the Park around July 15, 2021, likely on a Sunday afternoon; the Commission approved issuance of fifteen parking permits for the event and requested that Commissioner Masotta stress to the applicant that several important rules apply to any use of the Park (no glass or alcohol allowed, no tents/awnings allowed, no reservations of any kind apply, etc.).
11. Commissioner Redman previously reported that there is some construction debris (specifically, an accretion of concrete) left over from the seawall repairs in the Park area between two of the private homes in the southwest corner of the Park, the Chase house and the neighboring house. In addition, she reported that a sinkhole has appeared (reappeared) along the railing in that area of the Park and that she'd contact Director Palluzzi to have it filled. The Commission inspected the sinkhole during the walkthrough and determined that it has been caused by a collapsed drainage pipe. Commissioner Radulski will request of the Recreation Department that action be taken to remove the debris, repair the drainpipe, and fill the sinkhole. In the meantime, the Commission will take action to close off that area from pedestrian traffic.
12. The Commissioners approved at the December 2020 meeting that the Park's entrance would, in the short term, be secured with a chain and combination lock; this is being delayed to work through logistical issues. In the longer term, the Commission is to work with the Recreation Department to have installed a keypad-operated gate with a lifting or swinging arm, which will need to be funded through the Board of Recreation.

Continuing Items to Monitor:

1. The area near the bocce court has been reported at several times to have a number of personally owned items near it. Commissioner Radulski is to continue to communicate to persons using the court that only Town-furnished items are allowed to remain in the area when bocce-court users are not there.
2. Regarding the presence of tents/canopies on the main beach, the Commission has set the following limits on tents (which are prohibited by Town ordinance), canopies, and "sun shades": Structures are allowed to be five feet high or less, with a continuous fabric structure touching the sand (and with no "legs" holding up a canopy surface), and covering fewer than sixty square feet.

3. It was reported at a previous meeting that a parkgoer stated to a gate guard that the rules posted online about entry for non-stickerholders are incorrect; Commissioner Redman reported that she'd checked the online information and found all information to be correct at that point in time. Commissioner O'Neill is working with the Recreation Department to get the rules prominently visible (they are currently only available through a Web search) and, once accomplished, the Commission will check this periodically.
4. The swings' fittings should be checked for wear and damage; Commissioner Radulski is to check on that and to report to the Commission and Director Palluzzi regarding it.
5. Some of the Park's trees have mulch piled close to the trunks, which can cause rotting of the bark and (eventually) the death of the affected tree, and the mulch will need to be pulled away from the trunks. Commissioner Radulski has reported this to Director Palluzzi for action, and is to check on that again and to report to the Commission and Director Palluzzi regarding it.
6. It was reported at a previous meeting that, contrary to the Park's rules, some parkgoers are riding bicycles off of paved areas. In the Spring, Director Palluzzi and the gate guards will be asked to keep an eye out for that activity.
7. Regarding the measures being taken to prevent COVID-19 transmission in the Park, Commissioner Radulski has contacted the Director of the Town's Recreation Department, Mr. Alex Palluzzi, to request that any changes in Town/Department policy concerning COVID-19 prevention in the Park be communicated to the Commission.
8. It was noted at a previous meeting that there's erosion on the secondary sledding hill (which runs from the north side of the top of the main easterly hill down toward the bathroom building); Commissioner Radulski is to continue to check on that and to report about it to the Commission.
9. Dumping of yard waste has been noted at the north-central part of the Park, at the 'back' entrance by which pedestrians can enter the Park; there is a "No Dumping" sign there, and this area is being monitored by Commissioner Radulski. His latest report is that there were no signs of any additional dumping.

The next meeting is to be held on Wednesday, March 17, 2021, at 7 PM, via whatever means are available, allowing for safety.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:56 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Matt Radulski, Chairman