

Longbrook Park Commission Special Meeting

December 6, 2016

The Longbrook Park Commission conducted a special meeting on Tuesday, December 6, 2016 in Room 213 of Stratford Town Hall, 2725 Main Street, Stratford CT, pursuant to notice duly posted.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE: Chairman Scott Farrington-Posner; Vice-Chair Marianne Antezzo; James McGuire and Jon Merriam

OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE: Maurice McCarthy, Director of Public Works; Chad Esposito, Park Superintendent; Town Attorney John Florek; Councilman Alan Llewelyn; Councilman Tina Manus; Robert Jaekle, Dog Park Subcommittee Co-Chair; John Rich, Dog Park Subcommittee Co-Chair; and Paula Lockshier, Dog Park Subcommittee member

COMMITTEE MEMBERS ABSENT: Philip Young, Roger Salls and Kalyn Bard

I CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Farrington-Posner called the meeting to order at 7:05pm.

II PUBLIC FORUM

∞ John Rich, 68 Willow Avenue

Mr. Rich announced the Stratford Dog Park Subcommittee is meeting on Dec. 21st to begin their Final Report. He added there will be a Public Open Forum on Jan. 12th, and information from that will go into the final report. Their next regular meeting after that will be Jan. 18, 2017 and hopefully they will have a report to send to the Parks & Recreation Committee for their approval, to then be sent to the Town Council for their approval.

∞ Lisa Hernandez, 175 Cutspring Road

Ms. Hernandez supports a dog park in Stratford, and thinks Longbrook Park is a great centralized location for one.

∞ Jon Merriam, 100 Brewster Street

Previously Mr. Farrington-Posner publically stated the ice rink was not a good investment of Town funds. Mr. Merriam questioned why he changed his response to now support an ice rink.

- ∞ Kayne Bosma, 379 Glenridge Road
The Wilcoxson Fathers Club stated they initiated the concept of an ice rink at Longbrook Park and is willing to do whatever is necessary to make it a success.

Mr. Farrington-Posner closed the Public Forum at 7:12pm.

III COMMISSIONERS' RESPONSE TO PUBLIC FORUM

- ∞ Ms. Antezzo voted against an ice rink as too expensive, especially regarding insurance.
- ∞ Mr. McGuire asked what the responsibilities are of the Dog Park Subcommittee; Mr. Rich explained the extensive vetting process done and what the final report will include.
- ∞ Mr. Merriam thinks Longbrook Park is a good location for a dog Park, but not the WPCA location. He also stated the ice rink was originally a good idea from the Wilcoxson Fathers Club, but agrees with Ms. Antezzo that it is terrible as it stands right now with the liability issues, and poses an undue burden on Public Works.
- ∞ Ms. Antezzo asked if Mr. Merriam surveyed area resident to determine if they supported a dog park at Longbrook. Mr. Merriam replied he did an online survey, and received approximately 400 responses, the results of which are on the Longbrook web page. Additionally, Mr. Merriam sent flyers to 175 people in the area. He received four responses: 2 for and 2 against a dog park at Longbrook Park. Ms. Antezzo then suggested anyone interested should go to the Shelton dog park, as it is a wonderful example of what it could be like in Stratford.
- ∞ Mr. Farrington-Posner thanked Mr. Rich for his explanation and questioned the votes from other commissions. Per Mr. Rich, only the Short Beach Commission formally voted No. Mr. Jaekle, who is on the Short Beach Commission, stated each commission has the option of voting yeah or nay, or deciding only if their location is a viable option for consideration. He added that the Dog Park Subcommittee will not go back to the other commissions requesting a formal vote. Mr. Llewelyn, who is Chairman of the Roosevelt Forest Commission Chairman, said they took a roll call formal vote with the recommendation that Roosevelt Forest be considered as a viable option for the dog park. Mr. Rich added that the Short Beach Commission made a formal resolution to the Town Council against a dog park at that location. Mr. Farrington-Posner would like a formal resolution on the next Longbrook Park Commission agenda to send to the Town Council.

- ∞ Mr. Farrington-Posner thanked Mr. Bosma for all the hard work the Wilcoxson Fathers Club has done for the ice rink. In response to Mr. Merriam, Mr. Farrington-Posner stated that while he did not approve of the cost of the rink in September, he felt positively about the idea of one. He added that not everything he said was included in what was published. He has since gotten further information regarding the rink, and is now in favor of one, but was not pleased with a \$90,000 fee for such. He asked Town Attorney Florek and Public Works to get a lower cost, which they were able to do. With a reduced cost, Mr. Farrington-Posner is now in favor of an ice rink as a way of giving back to the taxpayers, and perhaps as a way to generate income eventually.
- ∞ Mr. Merriam stated he has an issue with the lack of a cost estimate for the rink, and the fact that this commission did not formally approve the ice rink at the last meeting. Mr. Farrington-Posner replied that at the last meeting, they made a favorable recommendation for an ice rink at Longbrook Park, and requested a cost estimate from the Town Council. Mr. Llewelyn read the recommendation from the minutes of the Town Council meeting. Ms. Antezzo noted they received the cost figures at the Town Council meeting. Mr. Farrington-Posner stated he understands how the wording of the minutes of the last meeting can be interpreted in two ways.

IV OLD BUSINESS

a.) Park Maintenance Report

Mr. Esposito reported that leaves, tree work and general maintenance are being done. Penders will be locked this week and the buildings closed. Mr. Farrington-Posner stated the corner at Brightwood is overgrown; Mr. Esposito will have it cut back; Mr. Merriam noted the area has already been cleared. Ms. Antezzo questioned what will happen at the ice rink if the bathrooms have been winterized and closed for the season. Mr. Esposito replied that the use of portolets has been proposed. Mr. McGuire asked what can be done for the debris blocking the flow at the upper pond. Mr. Esposito stated that Conservation Administrator Tina Batoh is looking at dredging options, but that was not a good idea this past summer due to the draught.

b.) Status of Longbrook Park temporary ice rink

Mr. Esposito stated that the water lines as well as the power lines are in. The rink is in the shop at Public Works, and will be built when the weather clears (hopefully the week of Dec. 12th). He also noted the materials were changed to metal carbonite for the structure. The Bambini

ice re-surfacer and ice mower have been ordered. Per Mr. McCarthy, weather permitting, there will be lighting at the rink. Per Mr. Esposito, there will be one gate for the bambini, and gates for the walk-throughs (see attached map.) Black, vinyl-coated chain link fences will be installed before the ground freezes. Mr. Farrington-Posner questioned what involvement if any the Wilcoxson Fathers Club could have with the ice rink. Attorney Florek is uncertain, stating this will be determined by insurance liability and possible Public Works grievances. He then added it would probably be very little. Mr. McCarthy stated that regarding snow removal off the rink, the Town has a Memorandum of Understanding with the labor unions, and the unions will not tolerate anyone using gasoline-operated equipment anywhere in Town. Shoveling by hand, however, would be okay because it would take a minimum of 24 hours to respond to Longbrook after a snowfall. Mr. Bosma noted the Wilcoxson Fathers Club has approximately 20 volunteers willing to clean the surface of the rink after a snowfall to prevent re-surfacing problems if they had to wait for Public Works crew to clean it. Mr. Merriam then asked if the Town Attorney would approve of it. Attorney Florek stated that if the Director of Public Works was okay with it, then he was okay with it, but the Town will have to maintain control. Once the Fathers Club clears it off, Public Works will have to approve it before it is re-opened for public use. Mr. Merriam questioned the opening and closing of the gates. Mr. Esposito noted costs would be high if Public Works has to man it – especially if it is left open all weekend.

c.) Questions and concerns for Director of Public Works

Mr. Farrington-Posner asked if the mirrors on Inwood have been replaced, adding that they were originally put on the wrong side. Mr. McCarthy replied that the replacement mirror has been ordered, but has not yet been installed. He added that the mirror was placed on the specific location noted on the request. When Mr. Farrington-Posner requested a second mirror be installed on the other side of the street, Mr. McCarthy informed him that such a request would have to be approved by the Traffic Authority. Mr. Farrington-Posner then accepted a motion by Ms. Antezzo to send to the Traffic Authority a request to install a second mirror on the corner of Terrill Road and Inwood Road. Mr. McGuire seconded the motion, which passed unanimously. Mr. Farrington-Posner asked about updating the tennis courts, including new nets and poles. Per Mr. McCarthy, the cost is \$50K-\$60K, and will go into the next CIP. Mr. Farrington-Posner asked about vandalism at the

park. Per Mr. McCarthy, Penders is an open field, and was told to leave the gates open all day, and locked at dusk by the police. Ms. Antezzo noted this commission voted to restore the closure. Mr. Jaekle noted the Parks & Rec Committee also voted for it months ago. Mr. Farrington-Posner would like to discuss this further at the next meeting. Mr. Merriam informed Mr. McCarthy that the committee requested signs be put up indicating the park closes at 10pm. Mr. Farrington-Posner asked about problems with the pond aerators; Mr. McCarthy replied that they are repaired when Public Works is notified there is a problem with one. Ms. Antezzo questioned algae removal on the lower pond. Mr. McCarthy replied that a material was used for such on Motil Pond during the summer, but only with limited success. Public Works will try it earlier next year at Longbrook, he added, but the problem is those ponds are made up of rain water runoff from the streets.

V NEW BUSINESS

a.) Subcommittee for Longbrook Park Ice Rink

Mr. Farrington-Posner spoke with Attorney Alex Florek regarding forming a subcommittee for the ice rink. Attorney Florek is fine with it assuming it is approved by this committee. Mr. Farrington-Posner suggested the subcommittee be comprised of some member of this committee, two members of the Wilcoxson Fathers Club, two members of the Parks & Rec Committee, Mr. Esposito, some electorate and some from the public. Mr. Farrington-Posner then made a motion to form an Ice Rink Subcommittee of the Longbrook Park Commission. Mr. McGuire seconded the motion, which carried 3-1, with Mr. Merriam opposed. Attorney Florek explained that anything decided at the subcommittee level ultimately needs Town Council approval. Ms. Manus stated she would be interested in being on the subcommittee.

b.) Setting rules, regulations and procedure for Longbrook Park Ice Rink

Ms. Antezzo noted that during the Open Skates, younger kids may often go with older siblings but not necessarily an adult. Mr. Farrington-Posner looked at what the rules are at other municipal ice rinks, but added you cannot simply copy those rules as each Town has individual issues and concerns. He recommends speaking with Mr. McCarthy and Mr. Esposito regarding the hours of operation, and moving from there. Mr. McGuire questioned if helmet use would be mandatory; Attorney Florek will look into it. Mr. McCarthy reported that from what the insurance representatives are telling him so far, particular signage will most likely have to go up, and waiver forms will need to be signed. He

will forward these regulations to committee members when he receives them from the insurance carrier. Mr. McCarthy explained that Parks is a division of Public Works. The Parks Department has a staff of 19, six of whom are now out on disability, who are responsible for all parks in Town. Mr. Esposito recommended the ice rink hours of operation be “daylight”, at least Monday – Friday, because his staff are not trained ice-makers. He further recommended weekends be available for permitting after dark. Mr. McGuire questioned what hours the Fathers Club would like the ice rink to be open. Mr. Bosma stated would like to see permitted weekend nights to generate fees to cover the costs of the rink. Mr. McCarthy recommended speaking to Pat Patusky, Superintendent of Recreation, regarding such. Ms. Manus suggested the committee contact other groups (such as Senior Services or Parents Place) to determine if there is any interest in groups who may want to use the rink during the day. She further recommended having someone there collecting information for a matrix regarding when people come, how many, what time, et cetera. Mr. Farrington-Posner then accepted a motion by Mr. Merriam to send to the Town Council with a favorable recommendation the hours of the Longbrook Park Ice Rink be the following:

- Wednesday 2-6pm
- Friday 2-9pm
- Saturday 9am – 9pm
- Sunday 9am – 6pm

Mr. McGuire seconded the motion, which passed unanimously. Mr. Farrington-Posner accepted a motion to carry this item to next month’s agenda. Ms. Antezzo seconded the motion, which passed unanimously. Mr. Merriam questioned how the plowing/shoveling to get to the rink would be done. Mr. Esposito explained that a few walk paths would be done depending on the amount of snowfall (see attached map).

c.) 2017 meeting schedule

Upon discussion, Mr. Farrington-Posner accepted a motion by Mr. Merriam that the Longbrook Park Commission meet monthly, with a Public Forum at the beginning of each meeting, on the first Wednesday of each month in Room 213 of Stratford Town Hall beginning at 7:00pm or immediately following the Greenway Committee meeting. Ms. Antezzo seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

VI ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Farrington-Posner accepted a motion from Mr. McGuire, seconded by Mr. Merriam, to adjourn at 9:04pm. The motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Aileen Marsh

Acting Secretary



