

East Lyme Parks Recreation Commission
August 10, 2023
Regular Meeting Minutes

Present: Thomas Beebe, Chairman
Pat Larkin
Jackie Curry
Todd Donovan

Absent: Kathleen Kovalanka
Sue Kumro
Rob Tukey

Also Present: Jerry Lokken, Director of Parks and Recreation
Dan Cunningham, Ex-officio
Phil Barlow, FHI Studios
Bruce Dassinger, Darrow Pond
Bill Seeman, resident
Marjorie Meekhoff, Pollinator Pathways East Lyme, Inc.
Denise Dinsmore, Pollinator Pathways East Lyme, Inc.
Richard Williams, Darrow Pond
Nila Kaezer, Darrow Pond

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2023 AUG 16 A 9:38
Cynthia Williams
TOWN CLERK

The Pledge of Allegiance was observed.

1. CALL TO ORDER Chairman Tom Beebe called the August 10, 2023 Parks and Recreation Commission Meeting to order at 7:05 p.m.

8. COMMITTEE REPORTS The Darrow Pond Committee Report was moved to the top of the agenda.

Mr. Donovan provided a re-cap of Darrow Pond Subcommittee activities since the formation of the group in 2020 until present.

Phil Barlow of FHI Studios, the master plan consultant, reported the process has been deliberate and thorough. The plan balances education, conservation and passive recreation opportunities. Mr. Barlow went through the plan and pointed out enhancements on the map they created to explain the main elements.

Mr. Lokken stated the Board of Selectmen have given Parks and Recreation approval to have FHI Studios work on the plan and considering activities in the portion covered by a conservation easement. He noted that the plan does not include any boating access on Darrow Pond.

MOTION (1): Mr. Donovan moved that the Commission approve the final plan and that it be forwarded to the Board of Selectmen at a later date. Seconded by Ms. Curry. (4-0) Unanimous.

2. PUBLIC – no public comments

3. MINUTES

a) Minutes of June 8, 2023 Meeting. Mr. Beebe asked for additions, deletions or corrections to the June 8, 2023 East Lyme Parks and Recreation Commission Minutes.

MOTION (2): Mr. Larkin moved to approve the June 8, 2023 East Lyme Parks and Recreation Commission Minutes, as presented. Seconded by Ms. Curry. Mr. Donovan and Mr. Beebe abstained from voting. (2-0-2) Motion carried.

4. DIRECTOR’S REPORT.

Mr. Lokken reported we are working with Gordian Group, a firm approved by a purchasing cooperative agreement, to contract with them to be the Construction Manager on the \$275,000 project. Mr. Lokken reported that the firm has been used in the past by East Lyme. Mr. Larkin asked if the project could be bid out to see if any firms might be able to complete the job for less.

Mr. Lokken reported because of the horseshoe crabs spawning, we are prevented from mechanically grooming the beaches between May 15 to July 10 and that will likely mean a decrease in beach conditions and aesthetics.

5. EX OFFICIO’S REPORT

Mr. Cunningham reported the Board of Selectmen appointed a subcommittee to work on short term rentals. It can be controlled by an ordinance or by the Zoning Commission. This affects beach communities. The Selectmen are looking into the problem.

Regarding construction work at Exit 74 the contractor is paying for police officers to be present but there are not enough police officers available. We have an agreement with Montville who can supply its officers and they will be paid by the contractor.

The state police are under-staffed.

The Board of Selectmen will enter a program for high-speed charging stations. It can be done in one hour in the parking lot of the Town Hall. The cost is \$200,000 and it is expandable. This will allow us in the future to convert town vehicles.

There will be options on the November ballot regarding the Charter Revision’s recommendations.

6. COMMUNICATIONS.

a.) Letter from Kristin S. Lambert, President of Oswegatchie Hills Nature Preserve, regarding a new regulation that Oswegatchie Hills Nature Preserve Management Council recommends prohibiting the use of electric mountain bikes in the preserve.

b.) Response from CT DEEP on mechanical beach grooming. There was no further discussion on mechanical beach grooming.

c.) Email from Dr. John Pfeiffer, dated August 7, 2023 regarding the re-establishment of the traditional Nehantic burial ground within the confines of McCook Park’s western edge next to Atlantic and Columbus avenues.

d.) Email dated July 25, 2023 from Aoife Samuelson, regarding free or deeply discounted beach passes for families and households who have documented low income.

7. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

a) Youth Service Commission Reorganization. Mr. Lokken reported a group will be presenting to the Board of Selectmen in September a proposal to create a separate Youth and Families Services Department because there is a need for more services in East Lyme.

8. COMMITTEE REPORTS

- a) Darrow Pond (Todd) There was no further discussion on Darrow Pond.
- b) Dog Park. The Dog Park Subcommittee will have its first meeting on August 14 via Zoom.

9. NEW BUSINESS

a) Discounts for people with limited ability to pay. Mr. Lokken reported at the present time we do not provide financial assistance in our department. Regarding the letter from Mr. Samuelson, any town resident is allowed access into our beach, but they may not drive in for free. He suggested considering this at a future meeting.

b.) Hole in the Wall Restroom Project. Mr. Lokken reported that we are proceeding with installing heat pumps in the restrooms to make them year-round, but not actively pursuing connecting them to town sewer since the existing septic system handles the sewage without issue. The Commission may want to return the additional funding that was approved along with a request to use it for other projects.

c.) Beach staffing and budget. Mr. Lokken reported the minimum wage was increased. The Special Revenue Fund Balance was approximately \$40,000 at the beginning of the fiscal year just completed, and that we will likely use approximately \$10,000 from it.

Mr. Larkin informed Mr. Lokken that lifeguards remained at McCook's although it was raining. He suggested that if the gate attendant goes home because of rain, the lifeguards should also go home. Mr. Beebe asked Mr. Lokken to investigate this matter.

d.) Rental Tent Status/Plan. Mr. Lokken reported we received a refund for the tent and it was placed in the Special Revenue Fund. A potential donor was interested in adding a pavilion. No new response was received from him.

We did not want to charge for concerts, although they cost thousands of dollars. Mr. Beebe suggested re-thinking that.

Mr. Larkin asked if we charged for the Hartford Marathon? Mr. Lokken replied we charge them a park rental fee and they also pay for our lifeguards.

10. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION (3): Ms. Curry moved to adjourn the August 10, 2023 Parks and Recreation Regular Meeting at 8:45 p.m. Seconded by Mr. Donovan. (4-0) Unanimous.

Respectfully submitted,

Frances Gheri, Recording Secretary

