

Town of Middlebury Parks and Recreation

Betsy Anderson
Director

COMMISSIONERS
Ron Clark, Chairman
Carolanne Browne
Mike Roach
Robert Mastroianni
Harold Zinno III

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MIDDLEBURY PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION

Regular Meeting Minutes

Thursday, February 8, 2024 – 6:00 p.m.
Shepardson Community Center – Room 7

Present: Ronald Clark, Sr., Chairman
Carolanne Browne
Mike Roach
Robert Mastroianni
Harold Zinno

Also Present: Betsy Anderson, Director – Parks & Recreation
Jerry Attanasio
Barbara Whitaker, Recording Clerk

1. Call Meeting to Order

The meeting was called to order by the Chairman at 6:00 p.m.

2. Approval of January 11, 2024 Regular Meeting Minutes

Mike Roach MOTIONED to accept the minutes of the above-mentioned meeting,
SECONDED by Caroleanne Brown. Unanimous approval

3. Public Comment

At the last meeting the Commission discussed all of the events that have occurred over the past several years with Smash Factory. The decision was made not to renew the Quassy field contract with Smash Factory. The commission motioned not to renew the contract.

Jerry Attanasio, representing Smash Factory explained that in 2020 there was an agreement between his company and the Town to "fix up Ledgeview", but he does not remember that being applicable in 2021.

The Director explained that the first year there were plans of for small projects to be completed on the field in lieu of payment for practices there. When Smash Factory looked into the cost of the clay, it was too expensive. In 2021, Smash Factory said that they would maintain three Town baseball fields (Ledgeview, Meadowview and Shepardson), so the Town ended the relationship with Premier Turf. Throughout the season, numerous complaints were made that the fields were unsafe and full of weeds, which were conveyed to Smash Factory by Mike Roach. Betsy Anderson added that although some work was done, it was not completed often enough based on the contract that was terminated with Premier Turf and based on the agreement.

Jerry Attanasio said that he is a lawyer by trade, not a landscaper, and that he may have bitten off more than he could chew. He realizes that he did not live up to the commitment.

There were a few times when he hired an outside company to come in and take care of the fields. Jerry Attanasio spoke with an employee of Public Works and was informed that the park has "fill" buried in it which made it very cumbersome to maintain, because debris was always coming up and had to be removed.

Mr. Attanasio added that as far as coaches using field for longer periods of time than previously reserved, he is in charge, it is his responsibility and he did not communicate as well as he could have. He said that they did put in a lot of work, and if the field was in a state where so much work wasn't necessary, they could have kept it up. Mr. Attanasio stated that Smash Factory no longer wants to deal with Ledgewood, only the fields at Quassy. He doesn't feel that one thing has anything to do with the other.

He says he has a great relationship with Pomperaug Youth Baseball (PYB) and is using the fields. He says he maintains the field at Quassy, and that they have done a lot of work there. He gets the field ready at Quassy, and he feels that the history with Ledgewood is a knee jerk reaction and has nothing to do with them using Quassy. It has benefited the Town program, there are a lot of Middlebury kids that play in the program.

The Director said that she doesn't know much about what happens at Quassy field, any payments for Ledgewood goes directly to Middlebury Public Works. Jerry said that they pay for rain dates. Betsy Anderson said that there have been some overages in time, and other clients that use the field let them know of absences and overages. Mr. Attanasio restated that going forward they would not use Ledgewood, and he would like to use Quassy for one day during the week and games on Sundays.

Harold Zinno asked if there is an afterhours phone number. The Director explained that they can call the regular number at the Parks & Recreation office and leave a voicemail or email them to let them know. Harold Zinno said that the relationship with PYB has gotten better over the years.

Jerry said that they have 19 kids from Middlebury out of 30. They received a quote of \$17,000 from Premier for work on the Quassy fields.

The Chairman sternly advised that if the Commission allows the use of the field at Quassy, Mr. Attanasio would have to follow the rules and communicate with the Director of Parks & Recreation. The Chairman asked Mr. Attanasio to provide reasons on why he should be able to use the Quassy field; to which Mr. Attanasio responded:

- They have put in a lot of money and work into the field
- The kids love playing there
- The local program is appreciative of it
- Its right down street

- If he could mow the lawn he would because he doesn't feel that Public Works cuts it short enough

Harold Zinno said that he would be the afterhours liaison. Jerry said that as far as Quassy goes, there has not been one infraction. The relationship has grown into something good. He could have communicated better with Betsy Anderson, Parks & Recreation Director, and he apologized for not doing so.

Bob Mastroianni asked why they don't want to use Ledgewood anymore. Jerry explained that there are a lot of rocks at the field, and they have removed many. The infield is small for the bigger kids.

Harold Zinno stated that he thought that the clay at the field was going to be fixed, and he was pleased that Mr. Attanasio apologized. There was some discussion on the number of Middlebury kids in the program.

There was some discussion on the non-use of Ledgewood and the continued use of the Quassy field. There was some discussion on changing the contract with Quassy field, which still falls under the jurisdiction of the Parks & Recreation Commission. There was some discussion on the number of Middlebury participants on the teams. The Commission wants to obtain the information from PYB.

Smash Factory is now off of the Town fields.

The Chairman suggested having Smash Factory and PYB come and meet with the Commission. There was some discussion on Mr. Attanasio's presence limiting fund raising with parents from Southbury and selling advertising from surrounding towns to local people. PYB has other fields in Southbury that they practice on and keep in good shape.

The Director asked how long the Town has had the relationship with the PYB? There was never a contract, the only reason a contract was created was because Smash wanted the field and PYB did not want them to use the field, and there was a discrepancy in the use on one day of the week.

The chairman said that the Director has tolerated a lot from Smash Factory over the years and based on that he would say no. But based on the benefit of the children, he feels that there needs to be a discussion with PYB beforehand.

4. **Greenway Report - Sharon Bosco**
No report.

5. Committee Reports

Budget

Harold Zinno had no report.

Personnel

Bob Mastroianni had no report.

Building & Parks

Mike Roach had no report.

Public Relations

Caroleanne Brown had no report and has been spending a lot of time focusing on the summer concerts.

6. Director's Report - Betsy Anderson

Parks & Recreation is currently offering a Valentine's Day coloring contest for children ages 2 through 12. All participants will receive a goodie bag. There are three age groups and the top winner in each age group will receive a \$10 Dunkin gift card. The Easter Egg Hunt will be March 23rd at 1:00 p.m. Planning for the Memorial Day parade is underway.

The 1st & 2nd Grade basketball program has concluded. Parks & Rec has received a great deal of positive feedback about the program. There are karate, yoga and fitness programs in progress. Planning for summer camps for grades K through 9 will happen in the coming months.

Last year's new one-week sessions of summer camp for preschool-aged children was well-received. Three one-week sessions were offered. This summer, 6 sessions will be offered. The camp will run Monday through Friday from 9:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.

Work on the new MRA pass requirements will begin in March.

Carolanne Brown MOTIONED to accept the Director's report, SECONDED by Harold Zinno. Unanimous approval.

7. Old Business

Summer Concerts

Caroleanne Brown sent out links to the Commission members for musical groups to play at summer concerts this year. The price range is from \$200 to \$1200. There was some discussion on the number of groups the Commission would like to play, and the time of year that the concerts would start.

The Commission discussed the scheduling of the concerts. The survey indicated that a day of the week was fine with the public. There was some discussion on a different Commission member being in charge at each concert. Carolanne Browne suggested starting the series at the end of May, because most of the Town boards and commissions do not meet in the summer.

The Commission decided to hold the concerts on 6/27, 7/11, 7/25, 8/8 and 8/22 (skipping July 4th) from 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. on the field near the gazebo at Shepardson Community Center.

There was some discussion on promoting local restaurants and encouraging grab and goes for the public to purchase. Harold Zinno suggested starting the concert at 5:30 p.m. in August because of the change in daylight. Caroleanne Brown is also working on some demonstrations during intermissions.

The Chairman said that these concerts are a good start for activities in Town and encouraged the members to come up with more ideas.

Ballfields

This discussion took place earlier in the meeting.

8. New Business

2024 and Future Plans for Parks & Recreation Commission
Discussion above regarding summer concerts.

9. Executive Session

None.

10. Adjournment

Caroleanne Browne MOTIONED to adjourn at 7:22 p.m.; SECONDED by Mike Roach. Unanimous approval.

These minutes are submitted subject to approval.

Respectfully submitted,

Barbara J. Whitaker

Barbara J. Whitaker
Recording Clerk

cc: Town Clerk
Commission Members
Betsy Anderson, Director of Parks & Recreation

