

2013-09-09 Recreation Minutes

Brooklyn Parks and Recreation Commission

Regular Meeting

September 9, 2013

Commission members present: Mike Gaudreau, Mae Lyons, Kim Conroy, Lou Oleksy, Lauren Rossi, Steve Danna, Scott Allen, Dave Guimont and Austin Tanner

Also present: Chris Boyle, Secretary

Absent: Steve Phillips, Bucky Lohbusch; Director

Public attended : 14 members

Called to Order:

7:00pm

1. Approval of minutes – Regular meeting August 12, 2013

1st Lou Oleksy 2nd Steve Danna All in favor

2. Approval of monthly budget reports

1st Lauren Rossi 2nd Kim Conroy All in favor

3. Spooky Nights

Steve Phillips will be taking over the challenges of Spooky Nights. He will coordinate with the Assistant and the Parks maintainer. Mr. Gaudreau expressed his support and asked the commissions members for their support, also. There are concerns over someone in charge who also has a full time job. Many of the volunteers have dropped out of working for Spooky Nights and one of the businesses that was going to sell tickets has refused, due to the dismissal of the Director. Rick Ives (BOF) suggested they watch the budget carefully. Proper procedures need to be followed on requesting money. Mr. Tanner said Steve can go to him or the Assistant for financial assistance.

4. Discussion of “transition period” Parks and Recreation Department

There will be no change in the office hours for the Assistant. The Assistant will be maintaining the office and programs. The Assistant may have an hour or so extra if necessary. The First Selectman said he spoke the Assistant and he was told that no more hours would be necessary with the exception of an hour or so. There is conflicting stories, Mr. Gaudreau and Mr. Ives (BOF) heard differently. It was suggested that Mr. Gaudreau, the Assistant, and Mr. Tanner sit down and discuss the facts.

Kim Conroy asked for a commitment for extended hours for the Assistant from the First Selectman. He would not commit, there may be discussion in the future. The First Selectman would like the transition period to be very short. He did commend the Commission for moving forward. Mr. Ives commented that the hours are already in the budget to make the Assistant full

time and the first selectman has refused to allow them. The Commission is requesting the Assistant get full time hours.

5 . Discussion for Job Search

Mr.Gaudreau contacted Killingly Parks and Rec and got their information on searching for a new Director. There were 180 applicants and it took time to do things correctly. The process needs to be professional and thorough. The job description will be refined and a set of questions will be made. There will be a PO Box set up for applications and an email address. The job will be advertised for thirty days from the date of posting. It will be posted in the newspapers and 7 other sites. Mr. Gaudreau would like to form a committee comprised of 1 selectman—Drew Dionne, Mike Gaudreau, 1 BOF- Gene Michael Deary, and Steve Danna or Lou Oleksy after the posting is closed.

It will be narrowed down and the First selectman will be given the list of final candidates, after interviews and the Commission agrees to the candidates.

The First Selectman thinks he should be on the committee

He feels it is his right. Mrs. Rossi

and Mrs Conroy feels that will be a conflict of interest because the First Selectman makes the final decision.

He wants the process to move quickly. Mr. Gaudreau stated it will take as much time as it needs to find the right candidate

6. Other Business- none

7. Public time- Diane Wimmer from Conservation was checking on the date of October 13th for Spooky Nights. Mr. Gaudreau will look into it.

Mike Oatley wanted to know the status of Disc Golf. Mr. Gaudreau will make sure it gets done. There is a time limit due a grant.

Valerie-Bruzzi-Krsulic ,the Art Coordinator of Summer Camp presented a Blue ribbon best of show, to the Commission. The Art work of the campers was submitted and recognized. Great job to the campers, and Bucky Lohbusch for arranging for the art work to be displayed. "The Town should be proud of the Recreation programs at how well it they are organized and how well the programs are run."(applause)

Mrs. Lowell, coordinator of the Before and After School program, had a questions from parents about the program's potential taken over by a private program. There was a table set up at the Back to school barbeque suggesting fees and potential privatization of programs at the school. The Commission supports the Before and After School Program and there are no plans for it to change.

Lisa Faria, a parent, voiced concerns about the daycare and does not want the Before and After School program taken over.

The Commission did not know anything about this and the programs will continue as is.

Diane Wimmer read her thoughts:

Dear members of the Rec commission.

I do not envy the job before you, and I am now speaking as a taxpayer, I'm taking off the hat of the conservation chair.

First of all I really believe that you must let the public know in some kind of statement about the ridiculous accusations from the First Selectman.

- 1) not enough programs; You have doubled the programs in town, if not tripled them.
- 2) The first selectman, led the town to change the ordinance to put the director under his supervision. (and I believe you supported that). However he didn't change the other part of the ordinance... and I quote

3) 2-20.2 Organization and Duties.

- 4) **The Commission shall elect from its membership a Chairman and such other officers as it shall deem necessary. It shall oversee the preparation and implementation of recreation programs for the Town. It shall study, plan and make recommendations to the electors for the development of recreational and park facilities for the Town. It shall provide regulations for the use of such facilities. (Ord. 12/28/66 § II; Ord. 11/10/11)** The Commission not the First Selectman
these are my italics.

5)

6) 2-20.3 Appointment of the Director of Recreation and Parks.

- 7) The First Selectman, upon the recommendation of the Commission, shall appoint a Director of Parks and Recreation. The Director shall, in consultation with the Commission, develop recreation programs for the benefit of the Town. The Director shall manage the recreation programs and oversee the maintenance of all public playgrounds, recreation fields and facilities and the equipment associated therewith, in accordance with the goals and general policies set by the Commission. Upon the approval of the First Selectman, the Director may hire additional personnel as may be necessary to assist with such programs and maintenance. The Director will be under the direct supervision of the First Selectman. (Ord. 11/10/11) Again the Commission is in charge of the program, not the First Selectman

As you can see, although the First Selectman is in charge of the Director... You are in charge of programs... This has to be emphasized to the Finance Board and town. You decided how the fields were going on line, you decided not to have volleyball league. I have heard the First Selectman say he is CEO of the town, which may be true, but every CEO has to abide by the rules and laws that govern the organization. The first selectman has to abide by the ordinances and he clearly did not do so here.

Interim Director: I have the utmost respect and admiration for JoAnn Lohbush. I think she will do an excellent job, but I respectfully ask you not appoint her. I feel that the firing of the Director was retaliation. If you appoint JoAnn and she is taken out of the union, then the first selectman again may decide that a program wasn't done to his liking and fire her. I do not think you should put any other employees in the line of fire "pardon the pun". For the good of the town, we need someone, but if you put JoAnn in then you should have a written contract that is signed by all the selectman, that says she cannot be fired while acting as interim director, only be returned to administrative assistant and that she is still under the protection of the union.

Spooky Nights: At this point I feel that I will not work on the nights of spooky nights, though I will keep the commitment I made with Conservation for the 13th.

Before-After School program: People in this town have many options for before and after school child care; they can go to a private sitter, they can go to Village Green, they can go private and they can go to the Recreation Program.

This is a well run self sufficient program. There is an old saying which I firmly believe. "If it's not broken, don't fix it."

If Care A Lot wants to have their own program, then fine, people have another choice. I CANNOT believe that after the First Selectman fired a director for not having enough programs, that he didn't tell Carealot that we were not going to get rid of programs that are working.

"Melissa from Carelot spoke to a Board of Education member to consider contracting recreation programs to a private company. She was referred to the Board of Selectmen. The Selectmen feel this is a Board of Finance and Recreation Commission topic. Mr. Tanner will look into the history of why the Recreation Department handles before and after school programs and not the School board. The Selectmen agree on a joint meeting for a presentation with Board of Selectmen, Finance and Recreation Commission." From the Board of Selectmen's minutes 8-29-13

This looks to me that the First Selectman is trying to dismantle the Recreation Department. **Finally, Probate Court: If the First Selectman and the Board of Selectmen have no plan for the recreation department, (a plan which includes where the department is going, what the layout of the office is, enough storage and a budget to set up this new office) then this issue is not resolved. I don't care what the rent is; the recreation department is important to this town and serves more live people than probate.**

Letter by Diane Wimmer.

Mr. Tanner again stated The Director's dismissal was not personal or retaliation.

Mr. Gaudreau agreed with Mrs. Wimmer and respected her for voicing her opinion and said many people in town are afraid to voice their opinion for fear of firing.

Mr. Gaudreau stated it was not the Commissions choice to remove the director and again the Commission will take its time to replace him. IT will be done right and time taken, as it will be next to impossible to replace the Director as he is the Best Director we ever had. (applause)

Recreation will continue-- you have Mr. Gaudreau's word.

Kim Conroy appreciates Mr. Lohbusch's commitment to the town and the commission. It was not the Commissions choice to remove him. The Commission was asked to write a letter to commend him on his service to help him in his future endeavors. It will be discussed.

Mrs. Lowell wanted to know if there will be a contract for the next director so that person will not wonder if he or she will get fired for the same situation. Is there a way to change the ordinance again?

Mr. Tanner stated again he will be willing to help with Spooky Nights and the transition.

Mike Gaudreau talked about ways for the public to voice their opinion, a town meeting on September 24th, letters to the papers, etc.

8. Adjournment 8:40 pm

Motion made: 1st Dave Guimont 2nd Scott Allen All in Favor