

Corrected Minutes (12/6/10)

TOWN OF GUILFORD
Recreation and Park Commission
Workshop Minutes – 16th November, 2010

The Recreation and Park Commission held a budget workshop on Tuesday 16th November, 2010 at 6:00p.m. in the Guilford Community Center with Chairman Ralph Schipani presiding.

Present: Gary Gilbert, Barbara Pine, Sue Robins and Ralph Schipani. Also present Director Rick Maynard and prospective member Judy Sullivan. Excused: Jenny Carrillo, Alexandra Gross and Calvin Page. Absent: Robert Guadagno.

The meeting was called to order at 6:10p.m.

General Discussion: Mr. Schipani stated that the Commission had been discussing reassigning tasks and restructuring the Department. He said that personally he found it difficult to discuss a proposed budget when he did not know how the Department was going to look in six months time when that budget became effective. Mr. Schipani said that the Commission tried to do things right departmentally but was then stopped in its tracks by outside forces, and so he was expressing his frustration as a chairman of a Town commission. Mr. Schipani also was concerned that the Commission made decisions to take various actions and the next day he then received telephone calls complaining about this with the callers seemingly knowing more about the topic than he did. Mr. Gilbert noted that he had had two conversations with the First Selectman regarding refurbishing the office which he had documented with Mr. Schipani. Mr. Gilbert said he had made clear that he was not speaking for the Commission. He further reminded the Commission that all purchases had to be approved by the First Selectman, and also that any action taken was perceived in the context of what was best for the community. Mr. Gilbert briefly talked about the reorganization of the office space and suggested reviewing the schematics with the First Selectman. He noted that the Commission was operating under a scaled down budget. For the past two years capital items had been removed from its budget which he felt was shortsighted but the Department needed to make this up. Mr. Gilbert said he had pointed out to the First Selectman that the Department had paid for repairs to the Community Center roof, etc., and the Town was aware of that. He suggested the best thing to do was for Mr. Schipani and Ms. Pine to work out an acceptable compromise even though it may not be possible to purchase all the new office furniture at one time. Mr. Gilbert felt the Commission needed to be sensitive to the fact that it was one part of a whole. With hindsight, Mr. Gilbert said it might have been better if the Commission had discussed its proposal with the Town first. Mr. Schipani stated that the approach now was to verify if the subcommittee members would continue on the refurbishing/new furniture project. Ms. Pine noted that the two other people on the subcommittee with her had not able to work. She added that when a meeting was held with Mr. Maynard she had expected him to have a plan to reassign tasks, have new job descriptions, etc. Instead all that Mr. Maynard provided was the reassignment of tasks, for which a subcommittee was not needed. Mr. Maynard said he had understood there would be a follow up meeting to provide additional information. On the question of the subcommittee, Mr. Schipani stated that Mr. Page had volunteered. Mr. Gilbert suggested having an alternate member. Regarding the reorganizing of the office space, Mr. Gilbert said one concern was whether there would be one door open or both doors would be open - the traffic flow through the office, etc. Mr. Maynard replied that some adjustments may have to be made. Mr. Gilbert suggested doing the two offices first, along with the seniors side. Ms. Pine said even if the entire proposal was not done the office space still needed to be reorganized.

Proposed Budget Discussion: Mr. Gilbert stated the following concerns: 1) the Commission had made requests for specific information from the Director and Parks Foreman. 2) It had requested pre-budget meetings be held and had waited for a department-wide restructuring plan. None of this was provided to the Commission. 3) The Winter Brochure has been compiled with fees established but there was no discussion of this. 4) The Commission had also failed to show any sort of cost containment on grounds/parks as a result of the installation of artificial turf. 5) It had not shown how money would be saved through the acquisition of a trash collection vehicle. 6) Requests for grounds work were not carried out due to “lack of time”. Mr. Gilbert said that any budget request, with no plan or justification in place was unacceptable, and so he personally would not support it. He added that the Department spent more than \$500,000 per year on fields and parks and he felt the grounds budget should be cut. Ms. Robins agreed with Mr. Gilbert saying she could not support the budget request if there was not a full plan from beginning to end. Ms. Robins asked when was the last time that the Parks Foreman’s budget had been reviewed. Mr. Maynard pointed out that the Parks Foreman was very organized. Ms. Robins replied that being organized was one thing but one could always do things better. Each department needed to be as good as possible. Mr. Gilbert said he did not wish to sacrifice fields but maybe more needed to be done with less. Mr. Schipani said a selectman had made the comment about when was the last time the Department had looked at how hours were allocated. He stated that while some items such as salaries were beyond the Commission’s control, other categories should be reviewed from the ground up.

Regarding the issue of a trash collection vehicle, Mr. Maynard said this was more of a safety issue than a money saving device. Referring to concerns about outside contractors damaging fields with heavy equipment, Mr. Gilbert said a performance bond could be required. Then the question would be what to do with the staff who used to pick up trash. Mr. Gilbert said tasks for all 5 days of the work week should be reviewed and reassigned to all of the staff. Since no decision has been made on who would undertake trash collection, Mr. Gilbert said the Commission needed to proceed as if it would still be done by the Department. Mr. Schipani noted that the Commission had said it would make a recommendation to the First Selectman and this still had to be done. Mr. Gilbert recommended finding out if the Board of Selectmen would support the purchase of a trash collection vehicle. If not, there was no point in presenting this proposal. He noted that “Plan B” was also needed and would this be better than what was being done now. Mr. Maynard said the Parks Foreman had some rationales and he would ask him to put these in writing. Later in the meeting Mr. Maynard said he was bothered by the recycling bins and that SARAH wished to do all the recycling next year. Mr. Gilbert wondered if existing bins could be reworked and used rather than buying new ones. He added that the recycling bins were out of our control and he was opposed to having them as a line item in the Capital Plan. He also felt the number should be reduced from 50 to 30.

Mr. Schipani said that in order to justify the proposed budget he would need some history. Mr. Gilbert recommended looking at the revenue stream. Was there an area where revenue could be increased? Mr. Maynard replied that this was part of the budget process. Mr. Schipani stated that he would like to review changes at the December meeting. Mrs. Sullivan asked if groups using the fields paid a fee. Mr. Maynard replied that a lot of groups did not pay a fee. However, many groups provided in-kind services to upgrade the fields. Mr. Gilbert said this had to be taken into consideration. Mr. Maynard wondered if the Department could allow for credits for in-kind services. Ms. Pine noted that the Department had given back a lot of money to the Town at the end of FY 2009-2010. She asked if there was any way to show what proportion of that money came out of grounds, etc. Mr. Maynard replied that a lot of it had come from salaries and utilities. Ms. Pine replied that it would be useful to see a

budget for the funds which were given back. She then asked if a line item could be added to the Community Center Operations Budget for refurbishment. Mr. Maynard replied that this was included in the Five-Year Capital Plan. Mr. Gilbert did not feel that painting should be under the Capital Plan. Mr. Maynard replied that this came out of 'general repairs'. Mr. Gilbert then said that physical plant items should not be under 'general repairs'. He also felt it would be nice to have a line item for refurbishment of the interior of the Community Center. Ms. Pine thought that having a line item made a statement that it was an important expense and not something frivolous. Mrs. Sullivan asked about the Dudley Property Master Plan. Mr. Maynard replied that when the property was purchased by the Town the owners had replaced various restrictions on it and so the Commission felt a master plan should be developed. Mr. Gilbert said he could make the argument that plans for Chittenden Park could be put back a year with the Dudley Master Plan being moved forward by one year. However, this should be discussed with the entire Commission. Mr. Gilbert also recommended the future of the skate park should be discussed – perhaps this could become a different type of sports complex. He added that some people felt the Department's focus was too much on sports and not enough on parks. Mr. Gilbert said the Commission needed to support items in the budget that were important.

Mr. Gilbert said he would like to see the staff come up with a Wish List, for discussion at the February meeting. Ms. Pine stated that the Department now had a new seniors program coordinator and so she would feel justified in sending this person for additional training. Mr. Gilbert agreed saying he would also support having the Recreation Supervisor take extra management training as part of her professional development. Mr. Maynard mentioned that the Department did have some funds budgeted for training sessions. It was also felt that program instructors should be required to be recertified. Mr. Gilbert recommended holding CPR classes in house and discounting them.

Ms. Pine left the meeting at 7:53p.m.

Other Business: **1) Survey:** Mr. Maynard reported that a fairly good response had been received to the survey. There had been several comments about improving Jacobs Beach by adding shade trees, sand, etc. Mr. Maynard said the Recreation Supervisor had suggested hiring a landscape architect who specialized in beach areas to make recommendations. He also mentioned that the Town of Madison would be willing to provide its beach cleaning machine on a monthly basis. At present Guilford uses this once or twice a year. Mr. Maynard pointed out that part of the problem with the beach was that it was man made from dredging spoils. He did not think anything could be done about the shells. Mr. Gilbert said he would support having a landscape architect. Mr. Gilbert and Mr. Schipani asked that research and costs be brought to the December meeting. The Commission could then decide how to proceed. **2) Jacobs Beach:** Mr. Maynard reported that several residents had informed him that a property owner with land to the east of Jacobs Beach wished to install a pier. This has been approved by DEP but the Shellfish Commission had concerns. The residents wished the Department to take a stand on this matter. Mr. Maynard said he had talked to the Town Planner who stated that PZC had no jurisdiction over water issues. Mr. Gilbert said he believed the Harbor Management Commission would have jurisdiction and suggested contacting HMC. He also said he saw no point to the R&P Commission going on record on an issue over which it had no jurisdiction. **3) Reimbursable Report:** Mr. Gilbert asked that a report on summer programs be provided for the December meeting. **4) VFW Flags:** Mr. Gilbert reported that seven flags had been stolen from VFW some of which cost as much as \$200. He felt since a VFW commander worked in the Department that perhaps it could replace one flag.

There being no further business to come before the Commission, Mr. Schipani made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:20p.m. Ms. Robins seconded the motion and it was carried unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Katharine Stewart
Recording Secretary