PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION
EAST GRANBY, CONNECTICUT
MINUTES
September 4, 2025, 6:30pm

1. **CALL TO ORDER**
   A regular meeting of the East Granby Parks & Recreation Commission was held Thursday, September 4, 2025, in the Town Hall Large Conference Room. Chairperson Morgan Bengel called the meeting to order at 6:32pm. Members also present were Leona Bevins, Robert Ravens-Seger, Jennifer Derleth, Jim Lindberg, Alexa Bednarz and Nicole Sokolowski. Marc Dlugolenski, Ella DeSimone and Amanda Mele were absent. Alicia Van Neil, Program Director, was also present. Ken Kovaleski was present in the audience.

2. **DISCUSSION WITH THE PUBLIC**
   None.

3. **APPROVE MINUTES**
   R Ravens-Seger made a motion to approve the minutes as presented for August 7, 2025. N Sokolowski seconded. All in favor. Motion passed.

4. **CORRESPONDENCE**
   A Van Neil reported that an email was received from Jennifer Frank and will be discussed under the Farmington Valley Heritage Trail. Two emails about the playscape fundraising were received and responded to.

5. **PROGRAM REPORT**
   A Van Neil shared the Let's Talk Turkey program ad and reported summer programming has concluded. Camp registrations were full in June and July. Consider offering incentives for registering earlier next year. Some new additions for fall programming include: Suffield Pickleball is partnering with us to provide programming for adults and children, there will be a bus trip to New York City to see the Statue of Liberty and the 911 Memorial, baton twirling class for youth, wildlife explorers, and Brian Kleinman is also doing a bird watching program. Basketball registration will open before next weekend. If any board members want to give their input on emergency preparedness before next summer, that would be welcomed.

6. **TREASURERS REPORT**
   N. Sokolowski shared a budget report printout. She reported that everything is on track. A Van Neil did have to buy a new laptop, and it came out of the new equipment budget line.

7. **COMMITTEE REPORTS**
   A. **Cowles Park** – J Derleth reported on the section of the park from the main entrance to Wynding Hills. Nothing new seen. J Lindberg mentioned that he cleaned up some growth that was coming up through the bridges on the orange trail. He noticed about 23 broken planks that need to be replaced. Some areas have about 4 planks together that need replacing and are starting to be hazardous. J Derleth suggested organizing a clean-up day of the trails open to the public to help. She also mentioned there have been cars in the lot later in the evening. A Van Neil suggested keeping an eye out for trouble and possibly considering gating the driveway.

a. **Emergency Management Markers**- L Bevins will talk to Ken Believue to determine if markers are still relevant.

B. Farmington Valley Heritage Trail – R Ravens-Seger reported quite a few people were using the trail on the day he visited, including bikers, walkers, and dog walkers. Jennifer Frank sent an e-mail asking the commission to consider not spraying pesticides through the wetlands area for poison ivy control. A Van Neil talked to DPW and they said the request to spray came years ago from this commission because the vines were growing onto the path and became hazardous. Jennifer Frank suggested mowing the sides of the trail instead. DPW said the town employees do not have time to mow 12 miles (6 miles along both sides of the pavement). A Van Neil believes the spraying is currently done every year. If the Commission decides to stop spraying, the ivy won't grow back completely until the year after next. R Ravens-Seger gave his thoughts on the matter: Jennifer Frank is on the Inlands/Wetlands Commission and is also active in other environmental groups so she is offering environmentally friendly options. But he is concerned that if the Commission stops spraying that the town may not be able to manage the mowing and trimming themselves. A Van Neil will ask Jennifer Frank if she has people who would be willing to help manage the property instead of spraying.

a. Emergency Management Markers – Same as for Cowles Park.

b. **CT Rec Trails Grant Update**- A Van Neil reported that the work is almost done. DPW has been keeping track of the project and will provide the necessary paperwork for the town match for hours spent. Signage that is required by the grant will be going up soon.

C. **Granbrook Park** – M Bengel mentioned a lot of people have been using the park in the summer, which has been nice. Opening and closing the gate is done for the year.

a. Insurance Report – DPW has been fixing smaller items recommended in the report. They will provide a list of items fixed/not fixed. The balance beam and riding toy will be removed soon. They will fill in some of the holes in the ground as well.

b. Softball Field – No update.

D. East Granby Farms – A Van Neil reported that the park and playscape are busy. Flag football starts on Monday. Pre-school soccer shots have already started as well. R Ravens-Seger mentioned that the Historical Society's barn will close at the end of October for the year. It will be open every other Sunday from 2-4pm. M Bengel asked if they have seen a rise in visitors since the opening of the new playscape. R Ravens-Seger said he would ask.

a. STEAP Grant updates- Work has begun at the North entrance. The topsoil is being removed, and the ground is being leveled. Electrical quotes are being obtained. Roger has been amazing at keeping the group going and moving the project along.

E. **Sports Programs/Coaching/Training/Policies –** J Derleth has been working with Alicia to understand what the current mission statement, and philosophies are. Guidelines need to be created for the coaches. Every child/member of our

community deserves the right to be active and social. J Derleth suggests updating the mission statement to help sell East Granby programs and help define what coaches can do for everyone. What is the culture we are trying to promote? J Derleth would like to get youth input of what they look for in a coach.

F. Program Committee –

a. **Summer Concert-** It was held on August 22, 2025 and went very well. The Farmer's market was a nice addition. The organizations liked being all together instead of separated like they were last year. A Van Neil counted cars to compare to how many can park at East Granby Farms for future events.

b. **Halloween-** Thousands of dollars are spent on candy so the committee is working on ideas to collect donated candy to help offset the cost. The event will be on October 25th. A Van Neil asked for members to help at the event. The High School and Middle School Youth Action Council students will help out, as well as the National Honors Society students will host trunk or treat again. Commission members are welcome to meet with the Middle School students during the week before the event to help organize their activities.

c. **Tree Lighting-** The event will be on Dec. 5th. Three arborists have confirmed that the tree is in fact still alive, but it cannot be shaped like a Christmas Tree because it isn't the species that can be. It can only be pruned. The luminaries will be done again this year as well.

d. **250th Celebration-** No new update.

8. NEW BUSINESS

A. New Member Recruitment- Only one application has been received, from Ken Kovaleski.

Motion: L Bevins made a motion to appoint Ken Kovaleski to the East Granby Parks and Recreation Commission board, to complete Carly McKenney's term, ending on 10/30/26. M Bengel seconded the motion. All in favor. Motion carried.

B. Capital- A Van Neil gave an update on requests for capital funding. $10,000 has been put aside in the current fiscal year to fix the water system at Granbrook park. A discussion was held as to what requests should be put forth for the 5-year plan. There has been a request for $65,000 for pickleball and basketball courts at Granbrook, but since these are being put in at East Granby Farms, the suggestion is to change the request to a new playscape at Granbrook Park and up the request to $100,000. A second request that has been on the plan as well is the purchase of a van for transportation. The current amount requested is $20,000, but the commission wants to update the request to $50,000.

9. ADJOURNMENT

A motion was made by R Ravens-Seger and seconded by L Bevins to adjourn the meeting at 7:46 pm. Votes in favor were unanimous. Motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,
Jennifer Kovaleski
Commission Clerk