

**PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION
EAST GRANBY, CONNECTICUT
MINUTES
January 4, 2024**

1. CALL TO ORDER

A regular meeting of the East Granby Parks & Recreation Commission was held Thursday, January 4, 2024, in the Town Hall Large Conference Room. Chairperson Pat Gill called the meeting to order at 6:33 pm. Members also present were Robert Ravens-Seger, Leona Bevins, Karen Hines, Morgan Bengel, Carly McKenney, Nicole Sokolowski, Jon Webster, Chloe Rapose, and Ella DeSimone. Program Coordinator Alicia Van Neil was also present. Marc Dlugolenski was absent.

2. DISCUSSION WITH THE PUBLIC

None

3. APPROVE MINUTES

A motion was made by K Hines and seconded by R Ravens-Seger to approve the November 2, 2023, minutes. Votes in favor were unanimous. Motion carried.

4. CORRESPONDENCE

A Van Neil shared that she received an e-mail from Jennifer Frank, a member of the Traprock Ridge Land Conservancy (formerly East Granby Land Trust). The e-mail regards the deteriorating access road currently used to hike from East Granby Farms up to the ridge. Discussion will continue later in the meeting.

5. PROGRAM DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Program Coordinator A Van Neil updated the group on the following programs: Soccer Shots starts today, Ski Sundown starts tomorrow, Basketball for grades 3-8 started Dec 1 and is going well; games start Saturday, K-2 Basketball starts this week, After School programs start in February, and several Bus trips are scheduled for this year- a Bronx Zoo trip, another NYC trip, and a Foxwoods trip. The agency that runs the WINS For Life program is helping to coordinate adult refs for grades 3-8 basketball games. Teenagers are still refereeing the K-2 games, with Mason Williams as on-site coordinator. More competing basketball teams have been added from Barkhamsted and from the YMCA. The bus trip to NYC in December was full and went well.

6. TREASURER'S REPORT

L Bevins reported the budget is on schedule. A more detailed report will be available after learning about the new system. A Van Neil shared that she needs to talk to E Wimpfheimer about the outstanding fees for the gate attendant at Granbrook Park from the summer of 2023. The next budget needs to include a program director position, because it is currently funded by the ARPA Grant that is running out.

7. OLD BUSINESS

A. Committee Reports

1. **Farmington Valley Heritage Trail** – R Ravens-Seger stated that the same troubles persist but haven't gotten much worse. There were some tree cuttings near the trail from Copper Hill south to Rt. 20. The fences all look good. A Van Neil shared a resident reported the section of trail from Floydville Rd to Rt. 189 has a lot of holes. K Hines reminded the group this is the section she has been reporting the damage of in previous meetings.
 - a. **Emergency Management Markers**- No update

2. **Cowles Park** – K Hines shared that the park is still being used heavily. A Van Neil shared that Tom Pavelchak has done a lot of boardwalk replacements by Rt. 187 and Wynding Hills.
 - a. **Emergency Management Markers**- A Van Neil shared some suggestions from Ken Beliveau, East Granby Emergency Management. The committee and Ken need to discuss options.
 - b. **ADA Bike Trail** - No update.

3. **Granbrook Park** – A Van Neil shared that Pat McKenney finished the clean-up around the playscape area with a resident who has also donated the funds for the work. The area flooded in the recent storm. Water reached the parking lot and the park needed to be closed for 2 days.
 - a. **Gate Attendant/charge Summer 2024** – A discussion was held regarding the next steps. K Hines asked if guests of residents could be allowed to use the park for free if non-residents are charged a usage fee. This will be included in future discussions. Public discussions should be announced in the March "Let's Talk Turkey" and held in March so that final decisions can be made and implemented before Memorial Day weekend.
 - b. **Softball Field** – A Van Neil shared that she has drafted the Wetlands application and will work on completing it.

4. **East Granby Farms** –
 - a. **Basketball Court Update**- A Van Neil stated that warmer weather is needed to install, and M Dlugolenski is looking for a contractor.
 - b. **Playscape Update**- The Board of Finance wondered if part of the STEAP Grant money could be used for the playscape at the south entrance. The state answered that it is not since the grant application did not include it. First Selectwoman Eden Wimpfheimer will bring this information back to the BOF. It is possible to find other grant opportunities to apply for the playscape.

Motion: K Hines made a motion to remove the current tractor playscape at East Granby Farms due to safety concerns. R Ravens-Seger seconded the motion. A discussion followed. The concern is taking it down without having a plan to put a new structure in place. M Bengel asked

if a sign could be posted to use at your own risk. L Bevins asked if caution tape should be put up around it for now. M Bengel mentioned that more information will be available soon after the next BOF meeting. K Hines withdrew the motion.

- c. **STEAP Grant-** The grant was approved at the town meeting. The committee is currently being finalized and construction contractors are being considered. The project will be completed in 3-5 years.
- d. **Ball Field Updates-** The back-stop area clean-up has been completed.

5. **Sports Programs/Coaching/Training/Policies** – A Van Neil shared that M Dlugolenski and L Bevins updated the coaching contract. Additional expectations and procedures have been added. The company Averity: Protect Youth Sports is still being used to perform background checks, but the process has been upgraded from the basic package to the plus package. The basic package reviews backgrounds at a Federal level while the plus package reviews down to the County and State level. Training and coaching clinics are still needed. The Plus Package costs about \$7-\$11 more per person, and we will start doing the checks annually instead of every other year.

6. **Program Committee** –

- a. **Tree Lighting-** The event was held on 12/1 and went well. L Bevins shared that the luminaries were set up the night before and then set out the night of the lighting. 2 SUVs were used, but more would have been better. Maybe the luminary bags don't need to go up as far towards the library. The other area for improvement for the event is to set up the hot chocolate differently so the line doesn't back up outside. A Van Neil shared an idea of possibly combining the tree lighting event with the Women's Club Winter Wonderland event, and possibly even with the Student Valley Theater performance to make a Kick-Off to Winter weekend. Tree Medics did a wonderful job pruning the tree but mentioned that the tree has bare spots and may not be well.
- b. **Program Committee Members-** The people that were not selected to be commission members recently are going to be on the program sub-committee.

B. Park Rules – M Bengel has a draft of the park rules to send out to the commission.

8. **NEW BUSINESS**

A. Nominating Officers – K Hines shared the following nominations: Pat Gill for chairperson, Morgan Bengel for Vice-Chairperson, and Leona Bevins for Treasurer.

Motion: R Ravens-Seger made a motion and K Hines seconded to approve the slate of nominees as presented: Pat Gill for chairperson, Morgan Bengel for Vice-Chairperson, and Leona Bevins for Treasurer. Votes in favor were unanimous. Motion carried.

9. OTHER NEW BUSINESS

- A. **Sub-Committees** – A discussion was held regarding the various sub-committees. A few changes were made. New members should consider joining a sub-committee.
- B. **2024 Event Dates** – A discussion was held regarding setting the dates for the events that the Parks and Recreation Commission will hold for the town this year. Approving the list of dates has been tabled until the next meeting.
- C. **CT Recreational Trails Grant** – A grant opportunity is available in CT for multi-use trails. There is \$10 million available. Some of the possible areas of improvement are: Cowles Park repairs, Making more trails at Cowles Park ADA Accessible, Performing maintenance on the Farmington Valley Heritage Trail (the Greenway Bike Path), Creating a trail from the bridge down to Granbrook Park, and Creating a trail from the North Entrance of East Granby Farms up to the ridge. The last suggestion ties into the correspondence received from Jennifer Frank. Creating an actual hiking trail that goes from the north entrance of East Granby Farms up to the ridge would allow hikers to avoid using the deteriorating access road. A committee will meet to discuss this topic. The deadline for this application is March 12. M Bengel, C McKenney, R Ravens-Seeger, L Bevins and J Kovaleski will be on the committee.

10. ADJOURNMENT

A motion was made by R Ravens-Seeger and seconded by N Sokolowski to adjourn the meeting at 8:16 pm. Votes in favor were unanimous. Motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,
Jennifer Kovaleski
Commission Clerk