

MINUTES
East Granby Parks & Recreation Commission
East Granby, Connecticut
March 4, 2021

1. CALL TO ORDER

A regular meeting of the East Granby Parks & Recreation Commission was held via Zoom and telephone call-in on Thursday, March 4, 2021. Chairman Patrick Gill called the meeting to order at 7:03 pm. Members present were Vice Chairman Jay Brady, Treasurer Rosalie McKenney, Karen Hines, Doreen Jacius, and Nicole Sokolowski. Also present was Program Director Alicia Van Neil.

P Gill welcomed N Sokolowski, the newest member of the Commission.

2. DISCUSSION WITH THE PUBLIC

None

3. APPROVE MINUTES

There was not a quorum of members who attended the meeting on February 4, 2021. Therefore, the approval of that meeting's minutes will be done at the next meeting.

4. CORRESPONDENCE

A Van Neil stated that she received a letter from the East Granby Advisory Committee which was established by The Hartford Foundation to seek and review opportunities for the Foundation to give grants for small projects. The letter is an invitation to the Commission to apply for grant money.

5. PROGRAM DIRECTOR'S REPORT

A Van Neil stated that the children's basketball program is now possible because the Superintendent of schools has granted permission for the use of the Allgrove School and Seymour School gyms, as well as the High School gym on weekends. The season will be modified to five weeks of intramural play only. Approximately 100 children in grades K-8 will participate within their age group.

Currently continuing are the dance series, the cooking series, and two adult art sessions. There is a new drawing class called "Cartooning;" and the theater program will begin in two weeks.

First Selectman Jim Hayden has changed the guidelines for building use. Effective March 8, 2021, meetings can be held by groups with a COVID officer and/or an over-riding agency that oversees the group's COVID plan. This means the barn at the Farm can be used for meetings by groups like the Boy Scouts or the Girl Scouts or Little League. There is a plan for a continued phase-in of building use between now and May or June.

Since the Governor has changed the guidelines for outdoor gatherings, a flag football season is being planned.

The summer season has had so many parts in flux that publishing any details in Let's Talk Turkey as is usually done at this time of year is not possible. However details are taking shape and she expects to post them on facebook and through the schools and her database in April or May.

6. TREASURER'S REPORT

R McKenney stated that less than 50% of the budget has been spent which would make it likely that there will be money left over.

7. OLD BUSINESS

A. Committee Reports

- 1. Farmington Valley Heritage Trail** – B Ravens-Seeger sent a report which was read by P Gill. He stated that he walked the trail before and after recent snow and rain. The area south of Copper Hill Road was well used by snowmobiles which made for an easy walking surface. An unknown person plowed the area north of the road which caused gouging of the trail surface and damage to the wooden deck of the Beaver Dam Marsh bridge.

R McKenney stated that the Hawk System has been approved is going to be constructed by the State soon at the Rt 20 crossing. This system of crosswalk lights will improve safety.

- 2. Open Space** – R McKenney stated that money has started to accumulate in the open space account due to the recent sale of vacant approved subdivision lots with open space areas and the subsequent filed building plans.
- 3. Cowles Park** – K Hines stated that she had been snowshoeing before the recent windstorm and saw that somebody had been using the fields and brush areas away from the trails for quad use. D Jacius stated that there has been an increasing use of motorized vehicles at the park, as well as the fire trail and everything that is connected to the park up to the ridge.

These vehicles do a lot of damage. They learned that Galasso and Eversource are also not pleased with the motorized vehicle use of their properties up there and are working to shore up their entrances by replacing the gates and place cinder blocks such that only non-motorized vehicles can pass. Once they complete this work, the Commission will need to be even more observant of the park entrances and discuss ways of preventing unwanted motorized vehicle entry without preventing access by emergency vehicles. The entrance at Tunxis Avenue is believed to be where the quads came into the park.

NEMBA has been doing the trail grooming by hand during the winter and has been exploring alternate options. They wanted to acquire a Snowdog machine which would groom the trails for all forms of non-motorized use. They raised the money and have purchased the machine. It is likely they will begin using it next year as this winter nearing its end. This grooming will enhance trail use in a positive way.

4. **Granbrook Park** – J Brady stated he had no report
5. **East Granby Farms** – R McKenney stated she contacted TJ Baressy, an engineer/surveyor who used to work for the original firm that created the Masterplan for the Farm. She asked him to work up a cost for updating the Masterplan. She would like to use this update as a springboard to start Phase II. There are currently several new sources of funding to do parts of Phase II including the Little League, the open space account, a possible grant from The Hartford Foundation, and asking for some capital money from the Board of Selectmen and the Board of Finance. The cost for the update would come from the Contracted Services line.
6. **Marketing** – A Van Neil stated that she met with C Leadbeater. They decided that the first points of emphasis would be large events including photos. Then the effort will include creating a publicity calendar for regular programs.

8. NEW BUSINESS

- A. **Bylaws** – A Van Neil stated that at their meeting, C Leadbeater stated she intends to email the proposed changes which would have been discussed at this meeting to the members for review and discussion at the next meeting.
- B. **Committee Review** – A Van Neil reviewed the current list of members working on the Subcommittees. She suggested adding a new one for Recreation Sports Programs which would investigate whether these programs are meeting the requirements for hiring and background checks. There was a consensus that this would be a good idea. Members volunteered to work on several Subcommittees for which only one person was listed.

C. Easter – A Van Neil stated that she has chosen April 3, 2021 for the Easter Egg Hunts. They will be offered for free. A total of up to 200 participants and accompanying adults would be permitted; but people will have to sign up so that there are not more than 200 and so contact tracing would be possible if needed. The logistics, including how and where to set up the hunts for each age group and how many people can accompany each child, still need to be decided. There will also be Operation Egg Drop which will bring eggs to children whose families are not comfortable with an in-person hunt. The delivery would be made by the Easter Bunny on April 2, 2021. The logistics for this will also have to be worked out. The cost to do the hunts has been \$900.

A motion was made by J Brady and seconded by D Jacius to approve \$900 for the Easter events. The votes were in favor were unanimous. Motion carried.

D Jacius offered a shout out to A Van Neil for the Wednesday programs she has been running for children. They help offset so much of the cooped up feelings children are having because of COVID.

D. R McKenney wanted to start the thought process about having a summer concert or two. Her hope was to have one in June and another in August. She stated that on the one hand, booking a band now instead of waiting to see how open things become concerning COVID would potentially get good bands. On the other hand, if she books a band and then has to cancel, she would feel bad that a band closed a date for any other booking and lost a payday. She also needs help figuring out how to keep the audience, both seated and milling about, socially distanced in accordance with whatever the rules are on the concert date.

After some discussion, it was the consensus that she contact bands to ask if they would hold a booking date without a guarantee that the concert can occur. A Van Neil stated that she will contact the people she knows who run bigger venues, like Simsbury, to find out how they intend to do their audience social distancing.

9. ADJOURNMENT

A motion was made by R McKenney and seconded by J Brady to adjourn the meeting at 7:57 pm. The votes in favor were unanimous. Motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,
Barbara Marsele
Commission Clerk

