

Parks Commission Meeting Minutes

January 9, 2023 - 2:00 pm

Members present: Chair Antone Lima, Commissioner Richard Combra Jr., Commissioner Amy Billings and Executive Administrator Nicole Morey

Others Present Via Zoom: Oliver Kennedy, Jackie Kane, Kharma Finley-Wallace, Nike Okediji and Ann Smith.

Meeting recorded by Nicole Morey and later transcribed by Patty Culkins

2:00 PM Open meeting

2:05 PM

New Business

Discussion and possible vote on changes to the 2023 Special Use Permit Application

Chair Lima discussed items on the Special Use Permit Application that are being considered for change:

- Increase in the fee schedule for events based on size (was previously voted on).
- Tents over 10 x 10 will need a permit from the Building Department and tents may not be strung together to create larger spaces. Tents may not be used on the beaches.
- Events with over 50 attendees will need at least one port-a-potty. The Board of Health should be consulted as to whether additional ones are required.
- A \$25.00 filing fee and \$200.00 deposit fee are non-refundable once event is approved by the Commissioners. Deposits will be refunded if an event is not approved or is cancelled ahead of time.
- There must be at least 30 days from approval date to event date.
- Any permits needed from other departments must be submitted before approval is given.
- If Police Detail is needed, form must be approved and signed solely by the Police Chief.

Commissioner Combra made a motion to approve changes on Special Use Permit Application. Commissioner Billings seconded. (3 ayes)

Discussion and possible vote on article for April 2023 STM to cover budget shortfall

Chair Lima discussed the Parks Department article for the Special Town Meeting requesting \$35,600.00 to cover the budget shortfall, largely to do with the contract for the Ocean Park maintenance that was signed after the budget process had been completed. It is requested to fill the gap in the budget that has been short for the past nine months.

Commissioner Billings made a motion to approve the Parks Department article for the Special Town Meeting. Commissioner Combra seconded. (3 ayes)

Request to use Ocean Park Bandstand for proposal

Commissioner Lima has a request to open Ocean Park Bandstand in February for a marriage proposal event (3-4 people). He said it could be accommodated.

Commissioner Billings made a motion to approve event and waive the fee. Commissioner Combra seconded. (3 ayes)

Discussion of seasonal use of Sunset Lake Park for remote control boats

Oliver Kennedy was present via zoom. He asked for permission to continue to have remote control boats, that are owned by a group from New Jersey, at Sunset Lake Park. Commissioner Combra asked if there was a fee. Kennedy responded they would like to charge a fee but currently the only charge is to cover the cost of batteries and fuel.

Commissioner Lima said Kennedy's application is not on the agenda for a Special Use Permit because he wanted to have more discussion on this request. He said the Parks Commission is trying to get a handle on businesses wanting to operate in town parks and beaches, as there have been many issues with businesses charging fees, times of day the park is being used, plans of access and use concerning damage to parks and beaches. Lima asked that this item be put on the next agenda for the meeting on February 6th. He asked Mr. Kennedy to take another look at the application being submitted and supply more details about what was mentioned.

Special Use Permit Applications

Onuorah wedding; Ocean Park (between pond & bandstand) – Sunday, June 25, 2023

Jackie Kane for the Onuorah wedding requested via zoom; use of the area in front of the pond near the bandstand in Ocean Park for 50-60 guests. She requested the space for an hour to include the setup of benches, the ceremony and permission for a soloist musician and photographer. Chair Lima said that he had sent an email to the client about park policy, which included information that the park is for town events only except for the bandstand. The Commission said they can issue a permit for the base of or in the bandstand only. It was also discussed that even if a permit was given for the bandstand, it is a public space which others may be enjoying at the same time and band concerts are scheduled during that time of year so the time of the wedding may have to be adjusted. The Commission said they would not be comfortable allowing the bandstand for the number of guests. Commissioner Billings asked for an updated application for the next meeting because of the changes and the applicant may have to go before the Select Board because of the amplified music. The Wedding Planner agreed to revise the application.

Juneteenth Jubilee Festival 2023; Waban/Alley Park – Friday, June 16, Saturday, June 17 & Sunday, June 18, 2023

Kharmia Finley-Wallace requested via zoom; the use of Waban/Alley Park for Juneteenth Jubilee Festival overflow of panel discussion scheduled at the Tabernacle. Isis requested permission to set up a tent and serve food, however, she does not have anything specific lined up. Kharmia requested the park daily from 9:00 am to 9:00pm, with amplification from noon to 6:00pm. Chair Lima suggested that ending the event at 7:00pm would be better for the park neighbors and felt that the applicant should come back to the commission with specific information on the application for the event such as the location of tent, power source location, number of attendees, number of port-a-potties and decide if there will be food. The application should include a site map. He stressed that all information must be specific. Kharmia agreed to return with a more detailed application.

Soulfully Textured, Natural Hair Festival; Waban/Alley Park – Saturday, August 12, 2023 (rain date August 13)

Nike Okediji requested via zoom; the use of Waban/Alley Park for Soulfully Textured, Natural Hair Festival. Okediji requested permission to have vendors, speakers and food or food trucks, The event will be the same as the 2022 event. Chair Lima asked about plans for fenced parking, including what material would be used for fencing and the area that would be used. Commissioner Billings asked if there was a rain date (Sunday) and added there will be more than one port-a-potty needed. She asked Okediji to include more information on food trucks in the application but felt that otherwise the application looked good. She added that Okediji may need to add a scaled map for the Select Board. Chair Lima asked Okediji to stay in contact, check back with them mid spring and send Executive Administrator Nicole Morey an updated map.

Commissioner Combra made a motion to go ahead with the permitting process. Commissioner Billings seconded it. (3 ayes)

Old Business

FY 24 budget - No updates

Pickleball - No Updates

Park Director job description – Chair Lima will check in with Wendy Brough for updates.

Holiday light display 2022

Commissioners would like to clarify who is responsible if display lights go out or are blown off. They would like to have point of contact information from the final bidder.

Healy Square relocation of trees – No updates

FY 23 budget/CIP – No updates

East Chop Lighthouse – No updates

Updates/Comments

Commissioner Billings commented that this year the Yoga groups must be permitted and may have to be put out to bid. She is unsure how to handle the rest of the exercise class activities that are on town property but feels strongly that something needs to be done prior to summer months. Chair Lima agreed and said he would write a letter to the organizers of the known yoga and exercise groups and encourage them to apply for a permit well in advance of the summer.

Via zoom, Ann Smith asked that the board be consistent and fair concerning all businesses running classes from the town parks and beaches.

Previous minutes; June 13 & 27, November 7, December 5, 2022

Commissioner Billings noted minutes for November 7 - on “cleaning up Niantic Park” It should read – “parents are willing to clean up and not fix up”.

Commissioner Billings made a motion to approve the minutes. Combra seconded. (3 ayes)

Future meeting dates: February 6 & March 6, 2023

Chair Lima Made a motion to adjourn. Commissioner Billings seconded.

Meeting adjourned 3:11 pm