

**Town of Hamden  
Parks and Recreation Commission  
Minutes of Special Meeting  
January 19th, 2021  
7:00 pm**

1/12/2021 - Minutes

1. Call To Order

Chairman Leonardo called the meeting to order at 7:09 pm.

2. Attendance

Attending: Richard Leonardo, Chairman; Christine Huber; Ken Sweeten; Arnold Mann; Sarah Morrill

Absent: Thaddeus Watson; Chris Ruggiero; Patrick Donnelly

Also in Attendance: Craig Cesare; Liana Paglia; Commission clerk

3. Approval Of Past Minutes

Chairman Leonardo requested a motion to waive the minutes from the January 14th, 2020 meeting. Mr. Mann made a motion to waive the minutes, to which Ms. Huber seconded. All were in favor.

4. Old Business

4.1. Parks & Recreation Director's Report

Mr. Cesare updated the commission on how Covid-19 has impacted Hamden recreational activities. There was a transition to virtual activities, such as holiday wreath making tutorials and family concerts. The end of summer drive-in movie series was another successful activity, showcasing the continuous improvement of social distancing practices. In regards to the winter sports, socially distanced tryouts began on 1/19/21. There is ongoing discussion in regards to travelling, scheduling, and spectator regulations. The general consensus is to take a day by day approach to ensure the winter sports programs meet the Covid guidelines.

Mr. Mann questioned if Hamden charges a fee to rent the athletic fields. Mr. Cesare explained that it has been discussed previously, but is not currently in practice. He is in support of charging for field use, as the Town incurs the costs of maintaining the fields. He highlighted a growing concern that several out of town leagues have been sighted using Hamden fields, unpermitted. He suggested that the commission make an official recommendation to charge for field use, which would need approval from the legislative council.

Mr. Mann questioned if the Board of Education covers the cost of lining the soccer fields for the Hamden High School team. Mr. Cesare explained that the baseball and soccer teams typically use the new high school field, as opposed to the other local fields. A Board of Education maintainer is sent out to line the park for a game. The Hamden Public Works Department lines fields for middle school athletic teams, however.

Mr. Sweeten and Mr. Cesare discussed the permitting and field scheduling process. Mr. Cesare explained that the recreation staff handles the permitting and then schedules those teams on a master schedule. Outside teams are somehow learning the schedule of the Hamden teams, and using the fields when they are available. Mr. Sweeten questioned how these teams gain access to the fields. Mr.

Cesare explained that the fields are not locked or gated; they are open to the public. Mr. Cesare also raised the point of a potential liability issue if outside teams play on Hamden fields, unpermitted.

Ms. Huber questioned Mr. Cesare if the master schedule had been completed. Mr. Cesare explained that the master schedule is part of the new town website, but did not go public this season. He did say there has been success with the shared schedule among the Board of Education, Parks and Recreation Supervisors, and league officials. However, the calendar only shows legally permitted team scheduling.

Ms. Morrill arrived at 7:33pm.

The discussion returned to charging for field use. Mr. Cesare suggested the commissioners contact other towns for comparable rates and draft an official recommendation.

Mr. Mann questioned what constitutes a Hamden team. There was some discussion amongst the other commissioners as to whether that means all team members or a majority need to be from Hamden. They also discussed whether only outside teams should be charged, or Hamden teams as well, but at a discounted rate. Mr. Cesare concluded by saying that procedures such as permitting and field usage fees, play a component in contributing to the fiscal responsibility of the town.

Ms. Huber pointed out that Mr. Donnelly had started compiling comparable field rates from other towns. Mr. Cesare agreed to ask Mr. Donnelly to organize the data and send it to the commissioners. Ms. Morrill clarified that as an advisory commission, they can only make recommendations to the mayor's office, which after review could be brought before the legislative council. She questioned Mr. Cesare on the depth and quality of their suggestions. Mr. Cesare explained that recommendations should be based on due diligence. Displaying the comparable rates from other towns would be sufficient.

Ms. Morrill said that it would be helpful when creating the fee structure, to know what is under this commission's jurisdiction, as opposed to the Town Center Park Commission. Mr. Sweeten and Mr. Cesare both agreed that it would be beneficial to hold a joint meeting or forum with the Town Center Park Commission. The clerk, Ms. Paglia, mentioned that she is the clerk for the TCP commission meetings as well, and can pose the idea to the chairman at their next meeting.

Chairman Leonardo asked the commissioners if there were any additional questions for Mr. Cesare and there were not. Mr. Cesare ended by saying that he would touch base with Mr. Donnelly about sending out a master schedule for the different teams/fields.

5. New Business

6. Adjournment

At 8:08 pm, Chairman Leonardo requested a motion to adjourn. Mr. Sweeten made a motion to adjourn, which was seconded by Ms. Huber.

**Submitted by: Liana Paglia, Commission Clerk**