



**Town of Ridgefield Parks & Recreation Commission Meeting Minutes**  
**Tuesday, October 18, 2022 at 6:30 pm**  
**Meeting held via Zoom**  
**APPROVED**

**PRESENT:** P. Kearns, D. Shofi, K. Hulber, E. Bottali, P. Nichols, D. DiPinto, E. Cipolla, A. Platt  
**Guest:** Karen Sulzinsky

These minutes are a general summary of the meeting and are not intended to be a verbatim transcription. A recording of the meeting will be available for 45 days post:  
<https://www.ridgefieldparksandrec.org/about-parks-recreation/commission>

**Meeting called to order by Chair at 6:33 pm.**

**APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

David Shofi made a motion to approve the agenda. Seconded by Pete Nichols. Motion carried 5-0.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Motion made by David Shofi to approve the September minutes. Seconded by Pete Nichols. Motion carried 5-0.

**FINANCIAL UPDATE**

Eileen Cipolla provided the monthly financial report. Projected revenue and expenses are on-target.

**BUSINESS UPDATES**

**Chairman's Report** – Phil Kearns

Updates will be covered under New Business and committee reports.

**Director's Report** – Dennis DiPinto

- Finishing up interviews for three key positions with the department
- Continue to work with the Buildings and Grounds committee, land use attorney and sound expert on the Martin Park special permit
- Attended monthly revenue meeting at Town Hall
- In the early stages of putting together the FY2024 Capital Budget
- Met with members of the Father's Club to review a proposed club house structure

**Marketing & Programs** – Kathy Fassman was not in attendance

No new updates to share this month.



**Asst. Director Parks** – Dennis DiPinto covered for Bob Schneider in his absence

- Outdoor Maintenance crew is finishing fall clean-up and plantings
- Participated in interviews for the new maintenance positions

### **SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS**

**Marketing, Promotions & Membership** –Evie Bottali

Nothing new to report

**Aquatics & Programs** –Barbara Dobbin

Nothing new to report

**Budget & Policy** – Phil Kearns

Reviewed first round of the Capital budget and expect a couple of more rounds before it goes to the First Selectman for review.

**Buildings & Grounds (B&G)** – David Shofi

Committee continues to work thought the P&Z special permit application process for Martin Park pickleball – presented a second time on 10/11/22, and will continue to a third meeting on 10/25/22.

**Special Services, Community Outreach and Customer Experience** – Kim Hulber

Nothing new to report.

**Strategic Planning & Annual Goals** – Phil Kearns

Nothing new to report

### **NEW BUSINESS:**

#### **1. Native Plant Policy**

- The Town has adopted a new policy that states any new plantings on town properties should be native to the Northeast with a few exceptions that can be presented to the Conservation Commission.
- Prior to the new native plant policy P&R began a beautification project in 2021 focused on enhancing the walking trails at the Rec Center where blossoming cherry trees were planted. Currently, P&R is three trees short of finishing the project, and Mr. Kearns will request to be included on the agenda for the 10/19 BOS meeting to discuss whether we would be allowed to finish the plantings under the new policy.
- Mr. Kearns shared his thoughts and asked for the Commissions' input regarding the following discussion points which he plans to discuss during the next BOS meeting:

- 1) While P&R does support the initiative, the Commission feels the policy was made



prematurely of any input from or adequate communication with the P&R department.

- 2) P&R feels our park properties should be excluded from the town's policy or at minimum P&R be given the discretion to plant specimen ornamental trees, especially in Ballard Park. P&R agrees that nothing invasive would be planted in any of our parks.
  - 3) Lastly, for the current Rec Center beautification initiative, we are three trees short of completing that project on the Rec Center property, and want to confirm whether the BOS would allow us to complete the project as planned.
- Discussion ensued whether there is a native equivalent to those plantings that are non-native. And, what is the justification for not allowing non-native plantings that aren't considered invasive – many of these plants could still be considered good pollinators.
  - Mr. DiPinto provided comment that P&R does not plant invasive species on any of our properties, and the sweeping decision came as a surprise and it would be better to have a policy that is jointly-proposed between Commissions.

## **2. Commission Committee Reorganization**

- Mr. Kearns proposed a shift in the committee members going forward to better align with P&R staff and provide some additional synergy. Ms. Platt agreed to share the document via email with the Commissioners for their input.

With no further business, David Shofi moved to adjourn the meeting at 7:33pm. Pete Nichols seconded the motion and the motion carried 5-0.

**REMINDER: Next meeting scheduled for Tuesday, November 15, 2022 at 6:30 pm via Zoom.**