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**Stonington Recreation Commission Meeting  
Monday, January 25, 2016 at 6:00 PM  
Human Services Community Meeting Room**

Meeting Minutes

Present: Chairman Michael Crowley and Vice-Chair Frank Prachniak  
Commissioners Joe McKernan, Jennifer Norcross, Joe Ciriello,  
and Larry Theodore  
Recreation Administrator Richard Ward  
Human Services Manager Leanne Theodore  
Stonington Community Center Representative Kelsey Haack

Absent: Commissioner Beth Quesnel

Chairman Michael Crowley called the meeting to order at 6:06 PM.

**I. Public's Opportunity to Address the Commission**

Kelsey Haack, the new representative from the Stonington Community Center, will be involved at meetings. She is their Athletic Program Manager.

**II. Secretary's Report**

Human Services Manager Leanne Theodore noted that it is very hard to capture all the comments made during meetings. She asked to amend the November meeting minutes in regards to the partnership with the Stonington Community Center (COMO). She stated that there are good things going on, and the intention is to move forward in fostering and promoting the basketball program. The Stonington Recreation Commission will not take over the program, but work together with the COMO to make it better.

One more amendment to the minutes is to change "Online Student Jake DiScuillo" to just read "Student Jake DiScuillo" present at the November meeting.

A motion was made by Commissioner Prachniak to approve the November 30, 2015 Secretary's Report with the above noted changes. Motion seconded by Commissioner Norcross, all in favor, motion approved.

**III. Budget Reports**

Recreation Administrator Richard Ward noted a \$14,000 expense in the Facilities Maintenance Line includes the \$10,000 purchase of cameras. At

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this time last year there was a total revenue of \$27,000. At this time, the total revenue is \$41,000. Nothing jumps out as far as the MUNIS report. Everything is on target. There is a concern that the Utilities line will be overdrawn, there may be a need to roll over funds from another line.

A motion was made by Commissioner McKernan to approve the Budget Report, to include the October 2015, November 2015 and December 2015 reports. Motion seconded by Commissioner Ciriello, all in favor, motion approved.

**IV. Recreation Administrator's Report  
Winter Program Update**

- 1. Youth Programs**
- 2. Middle School & High School Programs**
- 3. Adult Programs**

**Spring plans: Brochure preview**

The adult volleyball league is not running this year as there were only two teams interested. Groton was able to accommodate these two teams in their league. Mr. Ward stated that he will not be giving up on the program and will try again next year.

Zumba is up from 12 participants. There is a new space to run this program. Marketing was also good.

Ski trips to Powder Ridge did not work out as a full bus load was needed and only 6-8 participants signed up. No snow may have been a factor. Commissioner Norcross suggested trying to organize this again.

The Safe Boating Course is doing well. There have been extra courses added that are almost sold out. This is run at the High School by Jerry Desmond.

Upcoming programs will include Yoga, Hike Stonington, Art in the Park, and Powderpuff Flag Football. All programs are in the guide which will be going out in February.

Commissioner Ciriello noted that he really likes the Hike Stonington Program. He feels it is definitely something that is a great activity. Commissioner Norcross noted that it will really highlight the area. Mr. Ward said there is a good response on sponsorship for this event. There are currently two sponsors – Avolonia Nature Trust and the Pequotesepos Nature Center will be “in kind sponsors”.

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Mr. Ward said he has been here just about a year now. Going forward, he would like the Commission to focus on strategies to improve on. He handed out "homework" sheets for the Commission members to brainstorm what they want to zero in on in the four areas listed below:

1. Meet the Needs of the Community
2. Increase Senior & Adult Programs
3. 100% Youth Participation
4. Town Parks & Facilities

Mr. Ward will put all the ideas together and present them to the Commission at a future meeting. Chairman Crowley said everyone needs to be aware of what other organizations in Town such as the COMO and the YMCA does so as to be careful not to step on toes. Human Services Director Leanne Theodore noted that Human Services is working on strategic planning as a whole and is making sure the focus is on collaboration with non-profits and the schools.

This will be placed on the agenda for the next meeting to discuss at that time.

#### V. **Chairman's Report**

Chairman Crowley congratulated Mr. Ward for being here one year. Leanne Theodore said Mr. Ward is doing a great job, is a team player and she is happy to have him on board.

Chairman Crowley noted that the work on the multi-purpose field is done and it came out good. He is going to talk to First Selectman Robert Simmons and approach the school department about the Recreation Commission taking over the practice football field. The Town does all the maintenance on the field with the exception of cutting the grass. There is \$40,000 left in the Bond. These funds will be used for a fence/barrier around the tennis courts. Parking will also be added at Spellman Park.

Mr. Ward communicated by letter with Bill King of the School Department and Ken Donovan. Chairman Crowley informed the Commission of some of the elements in the letter and the response received. The first is items piled up around the Palmer Building that need to be cleaned up. King agrees 100% and will have it cleared out. Second is the Batting Cage, which Chairman Crowley would like to see taken down every year. King is working to determine who would be responsible for this. Third is a dirt pile and wire fencing in area across from the Palmer Building. Hopefully this will be moved down towards the dug-out on the baseball field and an appropriate spot will be found for the dirt. Fourth is the red tractor trailer truck. King said there was an original plan

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to purchase sheds. They are at an impasse for a place to store the track and field equipment. There was a shed, but it was demolished. Commissioner Norcross suggested having the woodshop students build a shed.

**VI. Facilites ad-hoc committee**  
**a. Multipurpose field updates**

Mr. Ward feels this is fine for now. Tabled to March meeting.

**VII. Old Business**  
**a. REC/COMO Youth Basketball League**  
**b. Field usage fees**

Field usage fees was discussed first. Mr. Ward handed out what is currently on record as approved by the Recreation Commission for the fee structure. He feels the agreement as a whole should be looked at. He suggested, for non-profit groups, to ask groups to sponsor off season clinics and one summer camp in lieu of paying fees for field use. The funds generated by these clinics and summer camps would go into the accounts that are for field maintenance. He feels this would be a good solution to negative comments regarding fees. The groups would have to follow through with expectations, and if not would then be charged a fee. A contract or memorandum of understanding would be put in place.

This item was tabled to the next meeting.

REC/COMO Youth Basketball League: Mr. Ward asked Commissioner Ciriello and Kelsey Haack, COMO Representative to speak. Commissioner Ciriello, Mr. Ward, Leanne Theodore, Beth Stewart, Kelsey Haack, and COMO Program Director Priscilla met on January 22, 2016. Commissioner Ciriello read the following with regards to that meeting:

“Meeting 1/22/16 Ms. Stewart was concerned that Mr. Wall’s comments were not representative of the overall relationship between Recreation and the COMO. Ms. Stewart did acknowledge that deficiencies did occur and are being addressed. Our combined efforts must continue to ensure a world class basketball program. The COMO and the Recreation Dept. must continue to work in close cooperation to ensure all community concerns are met. The fee schedule was discussed. Ms. Stewart stated that scholarships and other costs mitigation measures were available to families. Concerns have been raised about facility availability in light of the proliferation of soccer programs during the basketball season. This

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issue should be addressed through a review of current programming. Adjustments next season to correct the inequity in available space for basketball should occur. A continued collaboration between the COMO and Stonington Recreation will ensure that a world class recreational basketball program will grow and flourish.”

Leanne Theodore felt there was good representation at the meeting and they were able to get a lot of questions answered. Issues with officials have already been addressed. The program is on the road to being back on track with adequate space for next year.

**VII. New Business**

Mr. Ward is looking for sponsors for Hike Stonington and movie nights.

**IX. Meeting Adjourned**

A motion to adjourn was made by Commissioner Ciriello at 7:43 PM. Motion seconded by Commissioner McKernan. All in favor, motion approved. Meeting adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted,



C. Michael Crowley, Chairman