

Kent Park and Recreation
Minutes Feb. 22, 2021 Meeting

Present: Blythe Everett, Lynn Harrington, Diane Impastato, Julia Neff, Michael Perkins, Abigail Smith Hanby, Kate Symonds, director Lesly Ferris.

Public & Invited Guests: None present.

Chairman Lynn Harrington called the monthly meeting to order at 7:03 p.m. via Zoom.

The commission held a moment of silence in honor and remembrance of Town highway employee John Lindsay. Ms. Ferris remarked on the many things John did for Park and Recreation.

Elevation of Alternates: Ms. Smith Hanby made a motion to elevate alternates Diane Impastato and Julia Neff. Ms. Symonds seconded the motion, and the motion was approved unanimously.

Acceptance of agenda: Mrs. Everett made a motion to approve the agenda as submitted. Ms. Smith Hanby seconded the motion, and the motion was approved unanimously.

Acceptance of Minutes of January 25, 2021 monthly meeting: Ms. Smith Hanby clarified that her nay on the proposed budget increase is not tied to the director's performance. Mrs. Everett made a motion to approve the minutes as clarified. Mr. Perkins made a motion to second the motion, and the motion was approved unanimously.

Correspondence: Ms. Ferris shared with the commission via email a letter of resignation from After-School Program co-leader Susan Vizzari. Mr. Perkins made a motion to accept the resignation of Susan Vizzari with regret. Ms. Neff seconded the motion, and the motion was approved unanimously. Ms. Ferris will send Mrs. Vizzari a note of thanks on behalf of the commission for her many, many years of service. The current staff is sufficient to run the program at this time, Ms. Ferris said.

Public and Invited Guests: There was no one present.

Director's Report: In addition to the written report provided prior to the meeting (attached), Ms. Ferris reported:

- Slamma-Jamma Basketball is interested in holding summer basketball camp in Kent. Ms. Ferris has contacted Kent Center School, and the gym would not be available this summer due to a construction project. There was discussion about indoor versus outdoor facilities to hold this camp, as well as the need for shade and a place to shelter in case of weather.
- Mr. Perkins asked about a tennis camp and asked to speak this week with the director about this program.

Old Business: After-School Program: age eligibility: Ms. Ferris reported on her conversation with the KCS principal regarding the question about Pre-K students to attending the ASP. Ms. Ferris reported the pre-K program has separate morning and afternoon sessions. There are about

5 students in one class and 7 in the other. They are 3 and 4-year olds. Mrs. Harrington agrees with Ms. Ferris that they are too young for the ASP. The consensus is to leave the topic on the agenda for continued discussion. Commissioners should send specific questions to the director.

Ms. Ferris said she thinks the present staff at ASP is adequate to run the current program. Ms. Ferris noted the creativity of the youngsters at “free” craft time, noting each child has their own craft bag with supplies.

Parks: projects, seasonal worker: Commissioner John Grant provided a job description for the proposed part-time season worker. Ms. Ferris reminded the commission that the person’s hours need to be a maximum of 25/week. The person would be entitled to benefits if they worked 30 or more hours/week. The director questioned if the commission should consider hiring a subcontractor to do the work. Ms. Neff said she is curious about what the other regional programs do. Ms. Ferris will touch base with her counterparts in Region One. Ms. Ferris shared that Mr. Grant suggested putting a plaque on the bench at Kent Common Park where John Lindsay liked to sit. Ms. Impastato wondered if there should be a subcommittee to raise money to fund the purchase of a nice tree with a garden around to plant at Kent Common Park. Ms. Smith Hanby suggested inviting the community to participate in such a project. Mrs. Harrington suggested the Lions Club and the fire department might want to join. Ms. Ferris will check with Town to ask what is being planned and let the commission know.

Parks’ Master Plan: Ms. Ferris reported on her research of Park and Recreation’s Five-Year Capital Plan. There is \$150,000 earmarked for repairs of the Emery Park swimming area floor that is unspent along with a small amount remaining from the tennis court project. The director reported that the Town treasurer said these funds could be reallocated for other Park and Rec capital projects and would need to be approved by the Board of Finance and a vote of the townspeople. The commission discussed several uses for these capital funds. Ms. Smith Hanby questioned how is Park and Recreation going to prioritize the list of needed maintenance items, adding she doesn’t feel there is any criteria to make any of these decisions. Ms. Smith Hanby explained the work of the playing field subcommittee and the separate distinctions the committee made for the two parks (Emery Park was envisioned as more passive while Kent Common would be an active recreation area). Ms. Ferris asked how a decision about the status of the swimming area would be made. The commission consensus is to come up with a list of pointed questions about swimming in Kent and send that out a survey to the community. Ms. Ferris will send out potential dates for a meeting to create these questions.

Sports Programs: Ms. Ferris reported on the two Zoom meetings about the regional, charter Little League team and when/if that could start this spring. The directors are speaking with their local officials and school principals. Ms. Smith Hanby said she personally feels any athletic program in the summer should be outside.

2020-21 Monthly Budget Report: No report was received.

2021-22 Budget Proposal: KCS Ballfield Maintenance: Ms. Ferris shared with the commission a memo about the proposed expenditure for the ballfields that she emailed the playing field subcommittee. The infield maintenance and the fertilization program would be the same cost in the new fiscal year that it is currently. There was some discussion about prioritizing field usage and who has oversight of the playground area. Ms. Neff made a motion to approve \$8,750.00 for the KCS Ballfield Maintenance Line contingent upon who has priority for field use. Mrs. Everett seconded the motion. Ms. Smith Hanby asked what benefit Park and Rec gets for managing the fields, saying she would like a better understanding of what the commission is managing. Mrs. Everett made a motion to void the prior motion about the ballfield funding. Ms. Neff seconded the motion, and the motion was approved unanimously.

Ms. Symonds said she feels the commission needs to approve the maintenance money and then could have some future conversations to clarify the oversight of the fields. Ms. Smith Hanby made a motion to approve an allocation of \$8,750.00 in the proposed 2021-22 budget draft, Kent Center School Playing Field maintenance line. Ms. Symonds seconded the motion, and the motion was approved unanimously. Ms. Ferris will provide an updated report on the ballfields.

Easter Event Update: Ms. Ferris provided a written update of the Easter subcommittee's meetings to date (attached). Ms. Impastato said the subcommittee members thought it would be a better idea to do a rock theme as a spring scene. She shared the prize basket that she put together which also would contain a gift certificate to a local business. Ms. Ferris said the event still needs a name, and she asked for direction on how many goody bags to create. Ms. Smith Hanby said she likes the contest as being more a spring thing. Ms. Neff agrees, saying she feels it opens more opportunity for creativity. One name suggestion was Kent Park and Rock Contest; another was Spring Parks and Rocks. Mrs. Harrington voiced support for keeping the event as an Easter Egg event in place of the traditional egg hunt. Ms. Smith Hanby said maybe the commission wants to make the event more inclusive in considering a change. The subcommittee will meet to finalize event details, including the contest name.

2021 Concert Series: Ms. Ferris sent the list of questions to be considered about the concert series following the January meeting (attached). Mr. Perkins offered to put the questions in a google doc and send out to the commission to populate their answers. The consensus is to continue the concert series discussion at the March meeting.

New Business: There was no discussion.

The next Park and Recreation Commission meeting is March 22, 2021 at 7 p.m. Mrs. Harrington made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:42 p.m.

Lesly Ferris, Director

Minutes are not considered final until approved. Refer to the minutes from ensuing meeting for any changes and/or corrections.