

Town of Middlebury Parks and Recreation



**Betsy Anderson, APRP
Director**

COMMISSIONERS
Ron Clark, Chairman
Jack Worgan
Carolanne Browne
Mike Roach

MIDDLEBURY PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION

Meeting Minutes

Thursday April 8, 2021

Via Zoom

Present: Ron Clark, Chairman
Betsy Anderson, Director
Mike Roach
Jack Worgan
Carolanne Browne

Absent:

CALL MEETING TO ORDER

Ron Clark called the meeting to order at 6:02 PM.

APPROVE MINUTES

VOTED: Unanimously on a motion by Jack Worgan and seconded by Mike Roach to **APPROVE** the March 11, 2021 meeting minutes.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Mike Greider, Blueberry Knoll, said he appreciated the opportunity to join the meeting. He explained he has a 13 and 9 year old playing on Pomperaug Soccer League. The issue that he has is 4 to 5 days a week he has to drive his kids to Southbury for practice when there is plenty of open space in Middlebury not being utilized. He was told by Pomperaug Soccer the reason they don't use the fields in Middlebury is there is a charge. He said it bothers him greatly that Middlebury would charge a fee for playing on the fields in their own town. He said he feels that the fields are not up to par to be utilized like other towns are, and he would like to figure out how to improve them. Katie O'Connor, wanted to piggy back what Mike said. She has 2 kids that utilize Southbury facilities. She is asking why they aren't utilizing Middlebury's soccer fields and why, as Middlebury residents, are they being charged to use the fields? When she called the office, the person she spoke with told her that the First Selectman makes the charges. She wanted to get direction from this board first before moving forward to speaking with the First Selectman.

Ron responded by saying they never charged for years when Middlebury had their own soccer group. But they didn't have enough kids participating. When Southbury offered to combine towns, they allowed our kids to go into their teams. He said the teams are made up of about 30% of Middlebury kids. It cost the town about \$40,000.00 a year to maintain the fields. He said he appreciated what they had to say and will take what was said tonight and discuss the future use of the fields with the board. He told them they need to understand this board is up against the BOF and the First Selectman. He will see what they can do to decrease the cost.

Mike Greider said he posed the question on social media and there was quite a few people upset by it, and he had a huge response to the question. Ron said they will add the fields and cost to Old Business for next month's meeting.

Carolanne said the parents are being told by the soccer board that there is a fee to use the fields, and she feels they are pinning it on this board. She said there is a fee because not all the kids on the team are Middlebury residents. Most of the kids on the team are from Southbury and those parents are not going to want to drive to Middlebury. Mike Roach asked if the roles were reversed how much would Southbury charge. In their bylaws it states if 70% of the children are from Southbury they don't charge to use the fields, but if it's less, then they do. Ron said this has always been an issue. Mike said the biggest problem seems to be the traveling. Carolanne said that 70% of those parents are from Southbury and are not going to want to travel to Middlebury. Ron said the teams will always be dominated by kids from Southbury. When this team was set up all the parents knew they would traveling that far. He understands the fields are empty and it's frustrating. Middlebury has great fields without a lot of kids to play on them. Carolanne asked if they suggest waiving the fee for Pomperaug teams, and then, when they still don't want to come to Middlebury they can no longer blame them. A discussion ensued regarding the percentage of Southbury kids needed on a team in order to waive the usage charge. Betsy read the Southbury Park and Recreation policy which states there needs to be 65% or greater residents in order to waive the charge. Mike noted Pomperaug has a registration fee. When Middlebury collects a fee it goes toward the field maintenance, all their money goes directly to them. Carolanne suggested a letter be crafted when they do make a decision and it should let the residents know that Southbury would be charging as well.

GREENWAY REPORT

Ron Clark said the Board of Selectman is going to appoint 4 or 5 new members to the committee, with Sharon Bosco being the Chairman. The Greenway Committee will report to the Park and Recreation Commission.

Ron said at the last meeting there was a discussion regarding plowing the greenway in the winter. He received legal opinion from the town attorney. Anyone that asks, can get a copy of this. CIRMA said it's not suggested that they plow it because of the high number of law suits. The purpose of the greenway in the winter was for snow shoeing or cross country skiing. The town had to get right of way from many of the houses along the greenway. Ron said he would send a copy of the legal opinion to the board members.

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

BUDGET

Nothing to report

PERSONNEL

Nothing to report

BUILDING AND PARKS

Mike Roach reported that he has been walking the parks to see what each one has to offer. He hopes to finish up this week.

PUBLIC RELATIONS

Carolanne Browne said there were a few things posted on the Middlebury page. She encouraged one woman to reach out regarding the opening of the MRA. Carolanne said there is a lot of interest in it opening early this year. The online messages then spiraled into a conversation regarding the cost of the MRA passes. She said she encouraged another person to reach out regarding the hours of operation and the cost. Betsy said that as of tonight, no one has reached out to her.

Carolanne said another gentleman had reached out to her regarding the fee to use the town parks. Betsy said that the Park and Recreation department does not get a lot of money in the budget, so the charges help pay for the up keep of the fields. Ron said that the BOF and the Selectman have been specific about the fields and the cost to use them. He said it is something they could look into as to where they fall in line with other towns. Jack said that most of the fees come from out of town usage. Carolanne said it was a Pomperaug team asking. Ron said that when the Middlebury league left, Pomperaug picked up the ball, but the average Middlebury players are about 30% of the team.

DIRECTORS REPORT

Betsy Anderson reported this past month the Easter Bunny visited Shepardson, which went very well. There was a department wide Easter Parade which was a huge success. They collected 3 tons of food and over \$1,000.00 for the food bank. Betsy said they are working on details for the summer camps and will be finalizing it in the coming weeks. The MRA boat rack lottery is in progress, and they will start selling passes in early May. Betsy explained the office is only open until noon until the Shepardson construction is complete. She said the parks in town are open and they are working on getting the bathrooms open soon. There will be improvements done this year to Ledgewood Park as well as renovations in progress for improving the Skate Park equipment. Betsy said they are moving forward with the new recreation software and they are finalizing the contract.

VOTED: Unanimously on a motion by Carolanne Browne and seconded by Jack Worgan to **APPROVE** the directors report.

OLD BUSINESS

None

NEW BUSINESS

None

EXECUTIVE SESSION

None

ADJOURNMENT

VOTED: Unanimously on a motion by Carolanne Browne and seconded by Mike Roach to **ADJOURN** the meeting at 6:57 PM

cc: Town Clerk
Commission Members
Betsy Anderson
Bill Stowell