

Park and Recreation Commission

John Bittmann, Chairman
Ronald Sill
Bruce Sill
Heather Beaton
Jose Rivera (BOAT)
Michael Kelleher
vacant

Minutes

(meeting recorded)

Monthly meeting: Monday, July 14, 2025 – held at City Hall.

Meeting was called to order at 7:05 p.m. with the Pledge of Allegiance.

By roll call, members present: John Bittmann, Bruce Sill, Heather Beaton (ZOOM), Jose Rivera (ZOOM) and Michael Kelleher. Ronald Sill was excused.

Parks and Recreation Director Dennis O'Connell was present. Athletic Director Jenn Moffat was present.

ADDITIONS OR DELETIONS AND ACCEPTANCE OF THE AGENDA:

Without objection, the agenda was accepted as written.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Without objection, the approval was tabled.

PUBLIC PORTION:

Kenneth Marcucio, Little League director, stated that the Senior Baseball team won the state tournament and will be going to the Eastern Regional tournament in Maine. This is a regional team consisting of players from Ansonia, Derby and Monroe. They have been fundraising to support the cost of \$8,000 to attend the tournament.

Mr. Marcucio reported that Pop Warner has agreed to pay their share of the utilities owed to Little League. Mr. O'Connell noted that an agreement has been finalized for the Parks & Recreation to take over the utility costs of the fieldhouse as of the fiscal 2025-2026 year. Yamilette McNeill, Pop Warner president, indicated that the expense was a burden to the program and is glad that this expense is now going to be paid by the Parks and Recreation Department. The history of the shared expense was discussed noting that after a fire many years ago, the arrangement was made as Pop Warner, at the time, had no facilities to store their equipment or hold their meetings. At one point the building was being used year round. That has since changed and it is now winterized each year to lessen the overall costs. Mr. O'Connell noted that the expense was not included in the upcoming budget but he will be making transfers to cover this expense while remaining within the existing funding. All agreed that having this paid through the city budget will resolve the existing financial burdens on the programs and will insure that this city building will be supervised by the city just as the other buildings are maintained.

Town Clerk Marc Garofalo clarified that this funding is not currently in the approved budget for 2025-2026. He questioned whether there will be any change to the current stipends set within the budget for each of the programs. Mr. O'Connell indicated that the stipends will remain the same. That funding has always been for the programs. It covers costs for play in each of the programs. It covers uniforms, cost of umpires and other such game related expenses. The utilities were not paid with the funding as the programs managed their other expenses through fundraising and program registrations.

Mr. Marcucio also noted that through the generosity of Mrs. Payden, the Little League received \$60,000 a while ago. There was hope of putting in new field lighting but that has proven too costly. He plans on doing field improvements and beautification with the funding.

No one else spoke and without objection the public portion was closed.

CORRESPONDENCES:

Nothing was presented.

DIRECTOR REPORTS:

Mr. O'Connell reviewed his monthly report. He indicated that after a recent rain storm there was runoff that crossed the field. Upon inspection it was determined that there was some lifting of the turf. He is exploring the repairs through AstroTurf as the warranty should cover the costs.

Pop Warner registration is ongoing. The participation has gone down in recent years. Mr. O'Connell has suggested exploring this as an afternoon program although it seems that finding volunteer staffing is also a challenge and an afternoon timeframe would be more difficult due to work schedules.

The basketball hoops will be replaced at the picnic grove with funding coming from the city's capital account. The courts are in need of resurfacing at an estimated cost of \$25,000. Mr. O'Connell is exploring the funds through the Capital Planning Commission. He stressed that the facility is well used with 20-30 players each night. He advised that this project should receive attention as soon as possible.

Mr. O'Connell noted that the pool maintenance issues continue and do impact the ability to hold swimming lessons. He estimated that \$6,000 to \$8,000 in revenue was lost due to the closure. The cost for temporary repairs places quite a demand on the budget. The issue is that the heater for the pool is not properly functioning.

The OLE soccer program has chosen not to come back to Derby this year. That represents an additional loss of revenue. They also were supportive of the Youth Soccer program and that relationship has ended as well.

Members discussed the revenue that is generated each year. The consensus being that rather than returning it to the general fund, the money should be returned to the department for facility maintenance and repair. Since the Payden Park field and football field were constructed, the Commission has been asking that the money be placed in reserve to accumulate funds for the projected costs of field turf replacement. As of yet, there has been no funding set aside for the anticipated costs of over a million dollars to replace any of the fields as the life expectancy is approximately ten years.

Mr. O'Connell stressed that each year there are transfers within the budget to cover the bills but he has never in his years of service overspent the budget. Certainly, each year the unexpected maintenance and repair costs can be very challenging and with the limits on funding there are needs that have to go unmet. He and the Finance Director go over the budget each year and like this year there was a zero increase in the total. Capital Planning does support major expenditures but their funding also has limitations.

The Naming Committee is scheduling to meet to discuss the naming of Witek Park fields for Mario Tessitore.

Parks and Recreation Update and Report for June 2025

- A maintenance issue has arrived at Ryan Complex Football/Soccer Field. The fibers attached to the south end goal line (red in color) are separating from the base of the field.
- Astroturf of Pittsburg PA, the contractor has been sent footage containing the basis of the problem. The matter has been referred to their claims department.
- Derby Little League has completed the 2025 spring session. The program was a success.
- Derby Pop Warner is working hard to recruit players for their fall season. Like all programs lately it is a struggle.
- New basketball hoops are purchased for the Coon Hollow basketball courts. Ed McManus construction has agreed to put them in for us.
- It was a long year for the DVCC pool. Much down time and many dollars spent on repairs was the result.
- Recreation receivables as of June 30, 2025, were \$83,304.
- Recreation receivables as of July 7, 2025, were \$1,474.75.

High School Athletic Director's Report:

Ms. Moffat stated that many programs ended the season very well. Softball and baseball missed the tournaments by only one game. Boy's Track were state champions in three events and the Girl's track were runners up.

CIAC again allowed for two weeks practice in the off-season for the programs. Volleyball, football and track all took advantage of the schedule. Football will start their regular season in August.

Ms. Moffat and Mr. O'Connell are working to get the locker rooms at Payden Field house in shape for the upcoming season. The baseball mound repairs are complete.

There have been issues with balls going out of bounds at the Payden baseball field, on the first base side of the field. The Athletic Department is exploring possible remedies. Looking to extending netting could be too costly.

NEW OR OTHER BUSINESS:

At this time Michael Kelleher submitted his resignation. The Chair accepted it with regret.

MOTION made by Michael Kelleher and second by Bruce Sill. MOVE to adjourn the meeting at 8:00 p.m. Motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully prepared,

Karen Kemmesies

Karen Kemmesies, secretary

These minutes are subject to the Commission's approval at their next scheduled meeting.