

**Haddam Park & Recreation Commission**  
**Regular Monthly Meeting**  
**Tuesday, September 10, 2020**  
**7:30 pm EDT**  
**Via a GoToMeeting Virtual Conference**  
**MINUTES**  
**Approved as *Amended* at the October 8, 2020 Meeting**

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In attendance: Chairman Jason Lonergan, Vice Chairman Jennifer O'Neal, and Commissioner Daniel Belanger, Commissioner Peter Christopher, and Commissioner David Law

Not in attendance: All commissioners present

Staff in attendance: Barbara Galloway, Recording Clerk

1. Call to Order

Chairman Lonergan called the virtual Meeting to order at 7:31 PM.

2. Approval of the Minutes of the August 18, 2020 Video Conference Rescheduled Regular Meeting

**Vice Chairman O'Neal made the Motion seconded by Commissioner Law to approve as printed the August 18, 2020 Meeting Minutes. The Motion was approved unanimously.**

3. Facilities and Field Use Requests – any additional discussion/votes/approval for Fall 2020

Chairman Lonergan informed the commissioners that he had received no additional Fall Field Usage applications beyond the ones received and approved at the last meeting.

Chairman Lonergan reported that he had emailed all of the applicants that had been approved last month for Fall field usage and reminded them about the ongoing COVID-19 social restrictions and the “no dogs on the site” rule and also notified them about the problem of trash left on the ground at the sites, encouraging all participants to use of the provided trash bins. He said that he had had no responses to his email, but surmises that everyone is in agreement. He will do a follow-up email to all applicants to verify this.

4. General Review of current budget financial reports (08/2020)

*The following August financial statements were received: “Adjustments to Budgeted Expenditures, August 2020 - General Fund”, dated 09/03/2020, “Adjustments to Budgeted Expenditures, August 2020 - Capital Non-Recurring”, dated 09/03/2020, and “Adjustments to Budgeted Expenditures July 2020 to June 2021 - Capital Non-Recurring”, dated 09/08/2020. It was explained that the Capital Non-Recurring statement sent on 09/03/2020 was printed prior to the 2019-2020 budget year books having been finalized and the 2020-2021 budget having officially gone into effect and it, therefore, showed zero totals for all budget lines. The financial office emailed the adjusted and updated Capital budget showing all available fund balances for 2020-2021 on September 8.*

Chairman Lonergan noted that in the General Fund, the Field Maintenance line current expenditure reflects the Spring cleaning of the fields conducted earlier in the year and the up-to-date mowing fees. In the Capital Non-Recurring Fund, he reported that there is still funding that the commission saved by changing the scope of the work and the vendor used on

the “...20-50302 19-Fence Relocation” line. The commissioners agreed they could now use the remainder of these funds for completion of additional required projects during this fiscal year.

5. Unfinished Business

A. *Great Hills Fields*

- i. Walking Path at Great Hills – status: needed updates, status: extension  
Chairman Lonergan said that there was nothing new to report re: the leveling/gravel replacement maintenance on the walking path or the trimming of pine trees that have become overgrown and now block passage along the walkway. Chairman Lonergan said that he had hoped that this work would be done by now. He asked the other commissioners to make note of the path’s condition and report their findings to him, if they are at Great Hills in the next few days before he is there again. He noted that this surfacing and trimming work should be done before the weather changes. He will contact the vendor again.  
Further discussion of all that might be involved with completing an extension of the walking path was tabled until a later meeting.

- ii. Landscaping - status of needed work  
Chairman Lonergan reported that at the Great Fields property, per the discussion with the vendor re: agreed upon required work, the mulch had been installed, weeding had been completed, the driveway had been graded, and the holes had been filled near the soccer fields. He again noted that the pine trees that abut the fields had still not been trimmed back.

- iii. Eagle Scout Great Hills Kiosk Project – status  
Commissioner Christopher reported that Boy Scout Matt Pray had been prepared to start the kiosk project the previous week, but he hasn’t started the job as of today. He will contact Matt to find out his updated plan.

- iv. Playscape  
Chairman Lonergan, who had verbally reviewed with the commissioners portions of the outcomes of the Playscape investigation company’s report at the August meeting and who had also noted aspects of the report at this meeting, told the commissioners that he would be forwarding copies of the report to everyone for their individual review and information so that they could share ideas at a later meeting.

Chairman Lonergan reported that the playscape had not been “resurfaced” with new mulch as yet. Playscapes require a special type of mulch and the job cannot be completed with the regular landscaping materials, so he will follow-up with the vendor regarding this recommendation.

- v. Signage - status of planned additional signs re: trash and dogs  
Chairman Lonergan informed the commissioners that he had re-distributed around the area the trash cans that had all been stored near the concession stand. Hopefully this will help prevent trash from being thrown on the ground at the site.

Chairman Lonergan reported that signs are now installed regarding using the trash cans and that no dogs are allowed on the fields. He would like to have temporary signs made and installed regarding COVID-19 related restrictions, requiring wearing of masks and keeping social distancing, etc.. Vice Chairman O’Neal offered to assist the chairman in getting the signs ordered and installed. They arranged to talk about these signs later this week.

Chairman Lonergan stated that generally, the Great Hills fields are in good shape for September use, although he will check with the vendor about the unfinished work, discussed above.

- vi. Field Gates Condition - Commissioner Christopher noted that the gates leading to the field from the dugouts are not in very good condition and might need to be replaced. At Commissioner Christopher's request, Vice Chairman O'Neal said that she would take a look at the gates when she is at the fields again soon.
- vii. Reported Trespassing at Great Hills - Chairman Lonergan informed the commissioners that apparently people have been using the upper level of the Great Hills property to park vehicles, including a RV, after dark and/or overnight. He suggested locking the gates to that portion of the property when the upper area is not in use. The commissioners also agreed that the main gates at the entrance should be closed at the end of the playing day/evening to discourage unmonitored access by unknown people and to help prevent any potential liability.

*B. Brickyard Field*

- i. Status of fence repair (tree limb damage) and gates replacement  
Commissioner Christopher reported that the tree limb that had fallen earlier had been removed and the area had been cleaned up. He had been in contact with Fence World last week regarding beginning the needed fence repairs and gates replacements/relocations, but noticed that the repair/replacement fence work had not yet started. He will contact them again and report back to the commissioners. Chairman Lonergan said he believes he filed a purchase order for the work, but has not yet had a response from the Town.
- ii. Parking Lot Flyball Issues – status  
Commissioner Christopher also noted that he had asked the vendor about the idea of/costs involved with placing netting above a portion of the fence to prevent fly balls from going out of the field and into the parking lot area and possibly causing damage to vehicles. The vendor had not yet responded. Commissioner Christopher will ask about this when he speaks with the vendor soon. Commissioner Law asked Commissioner Christopher to find out if additional structures might be required to bear the weight and keep the netting in place, and, if so, what would be the estimated cost of that hardware and what changes to the current structure would be required. Commissioner Christopher believed that the netting could be run from the back of the backstop over to the dugout and attached to both structures. He did not think that extending the netting further than that would be necessary or cost-effective.
- iii. Signage - status of additional signs re: trash and dogs, previously discussed  
Chairman Lonergan reported that as at Great Hills, signs are now also installed at the Brickyard field regarding using the trash cans and that no dogs are allowed on the fields. He would like to have temporary signs made and installed regarding COVID-19 related restrictions, requiring wearing of masks and keeping social distancing, etc.. Again, Vice Chairman O'Neal had offered to assist the chairman in getting the signs ordered and installed at both sites. They will talk about the plan within the week.

There was a brief discussion about the banners that are used for advertising in the outfield and Commissioner Christopher noted that he had come before this commission several years ago, as a resident and Haddam Little League representative, to discuss the possibility of their use for advertising,

promoting good relations with local businesses, and offsetting some Little League costs and the commission at that time had approved it. The current commissioners all expressed their thought **that** it was a great idea.

C. *Haddam Elementary School property*

- i. Landscaping - status of work previously discussed  
Commissioner Law reported that a landscaping company has gone onto the HES property and is doing “clean up” there. Commissioner Law noted that the UConn Extension Center has a Master Gardeners program of which his wife is part. That group had been planting flowers and keeping part of the site cleared and neat, but the landscaping company has gone in and ripped out all of the work that had been done. He cannot understand why they would make an eyesore of the area so visible from the road and waste good works.

Note: It was reported that the school that had previously (before COVID-19) expressed an interest in use of the interior of the building is in talks once again with the Town, although nothing has become official. The commissioners agreed that this was potentially good news since the building would be in use once again. No further information regarding this was available at this time.

- ii. Closed Playground/Other Areas  
Chairman Lonergan stated that the playground area fence has been padlocked with no trespass signs displayed. He reported that during his discussion with First Selectman Robert McGarry, the first selectman informed him that there is currently no plan for the space and no funding set aside to take the playscape apart and remove it from the site. Chairman Lonergan noted that there are several benches in the playground area. He is considering asking to have the benches removed from that play area and reinstalled where they could be useful, such as by the HES basketball courts and at the Great Hills fields near the concession stand, overlooking one of the ballfields where there are currently old and splinter-ridden benches in place that are hardly usable.
- iii. Signage - status of additional signs re: trash and dogs, previously discussed  
There was no information discussed regarding the need for additional signage at this site at the moment.

D. *Higganum Center/Cove Activities – any updates*

Chairman Lonergan reported that he knows of nothing new with any plans for the Higganum Cove. He noted that there are always cars parked there so it seems to be popular. Commissioner Christopher suggested that the commission might consider installing a bike rack(s) on the site since so many young people ride their bikes there. He noted that he has heard that there have been bikes reported stolen from the area while children were playing on the site. Commissioner Law echoed his agreement with the idea of installing bike racks at the Cove and also in Higganum Center near businesses such as the restaurants in the Village area.

Katie Packtor, a Higganum resident, joined the discussion. She agreed that there has been a great increase in activity, especially bike riders, at the Cove and that the bike racks would be a wonderful addition. She also noted that there are many cars driving through the area and that speed on Route 81, coming around the curve into town, is a safety issue that should be discussed with the first selectman. Ms. Packtor also noted that trash is a problem at the Cove site with some residents taking it upon themselves to bring in plastic trash bags and clean up the area occasionally. A trash can on the site would be very useful. A sign could also be installed stating that people are

responsible for removing their own trash when they leave the site. It was suggested that there should also be signs installed asking people not to park on the street in the Cove area, as it encourages more crowds, and is a traffic and safety concern.

Chairman Lonergan informed Ms. Packtor that the Higganum Cove is not one of the properties that this commission currently oversees, but the commission is attentive to activity there and will consider action if necessary, since no other town agency has taken responsible for the site at this time.

E. *Trunk or Treat event – status report/participation decision*

Vice Chairman O’Neal, who had chaired the Trunk or Treat in conjunction with the Grim’s Haunted House in 2019, informed the commissioners that she had been in contact and had been planning with representatives of the group taking responsibility for the Trunk or Treat this October. The group agreed that it was a better plan to locate the involved cars in the front parking lot instead of on the side of the building, which one plan had considered. She noted that they will need a generator for additional lighting and for props. The commission had considered supporting the event with port-o-lets, lights, and a trooper for traffic control and to expedite pedestrians crossing Route 154. Vice Chairman O’Neal expressed her concerns about holding the event this year and having the commission name attached to it during this COVID-19 scare. She said that it will either be poorly attended due to virus fears or it could be overly attended as one of the only public events in town this Fall. She is concerned about having enough crowd control and attendees maintaining safe spacing. She is also concerned about the sanitary measures (hand sanitizers, hand soap, etc.) that would be provided in bathrooms and other common use areas. *After listening to Vice Chairman O’Neal’s concerns and a brief discussion, Chairman Lonergan with the other commissioners’ agreement stated that the commission would not officially or financially sponsor the Trunk or Treat in 2020 out of an abundance of caution during this ongoing pandemic.*

6. New Business

A. *Further Discussion of/Selection of commission 2020-2021 Capital Plan projects to address this year*

Aside from the fencing repairs and signage additions that are planned, Chairman Lonergan reminded the commissioners that there is seed funding in the commission’s Capital Plan for a basketball court and pavilion. He noted that they have found that there are spacing challenges for installing a basketball court on the upper level at Great Hills, as had been planned for in past years. He is suggesting that the funding might be better used toward improvement of the basketball courts at HES in the center of town. He also suggested that instead of one large pavilion, the commission might consider two pavilions on different parts of the Great Hills site or one there and another on a different park property. Chairman Lonergan could see using the funds to repair/improve the HES site or another existing site in Higganum Village. He asked for comments or additional ideas from the commissioners. Commissioner Law informed the commissioners that he has heard about further consideration of acquiring the Rossi property in the near future, which might lead to more planning discussions and potential ideas.

These considerations will be further discussed at a later meeting.

B. *Chairman Lonergan report on August meeting with First Selectman McGarry*

Chairman Lonergan reported that he and First Selectman McGarry discussed several items at their meeting in late August. In future years, the commission could combine landscaping efforts within a contract the Town negotiates with **its** existing contractor. Chairman Lonergan suggested to First Selectman McGarry that there will be times when the commission will need to be allowed/able to contact the contractor for special and or emergency services. Use of the HES playscape replacement is not in any immediate future Town plans and the dismantling of the current playscape is on

hold for now due to the lack of **budgeted** funding to complete it. First Selectman McGarry also discussed the complaints regarding loose trash at the Great Hills site. He wished Chairman Loneragan to express his thanks **to** the commissioners for their ongoing work re: the town's parks and recreational areas.

*C. Any new ideas for the Commission ongoing list of parks/recreation sites*  
Aside from discussions above, no new sites were discussed.

7. Correspondence

There was no correspondence received or discussed at this meeting.

8. Adjournment

**Commissioner Christopher made the Motion seconded by Vice Chairman O'Neal to adjourn the Meeting. The Motion was approved unanimously. The Meeting was adjourned at 8:27 PM.**

Respectfully submitted,  
Barbara D Galloway  
Recording Clerk