

HARTFORD PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION MINUTES

Wednesday, March 3, 2021

6:30 PM – City Hall Council Chambers

Present: Todd Rusniak, Mark Kohnhorst, Joe Kohler, Todd Bultman, Scott Helms, Amy Hoffmann

Excused: Karin Buhle

1. President Rusniak called the meeting to order at 6:30 PM; "This is an open meeting under 19.81 to 19.98 of the Wisconsin State Statutes".
2. Approval of Minutes –
MOTION BY Bultman, seconded by Kohnhorst to approve the February minutes.
MOTION CARRIED
3. Informational Monthly Staff Reports – Reviewed.
4. Communication and Correspondence – None
5. Appearances / Public Comments – None
6. Old Business - None
7. New Business

ADMINISTRATION

Starfish Swimming Instructional Program - Handout – Starfish Swimming is a national swim lesson program that the Aquatic Fitness Supervisor has been considering switching to. While used heavily in other states, it is not as predominate in Wisconsin. The department has always used Red Cross Learn to Swim program. However, the Aquatic Fitness Supervisor believes the Starfish program would be a better, more versatile program than the Learn To Swim. Since the Starfish Program was unable to present at the WPRA (Wisconsin Parks and Recreation Association) annual conference, they have been holding virtual meetings for those that would like to learn more about their program. The Aquatic Fitness Supervisor along with a few other departments in Wisconsin were part of a recent presentation. Many other departments are looking at options other than Red Cross due to concerns with the Learn to Swim program.

The Aquatic Fitness Supervisor believes that there will be better support from Starfish, better instructor training and continual training, and will allow a smoother transition for students to progress from one skill level (or benchmark) to another. Fees to become a certified instructor are significantly lower which can help us recruit more instructors. In addition, the Aquatic Fitness Supervisor, due to Red Cross policies on who can become a WSI Instructor (the person that runs the WSI certification classes), it likely will be impossible for him to become one. Thus the department relies heavily on the few WSI Certification Instructors in the area to run WSI courses for us. Often, it is difficult to schedule these instructors to run classes for us.

While only in the preliminary stages of research, staff did want to let the Commission know that this is something that staff will continue to evaluate and may, in the future, come to the Commission with a recommendation to move to this new swim lesson curriculum. The Starfish program also has a Starguard program, a lifeguard training certification. While the Aquatic Fitness Supervisor is not spending too much time researching this certification, it is something he would consider once he completes a recommendation about moving to the Starfish swim program.

In a brief look, the department fees for the Starfish program would be close our current fees of the Learn to Swim Program. The site provider cost for Starfish is based on number of instructors while the cost for Red Cross is based on number of students plus a site fee. With the slight increased cost for the Starfish program, there are additional benefits such as on line training for instructors and on line records management for the swim students. The Elite Membership would even include annual training and consulting visits on site to help train and assess staff to grow the swim lesson program. This is not available from the Red Cross.

The Director would like to see a group of Recreation Departments move to this program before we make the change, while the Aquatic Fitness Supervisor would like to be a leader in the state and feels once one agency takes the step, others will follow. The Director commented that with Slinger's swim lesson program dissolved, it could be easier to transition to a different program as youth in Slinger that may come to us for lessons as well, would not have to transition back and forth between two different programs.

President Rusniak was concerned about employability skills as instructors move off to college. By not being a Red Cross swim instructor, would that make it more difficult when they are in college to continue employment in the swim industry if most places use Red Cross Learn to Swim. The Aquatic Fitness Supervisor did not believe this would be a deterrent. We currently employ a few instructors that have not been certified by Red Cross. He gave the example that many YMCA's have their own Y Swim program and most swim facilities appreciate any certifications new staff may have as well as experience in teaching. Often, Red Cross facilities would use these non-Red Cross certified staff members as 'assistants' while other staff members would be Red Cross certified.

Commissioner Kohnhorst said that in 2012 Hartland replaced the Red Cross Swim lesson with creating their own lesson program. He stated that the community transitioned very smoothly as parent's ultimate goal is to have their child know how to swim. Parents are not as concerned about which program is used to do it. Mark continued to say that the reason Hartland changed was due to frustrations with the Red Cross program.

Commissioner Helms asked that the High School be notified as we get closer to a discussion on Starguard as a possible lifeguard program change since the High School instructs Red Cross Lifeguarding as a elective course.

Summer Employment Applications/Openings – An advertisement was shared with the Commission with all of the different positions we have open this summer. There are a lot. We struggle with our pay scales, competing with many local businesses with higher pay rates.

Volunteers for a Beautiful Hartford (VBH) – The VBH is holding a number of informational meetings this spring in hope to get more volunteers. The Director shared with the commission a VBH brochure listing the over 20 projects they are responsible for within the City. At the first meeting there were 14 people in attendance. The Director and City Administrator were at the meeting and expressed their appreciation for all the group does to maintain flower beds and the seasonal hanging baskets downtown.

RECREATION PROGRAMS / ACTIVITIES

Drop In Badminton, Wednesday Nights, Starts March 3rd

Kids Craft Easter Eggs, Saturday, March 27th

Adult Wooden Egg Cutouts Craft, Tuesday, March 23rd

Fitness Session III, Starts Week of April 5th

Easter Egg Hunt, Saturday April 3, Hosted by Hartford Jaycees

ADULT / YOUTH SPORT

Youthball Registration – Registration has ended with over 360 youth registered. Some leagues are closed but other leagues are open for late registrations based on creating nice roster numbers and number of teams per league. Staff will begin looking at the number of sponsors and coaches that have registered and begin making team rosters. Umpires will be needed.

Spring Volleyball League - Started last week. 12 Teams. 7 A and 5 B. Runs through end of April.

Youth Indoor Tennis – Starts Saturday, April 10.

AQUATICS

Veterans Memorial Aquatic Center – None

Signicast Aquatic Center

Special Swims

- March Madness, Saturday, March 14, 1-3:45 – Pool Basketball Games
- St. Patrick's Day Swim, Tuesday, March 17, 3:30-5:15 PM – Coins dropped in the pool. Some are worth prizes.
- Spring Break Swims, March 23 & 25 2:00-4:00 PM
- Eggstra Pool Fun, Saturday, April 3, 1-3:45 PM – floating eggs dropped in the pool. Some get you prizes.

WSI Course – The swim instructor certification course has been cancelled due to lack of interest.

Lifeguard Course – This will be held on Monday nights beginning April 15th. A few more registrations will be needed to run this course. The Aquatic Fitness Supervisor has a need for lifeguards this summer and hopes this course runs.

Swim Lessons – Session 2 will begin the week of March 15.

PARKS OPERATIONS

Ice Rink Report – Good ice has been available for a few weeks, however with the future forecast showing above freezing temperatures, likely the skating season is nearing the end.

Parks Project Report – Special Projects included:

Dead ash tree removed in the Serenity Subdivision parkland (7 trees)

Site preparation for tree removals at Willowbrook Park (5 planned)

Cemetery GIS Pleasant Hill burial mapping and data input (work done as time allows)

Painting park signs and picnic table repairs

Eagle Scout Project – Benches at Woodlawn Park to compliment the oversized checker board. These benches will be a different style than most benches in our parks but the Director feels it will work well for this location. It is a plastic lumber, heavy duty and will fit well in this wooded area. They will be surfaced installed and be able to have a brass memorial/name plaque.

Brush/Tree removal near Centennial Park due to Right of Way/Vision Right of Way with the Railroad Company.

OTHER REPORTS /COMMISSION REQUESTS

None

ADJOURNMENT

MOTION BY Bultman, seconded by Kohnhorst to adjourn at 7:20 PM.

MOTION CARRIED

Submitted by Mike Hermann and Sara Cummings

"Persons with disabilities requiring special accommodations for attendance at the meeting should contact the City Clerk at least one (1) business day prior to the meeting." Members of the Common Council may attend the above meeting. Pursuant to State ex rel. Badke v. Greendale Village Board, 173 Wis. 2d 553, 494 N.W. 2d 408 (1993) such attendance may be considered a meeting of the Common Council may attend the meeting without violating the open meeting law."