

**ONEONTA, NEW YORK – NOVEMBER 4, 2013 - 7:00 P.M.**  
**REGULAR MEETING OF THE PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION PG. 1**

**PRESENT:** Chair Tim Catella  
Commissioner Cynthia McCarthy  
Commissioner Geoff Davis  
Commissioner Stephen Pindar  
Council Member David Rissberger

**ABSENT:** Commissioner Gary Dilello

City Manager Michael Long also attended the meeting.

**PETITIONERS**

Bill Grau, 5 Woodside Avenue, appeared on behalf of the Oneonta Soccer Club, and told the Commission that the club is interested in the status of the Susquehanna River fields to be discussed later in the meeting.

Michael Lynch, 51 Ford Avenue, 4<sup>th</sup> Ward Council Member, addressed the Commission regarding the proposed agreement with the YMCA for pool and summer program services. He stated that he hoped that the Commissioners had now seen the proposed agreement and stated that he looked forward to hearing the Commissioners' views. He noted that there are a number of changes from the original draft that deserve close attention. He noted that the Commissioners should be concerned with what is being maintained and for whose benefit. He expressed concern that the City would incur all the costs of maintaining park facilities for the benefit of other organizations and asked the Commissioners to examine this carefully as stewards of the parks.

Irene Gallaer, 16 Cedar Street, addressed the Commission to emphasize that the parks belong to taxpayers and residents of the city and questioned the commitment of the City to maintain them properly.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Chair Catella then asked for a motion regarding the minutes.

**MOTION**, made by Commissioner Davis and seconded by Commissioner McCarthy, that the Commission approve the minutes of the meeting of October 7, 2013.

**Voting Ayes:** Chair Catella  
Commissioner McCarthy  
Commissioner Davis  
Commissioner Pindar

**Noes:** None

**Absent:** Commissioner Dilello

**MOTION CARRIED**

Chair Catella thanked Commissioner Davis for chairing the October meeting in his own absence

**CORRESPONDENCE**

There was no correspondence.

**OLD BUSINESS**

**Budget/Recreation Services Update**

Chair Catella asked City Manager Long to discuss the status of the 2014 budget process and other options for provision of Recreation Services. Chair Catella discussed a November 1 memo from Mayor Miller asking the Commission and the Council's Community Improvement Committee to examine options for Recreation Programs.

City Manager Long noted that he has been charged with speaking with other community organizations that operate overlapping recreation programs and that discussions with the YMCA regarding swimming programs and summer recreation programs. More recently, discussions have occurred with the Boys and Girls Club concerning baseball and softball programs. He noted that the Mayor has asked in his memo that these options be looked at independently from the budget process.

Chair Catella asked Commissioners for comments. Commissioner Davis indicated that after the last meeting he had understood that programmatic changes had been taken out of the budget discussions for 2014. It was clarified that while this was true, if the process proposed by the Mayor indicated ways to reduce costs through an agreement with the YMCA or other organizations, these could be implemented during 2014 whether or not it is reflected in the budget.

Commissioner Davis asked whether a Request for Proposals was needed. City Manager Long stated that he had asked City Attorney Merzig for an opinion on this question and his answer was negative.

Commissioner Davis asked whether the Parks survey had been consulted in the development of the YMCA proposal. Chair Catella and Director Andrews indicated that it had not

Commissioner Davis commented that the sense of the last meeting had been that the Commissioners should have received information that these discussions were underway sooner. He feels that the next two meetings will not be sufficient to reach a conclusion as requested by the Mayor.

Chair Catella indicated that he had been informed two weeks before the October meeting of the direction of discussions and took responsibility for any miscommunication. He stressed that he is not actively involved in the development of the agreement. City Manager Long indicated that the YMCA had asked that the discussions remain confidential until their Board was comfortable with the initial proposal.

Council Member Rissberger stated that he agreed that the flow of information has been problematical, particularly that the majority of the Common Council was not aware of the initial proposal until after the first draft of the budget had been presented. He stated that the discussion started too late in the year. He noted that the survey had overwhelmingly supported charging non-residents for Parks program, but that the YMCA proposal involves charges for city residents for programs.

Chair Catella indicated that the discussion may lead to revisiting the question of fees for non-residents. Commissioner Davis pointed out that the Commission has no power to implement fees and was not presented with a specific proposal on which to advise Council. Council Member Rissberger noted that there are still questions about how to differentiate between residents and non-residents in practice.

Chair Catella asked whether there were comments from the public.

David Coury, Recreation Department Clerk, stated that the proposed summer park programs in the YMCA proposal are not equivalents for the City's all-day drop-in playground program. The Y indicates that parents needing all-day care register for the YMCA's All-Day care program which may not be affordable for most users of the drop-in playground program.

Council Member Lynch, 51 Ford Avenue, stated that he is in the minority of those who don't want to charge at all at the Briggs Pool, but asked how charges will be applied in a way that doesn't create barriers to participation.

City Manager Long indicated that the grant for restoration of the bathhouse specifically prohibits charging city residents for pool use.

Irene Gallaer, 16 Cedar Street, stated that the City need not provide a perfect program, the fact that there is a program is important.

**NEW BUSINESS**

Susquehanna River fields update

Director Andrews indicated that he was asked to examine ways to reduce non-essential services. Given that, he developed 3 options for maintaining the Susquehanna River fields: 1) No maintenance; 2) maintain as recreational fields, which would reduce turf management; shift fall soccer back to Neahwa Park (Spring/Summer: Oneonta Soccer Club; Fall: Oneonta Youth Soccer Association); Option 3: Continue full maintenance.

Commissioner McCarthy recalled that these fields were opened due to lack of room at Neahwa Park. Commissioner Davis indicated that the Sus River fields were originally developed so that fields at Neahwa Park could be rested.

Chair Catella asked whether use of Wright Soccer Campus affects the need for Susquehanna River fields. Director Andrews noted that in 2013, the Sus River fields were not used at all for games and not as often as in earlier years for practice.

Bill Grau, 5 Woodside Avenue, as a representative of the Oneonta Soccer Club, stated that the OSC is in discussions with the County Industrial Development Agency regarding continuing use of the Wright Soccer Campus for older age-group games. OSC still sees the Sus River Fields as a valuable asset for practices. Also, there is no guarantee that the Wright Soccer Campus will be available after next year. Maintaining the Susquehanna River Fields in some respect is important to OSC.

Council Member Lynch noted that he had proposed reducing maintenance costs at the Sus River fields as he could not support spending city funds for fields used only by a private organization.

Council Member Rissberger asked how many people came to the City as a result of OSC tournaments. Mr. Grau estimated that each tournament draws 20-25 teams of 15 players in addition to family members.

Recreation Director's Report

Recreation Director Andrews updated the Commission on current activities. The Oneonta Youth Soccer Association fall programs have finished. Winterization activities are underway. Once snow falls, the upper and lower levels of Wilber Park will close for the season. The Punt Pass & Kick sectional competition was held in October and 6 sectional champions went on to the next stage in Buffalo yesterday. Director Andrews distributed the draft Parks project list for 2014. The Adult volleyball program at the Armory will go forward in 2014; registration will begin soon. The Oneonta Soccer Club will also use the Armory for practices beginning this month. The year-end report is being drafted.

There being no further business to come before the commission, Chair Catella adjourned the regular meeting at approximately 8:07 p.m.

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DOUGLAS KENDALL, City Clerk

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