

SUBJECT TO APPROVAL

Madison Beach and Recreation Department
Special Commission Meeting
March 28, 2016

In attendance were: Paul Maxwell - Chairman, Mary Pat Nardino, Mike Ciotti, Shane Kokoruda, Scot Erskine Director, Tom Banisch First Selectman Liaison, Bill Piggott

Absent: Emily Rosenthal, Joe Oslander, Ted Rahmann, Alicia Sullivan,

Called to order by P. Maxwell at 7:35am

I. Approval of Minutes dated March 2, 2016.

Motion made by Nardino to approve minutes.

Seconded by Ciotti

All in Favor

II. Chairman's Report

No Correspondence

III. Public Comments

Scott Murphy, Chairman of the Athletic Field Advisory Committee read a statement regarding the actions taken by the Commission at their March 2nd meeting relative to assessing the parking fees to the sports groups utilizing the Surf Club Fields and offered two suggestions for the Commission to consider and asked that they become part of the minutes.

IV. Sections Reports

a. Strong Field Report

Craig Semple -DHHS Athletic Director requested that the Commission push ahead to get a permanent perimeter fence to surround Strong Field to complete the project and it is needed in order to keep students within the confines of the field and to help guard against unwanted people entering. Commission will discuss and ask for recommendations from Strong Center group, Mike Ott and Scot Erskine for the May 6th monthly meeting.

b. Facilities

Kevin Schroeder from Madison Little League presented a request to install a seasonal batting cage between Nelson 1 & 2 at the Surf Club. Nardino asked what Seasonal meant. Schroeder responded April through October. Motion by Kokoruda to approve the batting cage in the suggested location subject to approval by David Anderson -Town Planner. Second by Nardino. Motion carried with Ciotti abstaining.

Field Allocation & Assignment Guidelines -Kokoruda briefly reviewed the document developed with the Field Advisory Committee explaining the different tiers and the assignment process. Motion by Ciotti to approve the document and that it be reviewed annually by the Field Committee and that they re-submit any changes to the Commission. Second by Kokoruda. Motion Carried.

Parking Fee Discussions- Maxwell asked for thought from the Commission members and the Director. Kokoruda read a prepared statement with suggestions and asked that it be part of the minutes.

Erskine handed out the Town Ordinance that explained the charge of the Commission relative to establishing and maintaining a beach admittance system. He indicated that we were, in fact going against that ordinance by allowing exceptions to the system. He also indicated that the exceptions make it confusing to the staff as they end up having to interpret the exceptions. Ciotti expressed that the fee was reasonable but had asked others if they had any other ideas as to allow entrance and help the staff. Nardino also expressed concerns.

Motion made by Nardino to amend previous actions accepting all changes suggested by staff with the exception of the Sports Fees for the Spring Season with the goal of coming up with a final solution by the September meeting. Second by Ciotti. Motion carried.

Motion by Ciotti that an interim solution for this Spring will be developed between the Director and the Field Advisory Committee in April and brought back to Commission on May 6^h. Second by Nardino . Motion Carried.

c. Bauer Park Report

Erskine reported that gardens are all marked and numbered .
Now open for planting. Harvest Festival Committee has begun meeting to plan for the October event.

d. Rockland Preserve Report

Work progressing on expansion of Rte 79 parking area. Survey work done showing intended areas for playground and a possible Dog Park.
"Rocklandia" Event canceled for this year.
Committee Working on large scale maps of trails including those in Durham and Guilford for the kiosks.
Wildflower Trail Hike planned in May.

e. Salt Meadow Report

Main Entrance sign has been ordered awaiting proof. Also interior signs are in the process of being made as well.
Green Up Cleanup day (4/23) Volunteers will be present from committee to educate people about the park.
Committee working on putting together a panel of speakers to talk about how best to manage the grasses and active areas. Other Committees will be invited to come to the discussion when date has been determined.
Portable safety fencing request by Madison Youth lacrosse had been reviewed at last meeting and committee approved to have one located at the Southern end of Field 2 to help stop balls and ultimately players from entering the grasses. Kokoruda stated that he had talked with the Chair of the Salt Meadow Committee and asked that it be placed back on their next agenda to reconsider it.

- f. Greenway Trail Report
Walk by Liberty Street nearing completion with regard to fencing.
- g. Programs
Spring and Summer programs online. Different ones are added as they are developed.
- h. Personnel
Interviews being conducted and selections are being made. Roughly 90% have been hired for the summer.

V. . Old
Business: None

VI. New Business None

VII. Adjournment Motion made by Nardino to adjourn the meeting. Seconded by Ciotti. All in favor. 9:10am.

Town of Madison

Field Advisory Committee

Recommendations Re: new Surf Club Parking Policy

To Beach & Recreation Commission -

The Fields Advisory Committee would like to formally submit this document and recommendations into the public record.

We the Madison Fields Advisor Committee, who are made up of primarily Madison Youth Sports Presidents, feel that the policy approved by the Beach & Recreation Commission and distributed to the youth sports programs on March 3, 2016, is not reasonable, did not go through the proper vetting process with its constituents and will ultimately cause more of an administration burden than originally anticipated.

We feel that charging families to use the Surf Club and Exchange fields is fundamentally wrong and has a significant impact on youth sports in Madison. For the date range specified, it impacts **6 fields** (Strong, 3 Exchange, and 2 Nelson Baseball), **29 days** (sum across all programs), **162 games** impacted (26 games per day) and an estimate of **570 cars per day** (when games = 26). This policy change will force youth sports programs to reschedule games at other fields in town, not utilizing the Surf Club fields at all. This may also create an unneeded and negative perception of the town of Madison...a negative perception that this town does not need. Out of town families coming to play games on our fields will not be happy to pay upon entry, especially when they are already paying to play in the youth sport. The already negative feelings about Madison will only get worse with this policy change.

We also feel that Beach & Rec did not go through the proper vetting process for this policy change with its constituents prior to submitting it for a formal vote. Given the Fields Advisory Committee reports into the Beach & Rec. Commission, this policy change was not raised by either the Director of Beach or the official liaison to our committee. This would have provided the Fields Advisory Committee with ample time to discuss the proposed policy change with the effected Madison youth sports programs and provide Beach & Rec Commission with input and additional data points to make an informed vote.

Lastly, we feel this policy will ultimately create an increased administrative burden for Beach & Rec. With the possibility of 20 cars per game and 570 cars per day at full capacity, this will create long lines as cash is taken at the gate. This will cause aggravation for the residents with parking passes. We also anticipate this will increase incidents at the gate via irritated drivers and passengers which will slow the lines down, as well as intimidate the young guard employees (many under 18 years old).

The following options are presented for consideration to the Beach & Recreation Commission by the Fields Advisory Committee.

Option 1

Reverse the motion/vote and create a working session with Beach & Rec Staff, Beach & Rec Commission and the Fields Advisory Committee to formulate a recommendation that works for everyone.

Option 2

Change the motion/Revote so that the proposed parking policy only includes dates from 6/20 - 8/31 (checking every day before 5PM). In doing so, this will reduce the effected sports, games and families dramatically. We estimate that the number of effected days will go from **29 to 8** and the number of effected games will go from **162 to 68**.

Respectfully Submitted,

Scott M. Murphy

Chairman - Fields Advisory Committee

To the Beach and Recreation Board:

First, I just want to thank Paul and the rest of the board members for allowing us to revisit this important topic so that we can ensure that we all arrive at a fully informed decision and resolution. Although this policy decision may seem small on the surface, the impact to our youth sports programs, our residence, and the general perception of our town are far greater.

The concerns expressed by the B&R staff are real, and we certainly need to provide our support to ensure they have a safe and productive work environment and process. I support most of their suggested changes, but take exception to the policy regarding sports related events at the surf club facility. Again, I don't dispute the challenges they face, only the remedy by which we are looking to solve it. And I believe that this policy will actually create more problems than it solves. I know that with a little cooperation and creative thinking, we can come to a solution that meets the staff needs and does not negatively impact our town, our residence, or the youth sports programs.

With that said, I want to express that I am disappointed in the process regarding the presentation and ultimate vote on this topic. Policy decisions such as this, which impact every resident in Madison, and, most of the youth sports programs in town, need to be properly vetted and discussed. I do not believe receiving the proposal a few days in advance of a meeting, and one discussion, provides the level of due diligence required for such a decision. I am also disappointed that the B&R Leadership chose not to engage other groups including the fields committee to better understand the impacts this sort of policy might have. I believe this lack of communication and cooperation led to this board to being grossly mis-informed on the impacts, which I believe led to a hasty approval of the policy.

I would like to address some of my concerns regarding this policy as well as some of the arguments I have heard in support of it. The areas I would like to address are:

- Policy Impacts
- Park utilization by non-resident sporting event goers.
- Staff impacts, incidents, and logistics
- Town reputation and perception

Sports Program Impacts - The assertion that this policy only impacts four (4) days is drastically understated, which is or will be supported by the information provided by the fields committee. There are at least 5 fields within the Surf Club facility, and between Memorial Day weekend and June 20th, there are nine (9) days which will be impacted. Each of those fields have multiple games on them each day, so you can quickly see how the impact starts to grow. In addition, the spring season for at least soccer and lacrosse runs from approximately 4/1 (if weather is good and the fields open) til 6/20. Those nine weekend days represent almost a third of the weekends of the entire season.

One of the arguments has been to simply move the games to other fields. First, why would or should we do that when we have this great facility. Strong field is an incredible experience for youth athletes, and why would we not utilize it. Logistically this argument doesn't work either. For example, without the surf club, soccer in the spring would be reduced to two (2) fields (LTC and Salt Meadow 3). That is not enough to run a program. We can't shut down 5 fields for almost a 3rd of the season.

In addition, in early June, the High School boys and girls are still playing lacrosse in the State Tournament. Are we going to charge families to come down to the surf club to watch a HS state game? They already need to pay to enter the game.

As you can see the impact to our youth sports teams alone is significant. I am not going to address the impact to our own residence, but that too is greater than has been reported. Charging pass fees for families that only drop and pick-up their kids, does not make sense.

Teams Staying and Using the Park - Town Perception- One of the concerns expressed is that there is a significant problem with people staying and using the park and beach after sporting events. I disagree that this is a problem on two fronts. First, teams or families staying is the exception and not the rule. Most families come, watch the game and leave. A youth lacrosse game lasts 1 hour, so we will be charging that family \$10 to park for an hour, simply to address an access issue. But even if they did stay, I would argue that this is a great thing. We have an incredible facility, and isn't it great that we can share it with our neighbors as part of our youth sports programs. So a kid from Cheshire wants to jump in the sound and hang-out at the beach. Is that really so bad. We are not talking about the busy beach season, and we are not turning away residents because of this issueso what's the problem. Do we want to be known as exclusionary, or a welcoming member of the Connecticut community?

Staff Impact, Incidents, & logistics – I know that one of the issues trying to be addressed is the number of incidents the gate staff have to handle. Now I am not clear on the statistics provided by Scot, and how many of those are related to sporting events, but I can tell you that number will grow exponentially with this new policy. Families showing up to watch a youth game for an hour, and having to pay \$10 is not going to be well received, and there is no doubt there will be significant issues. I suspect you will need a police officer at the gate on most weekends to support the B&R staff.

In addition, I believe this policy will introduce new logistical challenges for the staff. Increased financial management, traffic lines, and incident management to name a few.

And finally, I want to address this policy on another front. Putting aside the impact this may have on our own residents, what will this mean for the perception of Madison? Is this really the type of town we want to be? We will be the only town in the state that charges families to sit and watch their child play a sport. If none of the logistical or impact issues existed, this issue alone is enough in my mind to not approve this policy. Madison already struggles with perception issues, and this will only add to that problem.

I truly believe there are solutions that will can be developed that don't impact our youth programs, that doesn't place our staff in a more stressful environment, and that does not reflect poorly on Madison.

Respectfully,

Shane Kokoruda

B&R Board Member