

Parks and Rec minutes 11/8/23

Present: Steve Pierce, Alix Korpan, Mark McAndrews, Andrew Maria. Dialed in John Macken
Mike (George) Schmidt

1. Call to order - John Macken 7:41 PM
2. Approval of Minutes Motion by Alix Korpan, second by Macken, approved
3. Correspondence - none by Steve. One from John - Kevin Ring re: Westport addressing the boy / girl equity issue re field space and time. STEVE: who is running the inquiry? JOHN: BOE and Staples HS. Will forward the email. Article in the Hour, will send and Alix can post.
4. JOHN: good voter turnout, 28% by 5:00 which is an increase from 2020 which was the highest turnout in recent history.
5. A: Updates on pickle ball courts. Spoke with Michael Wren (P and Z) who said there will be a meeting next week wrt pickleball and noise. After that meeting they will rule on a few things including distance to residence. Wait on that ruling until we make a selection on location. Will have a budget number after that. Other issues include the fact that both locations are in a flood plain. JOHN can you explain the difference between Flood plain and flood way? Flood way is more restrictive (ie Schencks island) need to have a free standing structure. In flood plain fewer restrictions (HS tennis courts in a flood plain.) JOHN: Permission to build from town or state? STEVE: start with a town ALIX: didn't we previously discuss that a study had been done for Merwin? JOHN: When Lynne was on she said the location by Merwin had already been vetted. STEVE: It was preliminary and more work has to be done. Separately - BOS approved the recommendation for Guy Whiten project. JOHN: Are we sending out to multiple people for bid? STEVE: DPW is dealing with it. ANDREW: Would the pickle ball be bonded? STEVE: Likely yes if we hit longevity and cost threshold, as decided by town, which it would. ALIX: what is the issue with noise ordinance for pickle? STEVE: None by tennis courts. TBD near town. Nicer location, easier parking. JOHN: Timing ? STEVE: If P and R recommends it BOS, with a budget, BOS has to vote to move it forward, then BOF has to approve, then goes to town meeting in May. If it passes, can be ready to go shortly thereafter. IF it was capital budget would have to wait until July 1. So it won't be ready before mid summer at the earliest. JOHN: We will go to more than 1 vendor correct? STEVE: Yes. Have a budgetary number. We will have a design number and a construction number. Realistically won't be until summer 2025. Padel is next big craze

5B: Updates on playground. STEVE: contract is signed, playground is ordered. Contractual due date is March 31 with caveat of bad winter weather. Hope to have here late Jan early Feb. When it arrives (on site) old one will be removed. Should be assembled in 1-2 weeks so only 3weeks to a month of no playground. We will post dates of removal and add on social media. Will also get added to minutes. ALIX: what is update with Schencks? Is it I limbo? STEVE: still trying to get it done and see what can work and find a PG manufacturer who will make it. We have a concept but still have to get site prepped. ALIX: next steps? STEVE get a design team, with what we think we have. Then get PG makers to come up with ideas and go from there. JOHN: can you explain what you mean by natural playground and who is "they" STEVE: Environmental affairs. IE recyclable material that looks like logs. Going for a rustic look. ANDREW: like woodcock? Also discussed a ropes course like in Ridgefield.

6. Staff reports: Today the grounds crew sodded baseball field infield. Had already done Cider Mill and Comstock infields. Fall sports coming to an end after a very rainy fall. Allens meadow will also get sodded when soccer finishes. ANDREW: Do we sod all fields this time of year ? STEVE: Sod high use areas 2x a year like FO, Goal areas etc. Baseball fields, clean then up and freshen up clay but don't sod every year MARK: why didn't we sod Guy? STEVE: No water. Part of the problem with the lighting issue. MARK why couldn't we take advantage of the rain? STEVE: Hard to predict. WE usually seed or sod in November so that it is dormant so that it

takes by April. Rest in July, hard to predict water. Guy is in very bad shape in middle of field, use for football and lax. When lax is done in June it's too late. Irrigation system for infield of varsity baseball. MARK: Can we use a water cannon? STEVE: not ideal, largely due to timing (don't want to water during day, would rather do at night, etc.) MARK: someone dug a trench and clay is running back on to sidewalk. JOHN: when was last time coconut husk was raked? STEVE: last week MARK it doesn't feel like it. (Mark and Steve discuss properties of coconut husk - conclusion, it gets wet and freezes this time of year.)

Back to staff reports: had Lynne's last department head meeting. BOS and WARF have agreed to change agreement. Instead of banner program going to turf replacement, it will go to field improvement projects to be approved by P and R. Will work with us to develop a list of priorities. ANDREW: Will warf be paying for irrigation? STEVE: let's not speculate. STEVE: just got a new dial a ride which is a big deal because its hard to find a chassis. Now just need it to get made. Came in under budget. Using this as an example, we budgeted a little extra for lights so maybe we an have some left to help with irrigation. ALIX: Did we ever get a cost estimate for potential irrigation? STEVE: yes. Based on professional design work by design tec. For field renovation / irrigation approx 180K. Some of that has to be done anyway.

Winter programs still open sign up. Basketball mostly fill except girls 6-7-8

JOHN: When do we go through budget process ? STEVE: It has been started. We wait for guidance from new boards. Should have something flushed by Dec. Board will have a chance to look it over. JOHN: with 4 new members can we look it over? STEVE: I can send out and am available to discuss. Just operating budget and capital budget.

STEVE: met with cricket gentlemen - they will be playing behind Post school. Will be using batting cage. Very excited, Started a non profit. Rectangular field. They are happy. STEVE: ultimate frisbee coming to town this summer.

7. Member comment: ANDREW: Hayride with Santa is filling up. 800-1000. STEVE: Laser light show, bonfire, lots of decorations etc. Dec 8. Starts at 3. Won't turn people away just monitor the flow of people. ANDREW: Are their programs that filled up too quickly? STEVE: coach Mike Garrity fills up fast. Trying to add another session.

8. Public comment: None

9. Motion to adjourn Andrew, second Alix. Unanimous. 8:39 adjourned

Westport works to address equity in boys, girls sports

[Kayla Mutchler](#), Staff writer

Oct. 25, 2023

[Comments](#)



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Staples' Natalie Chudowsky, center, controls the ball while St. Joseph defenders Olivia Franson, left, and Julia Nunes give chase during Staples and St. Joseph's 1-1 tie in the high school girls soccer match at Wakeman Park in Westport, Conn. Wednesday, Oct. 18, 2023.



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WESTPORT — The Board of Education and Staples High School athletic department are making strides to close the gap in inequalities between genders in school sports.

There were 983 individual student athletes in the 2022-2023 school year, 555 of whom were boys and 448 were girls. Since some play multiple sports, there were a total 1,568 roster spots filled at the high school.

Staples High School has varsity teams for 14 boys sports and 13 girls sports, according to the Connecticut Interscholastic Athletic Conference website. This doesn't include club teams.

Officials are looking at potential disparities among the athletic offerings, beyond just the number of available sports, including where they play or practice, coaches and funding. All of these were recently discussed at a meeting between the school board's

policy committee, Athletic Director VJ Sarullo and Assistant Superintendent of Human Resources and General Administration John Bayers.

"That's what we're looking to see," Lee Goldstein, the school board chair, said at the meeting. "At the end of the day, our students are being well served."

Working alongside Planning and Zoning, the athletic department is already trying to fix an issue of field lighting across town, in which only the football field is lit and PJ Romano Field is temporarily lit. Because of this, boys sports teams have more of an opportunity to play under the lights than the girls do. It also gives youth teams less time to practice because the sun sets earlier this time of year.

Each sports season, the Board of Education approves monetary gifts from the boosters which help fund coaches and other needs of the respective sports.

BOE Member Kevin Christie said it would be helpful to have a framework surrounding these stipends to ensure gender disparities are not caused by accepting them.

Sarullo said the athletic department has analyzed the number of coaches supported by the BOE budget compared to the rosters of each respective male and female sport.

The ratio is almost identical between the genders for the fall, being 11.16 players to coaches for boys and 11.08 for girls.

"We're right there," Sarullo said.

Sarullo said this ratio includes football, which typically has the most requested gifts to be approved and a large team size at about 123 players.

He said he will analyze the player-to-coach ratio again for the winter and spring sports to ensure equity between gender and sports.

The booster donations come in before the rosters are finalized because coaches need to be hired, but they are able to look at the previous season's roster to make an estimate.

Goldstein said "it was really nice" to see how the funds are used and that the ratio is equal.

Sarullo said booster money has funded six football coaches, one for boys soccer, one for water polo and two for girls soccer.

Without the funds, the girls' ratio would be lower than the boys', he said.

The booster funds also go towards ensuring players are able to participate, if their families cannot contribute.

"No kid will ever not be able to participate in our program because of a financial issue," Sarullo said.

Other issues that they are tackling include locker room upgrades, uniforms and transportation.

Sarullo said the locker rooms feel decades old, and could use upgrades, particularly in the girls locker room, such as adding team rooms or removing unused lockers.

There are also three locker rooms: one for football and boys lacrosse, one for girls sports and gym class and another for all other boys sports and gym class.

The group is planning to walk through the locker rooms to see what else needs to be upgraded.

Goldstein added they need to ensure all bathroom signs have correct signage, as there is a disparity in the school where some say "girls," other say "womens," and the same for "boys" and "men."

This wouldn't be a priority item when it comes to school capital funding, but it needs to get done, so they may need to leverage booster funds, BOE Vice Chair Liz Heyer said.

For weight room usage, Sarullo created a Google Calendar sign up, where coaches can schedule when they want their teams to use it.

Since implemented this September, he said there has only been one scheduling conflict with freshman football and girls lacrosse, but it ensures all 39 teams have equal access to the weight room.

This year, the department is also collecting data about uniforms, Sarullo said. Over the summer, they will determine a new uniform replacement plan, where each team should have one new uniform per four years of school. This means every player would experience a new uniform at least once in their high school sports career.

Sarullo said student bus transportation has also been fixed this year since the district switched to First Student, Inc.

They have been able to pick up all 11 sports, he said. The only time there would be an issue is if the company is ever short buses. In that case, they would have to get coach buses, but that hasn't happened yet.

Sarullo said there also hasn't been any issues regarding practice times so far this fall, and he anticipates the same in the winter and spring.

Adding lights to more of the town's fields would also help with practice and game schedules, especially for youth sports, Sarullo said. Currently, by the time high school sports are done, there isn't much time left for youth sports to play. Teams can only play on unlit fields until about 6 p.m. because of the sun setting.

The new lights, if approved, would also use a technology where you cannot see they are on until you are close to the field. Sarullo said schools in Milford use a similar technology, and he has seen it work well.

Sarullo said with lights added to all the fields, it would allow each sport to play about two or three night games per season.

If there are any issues, Sarullo said parents should talk to coaches, and then coaches should contact him.



HOUR