

**HUMAN AND COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE MEETING
DECEMBER 16, 2021, 8:00 A.M.
MINUTES**

1. Call to Order

- A. Chairwoman Adrienne Billings-Smith called the meeting to order at 8:01 a.m.

Attendees – Mayor Shari Cantor, Deputy Mayor Liam Sweeney, Chairwoman Adrienne Billings-Smith, Councilor Mary Fay, Councilor Ben Wenograd, Town Manager Matthew Hart, Director of Leisure and Social Services Helen Rubino-Turco, Acting Library Director Carol Waxman, Director of Plant and Facilities Robert Palmer and Marc Blanchard.

2. Business Items

- A. New Elmwood Community Center (100 Mayflower St.) – Mr. Hart wanted to touch base on the status of the Advisory Committee, reported the bid has gone out to retain consulting assistance to help with the early stages of the project and Leisure Services and the Library have been conducting tours and touching base with their colleagues. Mr. Hart stated at the October meeting it was requested the Council establish an Advisory Committee for the planning and design stages of the project. Once under construction, the Council could disband the committee. The Committee would assist with engaging the broader community including key stakeholders (Library and Senior Center boards, etc.). The Committee would consist of nine members from a variety of boards and commissions as well as the residents at large. Ms. Rubino-Turco added outreach had begun to the stakeholders, bringing them up to speed on the project. Ms. Waxman stated she had visited a few communities looking at their community centers. The concept of having all community services in one building is perfect. In each of the centers visited, there was a combination of senior, teen and daycare centers, recreational facilities like a large gym with a stage, rooms for cultural opportunities and classes in addition to a public library, post office and/or voting registrar's office. It was one-stop shopping. Mr. Palmer stated on behalf of the Town, he has issued a request for proposals for a Feasibility and Functional Program Study for the Elmwood Community Center.

Typically, an architectural and/or planning firm would respond. Preferably, a larger firm with experience. This was issued on November 15 with proposals due December 17. The proposals will be reviewed next week and then a shortlist for interviews will be set up. Part of the study would include determining whether or not the community center could be used as is, if modifications would be needed, or if a new facility would be needed to meet our goals. Mayor Cantor suggested Staff submit a list to the Council or the Committee with recommendations for the Advisory Committee and a letter to the chairs of the groups interested could be drafted by Staff indicating the deadline for their recommendations. Mr. Rubino-Turco mentioned some of the key stakeholder groups have already discussed who would be interested, facilitating the collection of resumes and letters of interest from many of those groups. Mr. Hart stated something would be available to the Committee by the end of the calendar year.

- B. Proposed Leisure Services Fee Changes – Mr. Hart stated many of the recreational programs are supported through the Leisure Services Fund or user fees and there are a few fee adjustments proposed for the new calendar year. Ms. Rubino-Turco stated the requested changes are in three areas; outdoor pools, golf courses and the skating rink. There have not been any fee changes in 2 years but the minimum wage has gone up \$2 and will go up again on July 1; \$3 since the last substantive changes. Many of the facilities hire personnel just above minimum wage; lifeguards, camp counselors, skate monitors, etc. Leisure Services operates with the General Fund, the Enterprise Fund and the West [Moor 32:42] Park Fund. Swimming pools are through the General Fund. There is a proposed increase of \$1 for all patrons at the outdoor pools, which would ease the impact on the General Fund. The four components of the Enterprise Fund are the rink, indoor swimming pool, golf course and camps. There are no changes for the skating rink other than renting a whole sheet of ice, which is market rate. This will bring in an additional \$10,000. The golf course has a new golf professional, who started in 2021. The changes being proposed for the golf course are in the 2% to 3% range.

The green fees would go up \$1 and the golf passes for residents would go up to between 3.2% and 3.8%. Buena Vista fees would also go up \$1 but the full season pass for individuals would go up \$20 for residents, \$15 for seniors and partial memberships (seniors playing on off periods) would go up \$10, which is a 4.3% increase. The monies generated from these increases would be approximately \$35,000 at Rockledge and \$16,000 at Buena Vista.

3. Communications

4. Staff Reports

- A. Library – Ms. Waxman stated the biggest challenge to the Library is pandemic protocol, particularly with the children. With the rise in the positivity rate and the children's programming has been brought indoors, the Library can only service children 2 and older for programming and in small groups. All Library visitors are wearing masks. It was hoped the adult indoor programming would resume in January but it will remain virtual at this time. Despite the challenges, the Library has provided three new services; Smart Lockers at Bishop's Corner, Tech Lab and a Study Pod. The lockers allow patrons to pick up their materials at any time. The Tech Lab will open in January and will offer services like podcasting, use of sound equipment, AutoCAD for drafting, video production, studio equipment, editing tools and software. The Study Pod is now in use. It is a square glass pod in the Adult Department with a door and an open roof for fresh air. The pod can hold up to 4 people and meets COVID protocol for those not wishing to sit in the main room with others. The West Hartford Mayor's Youth Council is now meeting. The council consists of 11 teens and has met 3 times since September, twice virtually and once in person. The Human Rights Commission has as the Youth Council to prepare a video for their annual celebration of the universal declaration of human rights.

In the coming months, the youth council subcommittees will work on their action projects including mental health and awareness for teens, social events for teens and an international

diversity night. They have also been asked to help rename New Street in addition to being asked by several agencies and groups for their expertise and opinions on projects. An art curator has been hired to curate up to six art shows a year for the Library. The fifth year of the Kindness Project was completed. The project will now be a national model for libraries. The instructional video for other libraries was just filmed. Other opportunities outside of the adult and children's programs include the Fiber Arts Book Club, weekly meetings of the Atlantic Monthly and New Yorker groups, a Night Owls Book Club and a Fiction Writers group.

- B. Leisure & Social Services – Ms. Rubino-Turco stated the design firm for the Eisenhower Pool has been selected and the contract will be executed in the next couple of days. They will have a few months to work with us about what we would like to see and how it would look. The bid documents would be ready by March or April and then it would be put out to bid with a contractor selected by May and hopefully, groundbreaking in June. It takes about a year to build a pool. The Wolcott parking lot is almost completed. A few finishing touches will be completed in the spring but the lot itself is open. There have also been some improvements to the community garden. The focus will now turn to the eastern side of the park. Regarding programming, the West Hartford Waves swim team is a parent-run organization helping children in middle school to prepare and try out for the high school team if they would like. There have been challenges with the parent-running as well as issues regarding the pandemic but Cornerstone has taken it in-house. They have over 90 registrations for the Waves program. Parents are still involved and participating but Cornerstone is leading the organization. The golf courses will be closed for the season after this weekend but the walking trails will be open to the public. On the Social Services side, the West Hartford Kindness Program ends tomorrow. Several organizations and town departments are participating in the Adopt-A-Family program.

Ms. Rubino-Turco highlighted an event that occurred with the Food Pantry in November, which was a collaboration with the Carrabba Foundation to distribute turkeys and perishable items. They provided a refrigerated delivery and the bag distribution was more than doubled.

- C. Town Manager – Mr. Hart mentioned the Library Board will be meeting tonight to vote on their preferred candidate and will be sending an announcement to the Town Council immediately following the meeting.

5. Future Agenda Items – Update on upcoming Parks spring projects

6. Adjournment – The meeting adjourned at 9:26 a.m.

/axb