

**Parks & Recreation Advisory Board
Meeting Minutes
January 27, 2025
Elmwood Community Center, Room 24**

Meeting called to order by Anna Park, Chair at 5:34 PM.

1. Roll Call:

In Attendance: Patrick Cooney, Shawn Daly, Mike Fournier, Nancy Gierlich, Anna Park, Narayan Paudel.

Absent: Steve Garneau, Lisa Karam.

Staff in Attendance: Helen Rubino-Turco.

There is one open board position to fill.

2. Adoption of December 2, 2024 Minutes – passed (Patrick Cooney, Shawn Daly, Mike Fournier and Nancy Gierlich abstained).

3. Old Business:

- Capital Improvements Update
 - Eisenhower Pool–Due to an abatement issue in the seams and paint of the pool, renovation of the pool will be delayed until Fall of 2025 with attendant increased cost. The pool house is completed. The basketball courts have been replaced with post-tensioned concrete.
 - Wolcott Park–The restroom project is done (only need to seal floors once weather is warmer) and the bathrooms will open in the spring.
 - Sedgwick Middle School–The baseball field was renovated. Work included irrigation installation, soil amendment, laser grading, crowning and resodding.
 - Norfeldt Softball field–the installation of a guard rail between the field and South Quaker Lane was installed. Reconfiguration of the parking lot is planned next.
 - Fernridge Park–six tennis courts will be renovated this summer with post-tensioned concrete. Har-Tru courts will be eliminated.
 - New Community Center– This project is in the schematic design phase. Working with the topography at the site, GWWO is proposing a walkout basement with a gym; a first floor with preschool and senior center spaces as well as a room with a stage; and a second floor with a library, teen center meeting rooms, and Emergency Management offices. The plan will be shown to the Human Services sub-committee of the Town Council next month. During construction the dog park will be closed, but a permanent dog park is a priority.
- The Tree Canopy Study Update
 - The Tree Canopy Study is almost complete and confirms West Hartford has lost many trees since 2010 as a result of stress from drought, impact of global warming and diseases. The tree inventory has started and hopes to wrap up by June, when a booth at Celebrate West Hartford will be manned to inform the public about the project and the trees in our town. Notably, Westmoor is a Level II arboretum, one of only three in the state.

4. New Business:

- Spring/Summer Camp Programs – The brochure will be posted online on January 29, 2025. Residents can register for summer camps on February 5 starting at noon and for spring camps on March 5 at noon. Non-residents can register for summer camps beginning on February 12 at noon and for spring camps on March 12 at noon.
- Leisure Services Scholarship Fund–The current balance is about \$6000 and the goal is to reach \$35,000 so targeted fund-raising plans are being developed for this year. This summer, a free afternoon camp for income-eligible families based on a particular neighborhood will be eliminated and replaced by a full day Camp Funtastic (which will be offered in 3 locations in Town). Discounted registrations will be offered to income-eligible families regardless of where they live in town for many Leisure Services programs. The Board of Education may continue to offer bussing to afternoon camps for children who are enrolled in morning summer school programs.
- Senior Services Van– This free van is available for trips between the two senior centers as well as other trips.
- 2024 Annual Report–A report is being drafted to highlight the accomplishments and goals of the Parks and Leisure Services Department to include the following:
 - Accomplishments:
 - Reviewed and approved fee changes at various Leisure Services facilities to meet minimum wage increases or to simplify pricing structures.
 - Oversaw a successful 2024 summer camp season, with robust registrations at Elmwood Community Center, “Camp Funtastic,” special interest camps and Westmoor Park. Leisure Services processed more than 39,500 registration for recreation programs at all levels including at the senior centers in the last year.
 - Eliminated membership fees for senior center memberships and reinstated free van service to both senior center branches.
 - Requested review of recreation program registration process and supported introduction of different dates for resident vs. non-resident registration, which are being implemented for 2025 Spring/Summer registration.
 - Oversaw capital projects to increase accessibility, address safety concerns, increase efficiencies, reduce maintenance cost and improve the quality of life for residents—specifically, renovated restrooms at Wolcott Park; renovated baseball field at Sedgwick Middle School; installation of fencing at softball fields at Norfeldt Park; replaced basketball courts at Eisenhower Park; and renovated Eisenhower Park Poolhouse.
 - Encouraged the Department’s collaborations with the West Hartford Tree Action Group on seeking an Urban Tree Canopy Study and Tree Inventory, as well as distribution of tree seedlings and tree education.
 - Goals:
 - Continue to support efforts to make accessibility improvements in parks, such as the renovation of the restroom at Wolcott Park. By making these changes, West Hartford parks become available to more residents and visitors.
 - Following completion of the tree canopy study and tree inventory project, consider development of a tree planting plan and tree education campaign.
 - Support Celebrate West Hartford on June 7-8, 2025.
 - Review and advise on park ordinance rules and changes (e.g., no smoking policy).

5. Friends of West Hartford Parks Report

- No report was submitted.

6. Public Comment—none.

Meeting adjourned at 6:48 p.m.

Next Meeting: Monday, March 24, 2025; location Westmoor Park.

Minutes submitted by Nancy Gierlich.