

Parks & Recreation Advisory Board
Meeting Minutes
March 24, 2025
Westmoor Park

Meeting called to order by Anna Park, Chair at 5:33 PM.

1. Roll Call:

In Attendance: Patrick Cooney, Mike Fournier, Steve Garneau, Nancy Gierlich, Lisa Karam, Anna Park.

Absent: Shawn Daly, Narayan Paudel.

There is one open board position to fill.

Staff in Attendance: Helen Rubino-Turco.

Guest Speaker: Bill Gleason, volunteer with West Hartford Tree Action Group

2. Adoption of January 27, 2025 Minutes – passed unanimously.

3. Old Business:

- **Spring/Summer Camp Programs**

The staggered registration for residents/non-residents for summer camps in February and spring/summer programs in March was very successful. Summer camps will be held at Beachland, Fernridge and Kennedy. In future, after the pool is replaced, Eisenhower may be used instead of Beachland. As part of its 5-Year Consolidated Plan for use of federal funding, Social Services is reassessing the HANOC camp to deliver more equitable access to camp for children in low income families. Camp discounts to Leisure Services camps are available town-wide for qualifying students.

- **2024 Advisory Board Annual Report:** Motion approved unanimously to adopt the report.
- **Elmwood Community Center:** The schematic design is complete and is available on the library website.

- **The Tree Canopy Study**

Bill Gleason of the Tree Action Group gave an excellent presentation regarding the results of the tree canopy study, which analyzes West Hartford tree coverage in 2023 compared to 2010. The loss on a town-wide basis is roughly 20.6%, which is well over the “acceptable” high range of 15%. Notably, areas managed by the Town such as the parks and school retained better rates of coverage. Unfortunately the Town does not have any ordinances requiring trees to be replaced nor are permits required to remove trees. Homeowners may choose not to invest in replacing trees, and it is hoped that education and perhaps access to free trees can address this serious issue. The full tree canopy report with recommendations will be completed soon. An inventory of trees is also underway, which details species, size and condition. Given changes in climate, trees suitable for Mid-Atlantic regions may be suitable for Connecticut in the future. The goal is to plant the right tree in the right place. A booth at Celebrate West Hartford will be staffed by volunteers to educate residents about the study, inventory work and tree issues. Mr. Gleason has inventoried the trees at Westmoor Park, which is now a Level 2 arboretum, one of three in the state. Tree walks are available (sign up through the Rec Desk).

4. New Business:

- Update on Cornerstone Aquatics Center
Monthly membership is up to 5,583 from 4,600 in 2023. The company running the center will continue to manage the outdoor pools at the parks this summer. The Waves swim club is popular as is a diving club. The center is used to host high school meets. Kudos to Mike Kerrigan for his leadership managing the center.

5. Friends of West Hartford Parks Report

- Lisa Karam shared that the non-profit board is seeking new members. A park clean-up is tentatively planned for Kennedy in April. The group plans to hold two movie nights at Beachland and is looking for a sponsor for the September movie. A Walk in the Park will be scheduled for October. The group is considering Spicebush Swamp Park, which offers 33 acres with an upland meadow.

6. Public Comment—none.

Meeting adjourned at 6:58 p.m.

Next Meeting: Monday, May 19, 2025; location Elmwood Community Center.

Minutes submitted by Nancy Gierlich.