

**Parks & Recreation Advisory Board
Meeting Minutes
July 28, 2025
Elmwood Community Center**

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

1. Roll Call:

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

Absent: Shawn Daly, Steve Garneau, Narayan Paudel.

Staff in Attendance: Helen Rubino-Turco.

There is one open board position to fill.

2. Adoption of March 24, 2025 Minutes – passed unanimously.

3. Old Business:

- **New Elmwood Community Center Design**

Regular meetings with GWWO architects and Whiting Turner, the construction manager, continue. Colliers has been hired as the Owner's Representative. Town representatives recently met with one playground provider, to discuss options. Other playground options will be sought. An overall construction budget may be provided by September. Portions of the project such as a proposed dog park and proposed pathways may be phased in over time. Updates will be posted on the library website.

- **Tree Inventory Progress**

Bill Gleason of the Tree Action Group has done the bulk of the work. More volunteers are needed. Most of the trees lost have been on private property. A series of training sessions will be offered. A final draft of the Urban Tree Canopy Study is being prepared.

- **Summer Camp Update**

The Department celebrates a banner season for registrations, with over 17,600 for Spring/summer programs and over 42,600 registrations processed for the last fiscal year, including for tree walks and senior center programs. Almost all full day summer camps were at over 95% capacity. Of the 17,600 registrations, more than 13,000 were for children and approximately 4,500 for adults and seniors. Recent TV coverage included stories at VMSR and Westmoor.

4. New Business:

- **Fall/Winter Programs**

The programs should be posted within the week. Registration opens Wednesday, August 6 at Noon.

- **Capital Improvement Projects Update**

Construction continues on the range at Rockledge Golf Course; fall completion is expected. The two foot bridges at Spicebush and Westmoor are completed. A footbridge at the Miracle League complex is next. Installation of post tension concrete tennis courts at Fernridge is underway, expected to be complete by early October. The Eisenhower pool will be replaced by June 2026; remediation is out to bid.

- **Feast on the Farm** will be held at Westmoor Park, Friday, September 26. Sponsors sought. Register through RecDesk.

- **Outdoor Pools**

Four sites are open and busy. Three will close Sunday, August 17 (as well as Cornerstone for its annual, one-week cleaning), but Fernridge Pool will stay open until August 29. Splash pads will remain open through early September. The Pooch Plunge is scheduled for August 18 at Beachland Pool.

- **Sustainability Projects**

- *Wolcott Hillside*

A land care consultant is working with staff and volunteers to create a wildflower meadow on Wolcott Road, adjacent to the Community Gardens. A pollinator garden has been installed by volunteers at the entrance to the Wolcott Children's Forest.

- *Tree Forum*

A forum will be held at Westmoor Park (September 20 or 21, 3-5 p.m.) to discuss the tree canopy and proper tree planting (Right Tree, Right Place). For a \$30 fee, participants will receive a tree for their property such as maple, oak or dogwood. Preregistration is required.

- **America 250 –**

Staff are collaborating with residents regarding ways to celebrate the months-long anniversary. One suggestion was to plant a White Oak at every elementary school to honor Connecticut's legacy of the Charter Oak.

5. Friends of West Hartford Parks Report

Lisa Karan advised three new members have joined the board, bringing the total to 8. A successful movie night – Finding Nemo – was held at Eisenhower on July 25 and attracted about 50-60 people. Unfortunately, the bathrooms were locked. A second movie night showing Madagascar is set for September 5 at Kennedy. The group has funds to help complete the walkway at Fernridge but is awaiting completion of the bridge project on Fern Street.

6. Park Signage/Park Rules

Signage for parks was briefly discussed as well as the general steps to the park planning process. The Commission may prepare a letter in support of no smoking and speed restrictions (e.g. for e-bikes) in all the parks.

6. Public Comment—none.

Meeting adjourned at 6:35 p.m.

Next Meeting: Monday, September 22, 2025; location Elmwood Community Center.

Minutes submitted by Nancy Gierlich.