

**Parks & Recreation Advisory Board
Meeting Minutes
October 6, 2025
Elmwood Community Center**

Meeting called to order by Anna Park, Chair at 5:40 PM.

1. **Roll Call:**

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

Absent: Patrick Cooney, Shawn Daly, Steve Garneau.

Guest: Chris Timmel

Staff in Attendance: Helen Rubino-Turco.

There are two open board positions to fill.

2. **Adoption of July 28, 2025 Minutes** – passed unanimously.

3. **Old Business:**

Tree Canopy Study and Inventory Progress – Final edits to the study have been completed, with data broken down by neighborhoods, census block and elementary school districts. Significantly more trees are needed, particularly on the southeast portion of town. Bill Gleason of the Tree Action Group has spearheaded the work. A page directed to the Tree project will soon be available on the updated Municipal website. A grant has been written to plant trees at Kennedy Park, Wolcott Park and the New Park corridor near the lower section of the Trout Brook Trail. Lisa noted trees are also needed on the Trail near Jackson Avenue.

Summer Recap

Outdoor Pools – Over 24,000 guests enjoyed the public pools this summer. Four family nights averaging 150 people were held allowing families free entry to the pools. Families had a lot of fun and the staff were very engaged with patrons. Youth swim classes filled, and parent-child classes and adult classes were also offered. Whether to offer a season pass and/or to increase prices to cover cost of living increases will be discussed December 1 meeting.

Veterans Rink – Buena Vista camp ages 6-11 sold out all of its 10 weekly sessions. IPH Hockey camp also had 4 weeks of sold-out classes.

Elmwood Community Center – Discovery Zone Camp ages 6-12 served 675 campers for full day camp, at a fill rate of 100%. This is a 10.3% increase over last year and shows a 2-year increase of 23% and a 3-year increase of 42%. Busy Bees Camps ages 3-5 served 455 full-day campers over 10 weeks, 5 campers over the original limit of 450. For Week 11, Leisure Services scrambled to accommodate requests for an 11th week and did so for 4 days using available staff and an unused available classroom.

Funtastic Camp Program - Both Fernridge and Beachland camps for ages 6-11 maxed out with 55 campers at each site for 8 weeks. Eisenhower will be added as a third location next year.

4. **New Business:**

Fall/Winter Programs

Registration opened August 6 for residents and August 13 for non-residents.

At Wolcott Park, the Feast on the Farm on September 26 was sold out. A grant of \$93,500 was awarded by the John G. Martin Foundation toward replacement of the park's small barn. Arboretum Tours are set for September 27, October 18 and October 25, with registration available through the Rec Desk.

Capital Improvement Projects Update

Fernridge Park - There will be a ribbon cutting on October 16 at 4:30 p.m. to mark completion of post-tensioned concrete tennis courts at Fernridge Park. Construction of the Fern Street bridge should be out to bid shortly. The water main will be replaced and the pond will be dredged and adjusted to decrease erosion. As a result of this expected work, Family Fishing Day at Fern will likely move to Spicebush Swamp Park or be cancelled.

Rockledge Golf - Work on the range at Rockledge Golf Course should be completed by November.

Eisenhower Pool has been demolished and will be replaced by June 2026.

Wolcott Park - The parking lot project at Wolcott Park will go out to bid shortly.

Miracle Field - new ADA compliant bridge at the Miracle Field out to bid shortly.

Friendship Memorial Park – rededication of parklet at the corner of Raymond Road and Park Road is set for October 24 at 10 a.m. This parklet honors the memory of two high school friends, Ashleigh Woodfield and Jennifer Hamilton, with improvements made by the WH Garden Club, Leisure Services and the Public Works Department.

New Community Center - budget discussions continue for the new Community Center.

Sustainability Projects

Wolcott Park - An educational event was held September 27 at the pollinator habitat installed by volunteers at the entrance to the Wolcott Children's Forest. Local TV covered this event. A new pollinator garden was designed and installed by the WH Garden Club in coordination with Leisure Services adjacent to the new restroom building. Finally, a wildflower hillside adjacent to the Community Gardens is coming, a collaboration with WH Sustainable Commission, WH Garden Club volunteers, Leisure Services and the Public Works Department.

5. Friends of West Hartford Parks Report –

Lisa Karan reported a second movie night showing Madagascar on September 12 at Kennedy was a great success, with free snacks and enjoyed by the diverse crowd. No Walk in the Park will be held this year. The group's next focus is to complete the walkway at Fernridge following completion of the bridge project on Fern Avenue. The group will meet in the park on October 25 at 10 AM to assess completion of a path from the pond to the pool.

6. Public Comment – Chris Timmel addressed the need for a playground in the Town Center in addition to those available in the parks and school yards.

Meeting adjourned at 6:48 p.m.

Next Meeting: Monday, December 1, 2025; location Elmwood Community Center.

Minutes submitted by Nancy Gierlich.