



CITY OF NORWALK
RECREATION, PARKS & CULTURAL AFFAIRS COUNCIL COMMITTEE
BY VIDEO CONFERENCE AND TELECONFERENCE
WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 8, 2025.
REGULAR MEETING
7:00 PM.



Members of the public may call in to participate. Callers will not be able to see the meeting participants. All participants will be muted upon entering the meeting. To speak, dial *9 on the phone and you will be called on by the host of the meeting during the public comment section. All speakers must state their name and address. Comments must be on a topic on the agenda and are limited to three minutes. Anyone disrupting the orderly conduct of the meeting, including by using threatening, hateful, or sexually explicit language, will be removed. Please find the information using the link above.



Members of the public who wish to “view the meeting live” and/or “provide live comments” can use the Zoom meeting platform. All participants will be muted upon entering the meeting. To speak, click the “raise your hand indicator” and you will be called on by the host of the meeting during the public comment section. All speakers must state their name and address. Comments must be on a topic on the agenda and are limited to three minutes. Anyone disrupting the orderly conduct of the meeting, including by using threatening, hateful, or sexually explicit language, will be removed. Please find the information using the link above.



Members of the public who wish to provide public comments are encouraged to submit those via email in advance of the meeting. For these comments to be read into the record, they must be submitted by 12:00 p.m. the day of the meeting. Please email Dilene Byrd at dbyrd@norwalkct.gov with the subject line “Public Comment” to provide written public comments prior to the meeting.

ATTENDANCE: Darlene Young, Chair; Douglas Sutton; Nicole’ Eaddy; Heather Dunn; Lisa Shanahan; Johan Lopez

ABSENT: Nicol Ayers

OTHERS: Chief James Walsh, Norwalk Police Department; James Gerweck

I. CALL TO ORDER

Ms. Young called the meeting to order at 7:04 PM.

II. ROLL CALL

At roll call, there were five (5) committee members present. A quorum was present.

III. ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES- DECEMBER 11, 2024

The acceptance of the minutes was tabled.

IV. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Richard Bonenfant-17 Park Hill Avenue

Mr. Bonenfant said the approval for dog access at Oyster Shell Park did not go through the Recreation and Parks Committee and only went through the Finance Committee, so they were left out of the decision-making process. He said there was already an area built and now wants to turn the area into a dog park which has already been done. He asked where the public input was because maybe families with children would have liked to have weighed in. He said he sees dogs at Cranbury Park, Matthews Park, and Veterans Park in areas where they are not allowed and asked who is responsible for telling people dogs are not permitted in certain areas, he is the grandfather of four and asked that the rules be enforced.

Luke Garvey

Mr. Garvey said one of the appeals of Cranbury Park is that it is an off-leash dog park and is a great place for socialization and there are a lot of parks in Norwalk and Fairfield County that offer on-leash-only experiences for people who don't want to interact with strange dogs.

Greg Helms

Mr. Helms said that he is a regular at Cranbury Park and is the Chair of Friends of Cranbury Park and hundreds of people at Cranbury Park would be affected by this change that would require leashing dogs while hiking on the trails, and many of us think it is absurd and have a strong objection to this dramatic change in our routine and comfort at the park.

Mr. Hughes clarified that that the plan for Cranbury Park does not ban unleashed dogs on the trails and everything will stay as is and are just outlining the rules, so they'll be part of the ordinance which includes no dogs on the Great Lawn but are still allowed on the trails off leash but under voice command.

Mr. Lopez joined the meeting at 7:11 PM.

Matha Coleman

Ms. Coleman said she was a resident of Norwalk, but she now lives in Monroe and drives to Norwalk and pays the parking fee to allow herself and her dog to have time on the walking trails and was concerned when she read in an email the trails would be banned so she is relieved to hear that is not the case. She said she frequently visits the park and never encounters anyone on the trails particularly people with kids so it would be an overreach if the authority said that dogs would not be allowed off-leash on the trails because it is a spectacular experience and many dog owners use it.

Mr. Helms said he must have misunderstood, and he believes that currently dogs are not required to be on a leash on the hiking trails and hundreds of us walk the parks daily and their dogs run throughout the park within our control and asked if that would be interpreted to be outside of our voice control going forward.

Ms. Price said she is with Friends of Norwalk Dogs and as a 35-year resident of Norwalk has walked dogs at Cranbury Park off-leash on the trails and has always been a pleasant wonderful experience and is a huge bonus for people who live in and outside of Norwalk and the Friends of Norwalk Dogs fully supports dogs being off leash at Cranbury Park outside of the Great lawn and playground area.

Will stated that he has been a resident of Norwalk for almost 20 years and one of the attractions for him has always been Cranbury Park and the ability to walk dogs, in his experience at the park there has never been an issue between the participants in the park, and has always been enjoyable and would be hard to believe that would ever change and supports the ongoing experience that we have had for the past 20 years and would like to continue with that trend.

Ms. Young said these items were on the last Recreation and Parks Committee agenda but there was not a quorum, but the folks representing the items did attend and provide explanations and went through the process.

V. OLD BUSINESS

A. AUTHORIZE THE MAYOR, HARRY W. RILLING, TO ENTER INTO AN AGREEMENT FOR THE USE OF BRIEN MCMAHON HIGH SCHOOL AND IMMEDIATE SURROUNDING GROUNDS BY BOSTON BUILDUP FOR THEIR 10K RUN TO BE HELD ON SUNDAY, JANUARY 19TH, 2025 FROM 8:00 A.M. TO 11:00 A.M. SET-UP TIME BY 7:40 A.M. SUNDAY WITH TEAR-DOWN BY 11:10 A.M. APPROXIMATELY 150 PEOPLE.

Mr. Gerwick provided a brief overview of the event and said this will be the 47th year the event will be held and there will be four races.

**** MS. SHANAHAN MOVED TO AUTHORIZE THE MAYOR, HARRY W. RILLING, TO ENTER INTO AN AGREEMENT FOR THE USE OF BRIEN MCMAHON HIGH SCHOOL AND IMMEDIATE SURROUNDING GROUNDS BY BOSTON BUILDUP FOR THEIR 10K RUN TO BE HELD ON SUNDAY, JANUARY 19TH, 2025 FROM 8:00 A.M. TO 11:00 A.M. SET-UP TIME BY 7:40 A.M. SUNDAY WITH TEAR-DOWN BY 11:10 A.M.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

B. AUTHORIZE THE MAYOR, HARRY W. RILLING, TO ENTER INTO AN AGREEMENT FOR THE USE OF VETERAN'S PARK AND IMMEDIATE SURROUNDING GROUNDS BY JS ENDURANCE FOR THEIR GARAVEL SONO HALF MARATHON, 5K & KIDS FUN RUN TO BE HELD ON SUNDAY, OCTOBER 5TH, 2025 FROM 8:30 A.M. TO 3:00 P.M. SET-UP TIME BY 8:00 A.M. SATURDAY, OCTOBER 4TH, 2025 WITH TEAR-DOWN BY 5:00 P.M. APPROXIMATELY 1200 PEOPLE.

Mr. Hughes said the SONO Marathon is a longstanding event and the organizers have done a great job over the years to decrease the impact of traffic and now don't receive any complaints in terms of traffic or delays and they have done a great job accommodating the residents.

**** MS. DUNN MOVED TO AUTHORIZE THE MAYOR, HARRY W. RILLING, TO ENTER INTO AN AGREEMENT FOR THE USE OF VETERAN'S PARK AND IMMEDIATE SURROUNDING GROUNDS BY JS ENDURANCE FOR THEIR GARAVEL SONO HALF MARATHON, 5K & KIDS FUN RUN TO BE HELD ON SUNDAY, OCTOBER 5TH, 2025 FROM 8:30 A.M. TO 3:00 P.M. SET-UP TIME BY 8:00 A.M. SATURDAY, OCTOBER 4TH, 2025 WITH TEAR-DOWN BY 5:00 P.M.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

C. AUTHORIZE THE MAYOR, HARRY W. RILLING, TO ENTER INTO AN AGREEMENT FOR THE USE OF CALF PASTURE BEACH, TAYLOR FARM AND IMMEDIATE SURROUNDING GROUNDS BY NORWALK MARINE MANUFACTURERS ASSOCIATION FOR THEIR NORWALK BOAT SHOW TO BE HELD ON THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 18TH, FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 19TH, SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 20TH, AND SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 21ST, 2025, FROM 7:00 A.M. TO 7:00 P.M. APPROXIMATELY 13,500 PEOPLE

Mr. Hughes said this is another long-standing event that is held, and they use Calf Pasture Beach and part of Taylor Farm for parking which works well for them and provides revenue for the city.

**** MR. LOPEZ MOVED TO AUTHORIZE THE MAYOR, HARRY W. RILLING, TO ENTER INTO AN AGREEMENT FOR THE USE OF CALF PASTURE BEACH, TAYLOR FARM AND IMMEDIATE SURROUNDING GROUNDS BY NORWALK MARINE MANUFACTURERS ASSOCIATION FOR THEIR NORWALK BOAT SHOW TO BE HELD ON THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 18TH, FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 19TH, SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 20TH, AND SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 21ST, 2025, FROM 7:00 A.M. TO 7:00 P.M.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

D. AUTHORIZE THE MAYOR, HARRY W. RILLING, TO EXECUTE AN AMENDMENT TO THE OCTOBER 26, 2021, AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE CITY OF NORWALK AND RACE COASTAL ENGINEERING FOR PURCHASING PROJECT 4154 DESIGN AND PERMITTING FOR REPLACEMENT OF VETERANS MEMORIAL PARK PUBLIC MARINA DOCKS FOR A SUM NOT TO EXCEED \$47,471.00 FOR CONSTRUCTION ADMINISTRATION SERVICES. ACCOUNT NO.09 22 6030 5777 C036709, 23 6030 5777 C036709, 24 6030 5777 C036709, 25 6030 5777 C0367

Mr. Hughes said this is for the ongoing marina dock reconstruction project and at the part of the project where they need to hire a construction manager so the perimeters for the construction manager were included in the original contract that was approved on October 26, 2021, and will now be instituting the terms of the contract and will be going out to bid soon for the construction of the marina docks at Veterans Park.

**** MS. SHANAHAN MOVED TO AUTHORIZE THE MAYOR, HARRY W. RILLING, TO EXECUTE AN AMENDMENT TO THE OCTOBER 26, 2021, AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE CITY OF NORWALK AND RACE COASTAL ENGINEERING FOR PURCHASING PROJECT 4154 DESIGN AND PERMITTING FOR REPLACEMENT OF VETERANS MEMORIAL PARK PUBLIC MARINA DOCKS FOR A SUM NOT TO EXCEED \$47,471.00 FOR CONSTRUCTION ADMINISTRATION SERVICES. ACCOUNT NO.09 22 6030 5777 C036709, 23 6030 5777 C036709, 24 6030 5777 C036709, 25 6030 5777 C0367**
**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

E. AUTHORIZE THE MAYOR, HARRY W. RILLING, TO SIGN ANY AND ALL DOCUMENTS REQUIRED FOR THE INSTALLATION OF A MICRO FOREST AT MEADOW STREET PARK, PROJECT DEPA00002011221 SOUTH NORWALK "PAVEMENT TO MICRO-FOREST" URBAN RESILIENCY PROJECT, AWARDED THROUGH THE NORWALK RIVER WATERSHED AUTHORITY.

Ms. Shanahan recused herself from the item and left the meeting at 7:20PM.

Mr. Stowers said this is a result of finding another use for this park and were looking for some green infrastructure that would help make the environment a little more natural and obtained a grant, one of the trends in green infrastructure to get things quickly is a micro forest. He said they would be working with the land trust to get this project completed, and the planning will begin next fall. Mr. Hughes said this is a very exciting project and will be one of the biggest micro forests and he can't wait to get it started and see how it grows throughout the years. Ms. Eaddy said she was excited to see what this is about and suggested an herb garden within the area.

Mr. Lopez said with the development of the Tree Master Plan there have been some discussions to provide tree canopy to South Norwalk because it has been neglected and is so close to the industrial zone. He said the micro forests develop quickly and the timing is perfect and will provide a lot of opportunities for the people in that area starting with clean air.

Ms. Young said this will be the first significant impact that will change the landscape of South Norwalk, and the herb garden is something that the Housing Authority can possibly do within their complex and she is hoping this sparks and encourages others in the area to improve their properties.

Ms. Dunn said it would be interesting to get some baseline temperature readings to see how it has impacted the area. Mr. Hughes said as part of the contract, they will be doing some before and after readings.

**** MS. EADDY MOVED TO AUTHORIZE THE MAYOR, HARRY W. RILLING, TO SIGN ANY AND ALL DOCUMENTS REQUIRED FOR THE INSTALLATION OF A MICRO FOREST AT MEADOW STREET PARK, PROJECT DEPA00002011221 SOUTH NORWALK "PAVEMENT TO MICRO-FOREST" URBAN RESILIENCY PROJECT, AWARDED THROUGH THE NORWALK RIVER WATERSHED AUTHORITY.
** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

Ms. Shanahan rejoined the meeting at 7:25 PM.

VI. NEW BUSINESS

A. AUTHORIZE THE MAYOR, HARRY W. RILLING, TO ENTER INTO AN AGREEMENT FOR THE USE OF SILVERMINE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL AND IMMEDIATE SURROUNDING GROUNDS BY BOSTON BUILDUP FOR THEIR 10K RUN TO BE HELD ON SUNDAY, MARCH 2ND, 2025 FROM 8:00 A.M. TO 11:00 A.M. SET-UP TIME BY 7:40 A.M. SUNDAY WITH TEAR-DOWN BY 11:10A.M. APPROXIMATELY 150 PEOPLE.

**** MR. LOPEZ MOVED TO AUTHORIZE THE MAYOR, HARRY W. RILLING, TO ENTER INTO AN AGREEMENT FOR THE USE OF SILVERMINE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL AND IMMEDIATE SURROUNDING GROUNDS BY BOSTON BUILDUP FOR THEIR 10K RUN TO BE HELD ON SUNDAY, MARCH 2ND, 2025 FROM 8:00 A.M. TO 11:00 A.M. SET-UP TIME BY 7:40 A.M. SUNDAY WITH TEAR-DOWN BY 11:10 A.M.
** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

B. AUTHORIZE THE PURCHASING AGENT TO ENTER INTO A MULTIPLE (3) YEAR SOLE SOURCE AGREEMENT WITH DUNNING INDUSTRIES FOR THE PURCHASE OF DURA EDGE CLASSIC FIELD CLAY.

Mr. Hughes said the parks department purchases dura edge classic field clay for all the fields and is a good quality clay and Dunnig Industries are only supplier in the northeast that supplies that clay, and the Purchasing Agent requested to obtain approval for a three-year sole source agreement. He said they have a \$122,000 a year budget in their operating budget for clay. Ms. Young asked if the price fluctuated. Mr. Hughes said "yes" based on the price of gas and materials but would still need to go through all the purchasing guidelines.

**** MR. SUTTON MOVED TO AUTHORIZE THE PURCHASING AGENT TO ENTER INTO A MULTIPLE (3) YEAR SOLE SOURCE AGREEMENT WITH DUNNING INDUSTRIES FOR THE PURCHASE OF DURA EDGE CLASSIC FIELD CLAY.
** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

C. AUTHORIZE THE MAYOR, HARRY W. RILLING, TO EXTEND THE GEESE RELIEF GEESE CONTROL CONTRACT, FOR AN ADDITIONAL YEAR, PER THE TERMS OF THE EXISTING AGREEMENT, WITH THE EXTENSION ENDING JULY 26, 2026.

Mr. Hughes said a few years ago this committee had approved a three-year contract for geese control services at Veterans Park and Calf Pasture and Shady Beaches and was awarded to Geese Relief and within the contract there were two one-year extensions and are requesting to enact on the first one-year extension which would carry the existing contract to July 26, 2026, and the price will remain the same.

**** MS. SHANAHAN MOVED TO AUTHORIZE THE MAYOR, HARRY W. RILLING, TO EXTEND THE GEESE RELIEF GEESE CONTROL CONTRACT, FOR AN ADDITIONAL YEAR, PER THE TERMS OF THE EXISTING AGREEMENT, WITH THE EXTENSION ENDING JULY 26, 2026.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

D. CODE OF THE CITY OF NORWALK, 74-13 CURFEW

Hours for use of the City parks by the public shall be established and may be amended from time to time by the Director of Parks and Recreation, subject to the approval of the Common Council. The Director shall submit the proposed schedule of hours to the Parks and Recreation Committee. The Committee shall hold a public hearing thereon, which hearing shall conform to the requirements of § 1-191.1. Following the public hearing, the Committee shall forward the proposed schedule of hours to the Common Council for approval.

Norwalk Ct. Recreation and Parks Director's Recommended Park Hours:

City Charter Chapter 74-13 Gives the Recreation and Parks Director the Authority to Set Park Hours with the approval of the Common Council after a public hearing in the Recreation and Parks Committee.

Therefore, it is my recommendation that Norwalk Park Hours are set as follows:

Neighborhood and Pocket Parks:

1. September (Labor Day) to May (Memorial Day) – Proposed Hours 7:00 AM to 9:00 PM
2. May (Memorial Day) to September (Labor Day) – Proposed Hours 7:00 AM to 10:00 PM

Regional Parks:

1. September (Labor Day) to May (Memorial Day) – Proposed Hours - 7:00 AM to 9:30 PM
Except Veterans Park – Proposed hours 7:00 AM to 8:00 PM

2. May (Memorial Day) to September (Labor Day) – Proposed Hours 7:00 AM to 10:30 PM
3. Oyster Shell Park; Calf Pasture Beach; Taylor Farm, and Cranbury Park
4. Except Veterans Park - Proposed Hours – 7:00 AM to 9:00 PM

Mr. Stowers said these items had passed the Recreation and Parks Committee and a public hearing was held but was tabled at the Common Council meeting and sent back to the Recreation and Parks Committee to hear some of the concerns that were voiced.

Mr. Stowers said he and his staff had conducted a limited survey of the surrounding towns city park hours and he made the recommendations based on the results of the survey, as well as feedback from staff, and discussions with the Norwalk Police Department. He said there are benefits to setting park hours and he believes people were under the assumption that the park opening times were changing but the parks don't currently open until 7:00 AM. He said he invited Chief Walsh to the meeting to provide his position on this initiative.

Ms. Young said one of the concerns that were expressed was that people walk earlier in the morning particularly at Calf Pasture Beach as the hours would now be specific and had asked if there would be leniency which of course there would be. Mr Hughes said the gates at the beach do not currently open until 7:00 AM but people park outside of the beach and would in before that, but no one bothers them and that will not change.

Ms. Young said there were also some comments made regarding how this will be enforced.

Chief Walsh said that currently there are some significant issues at the parks, meaning a lot of call volume and currently the officer that is assigned to the parks must close all four of the parks so if we were to standardize and codify all park hours that they would do a much better job to solve all the problems that they have seen. He said last year they received 498 calls for service at Veteran's Park and in the summer had 59 noise complaints, it became such an issue that patrol officers were being pulled from their patrol sectors to close the park and take care of the issues because the officer assigned to the parks was overextended with all the other park issues. He said once closing times are standardized there will be a plan implemented through extra work to have better coverage to close the parks on time to better relieve some of the neighbors' concerns of noise because Veteran's Park is probably the biggest concern with loitering, minor drug activity, open container drinking, and noise and he fully supports standardizing the times.

Ms. Dunn asked for clarification of the noise ordinance being in effect until 10:00 PM and asked if these hours align with the ordinance. Chief Walsh said "yes", and the current noise ordinance is difficult to enforce, and the noise is a constant quality of life issue beginning Memorial Day through September and there is a process to enforce the noise ordinance and has been a significant issue over the past two summers as Veterans Park has become more popular.

Ms. Shanahan asked what kind of criminal activity was happening in the parks and if they would be addressed within these hours. Chief Walsh said smoking cannabis in the parks has been an issue as well as minor drug activity, loitering, and alcohol consumption, and they keep on top of it the best they can.

Mr. Hughes said the intent of this is not to keep people out of the parks, but it is to keep illicit activity out of the parks.

Ms. Eaddy said there was a concern regarding people being stopped at Oyster Shell Park and forced to leave if they were walking through the park. Mr. Hughes said the intent is not to stop people from walking through the park after hours. Chief Walsh said there is no mechanism or gate to stop people from walking in that park at night, but the officers do patrol it to be sure everything is ok.

**** MR. LOPEZ MOVED TO APPROVE CODE OF THE CITY OF NORWALK, 74-13 CURFEW.
** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

E. RESOLUTION CONCERNING THE REGULATION OF DOGS AT CITY PARKS

Mr. Stowers said the park codes have never been approved by the Common Council and if they were there is no proof of it. He said that currently there are no dogs allowed at Oyster Shell Park and they are only allowed in the dog parks, the dilemma is if they are not allowed in the parks how do they get to the dog park if it is in the middle of the park, so as long as the dogs were leashed they were allowed in Oyster Shell Park to get to the dog park where they can run free. He said there is a contradiction in terms of the park codes and will be working with the law department to go through all the park codes and bring them before the Common Council to get them adopted. He said during the public comments period for this event there seemed to be some confusion with the version of language, and it should state that dogs will be allowed on the trails at Cranbury Park on or off leash or voice control by the owner and in the dog park dogs can be taken off leash. Mr. Hughes said the correct version of the resolution is online.

Mr. Stowers said because they want to open Oyster Shell Park tomorrow, they can't wait for the Common Council to approve this so the city Attorney stated that the director has the authority to do a temporary rule change with the approval of the Common Council and will need to ratify it and approve it to continue with the temporary rule change.

Ms. Eaddy asked if the area where the dogs will be allowed to be unleashed is separate from where the children will be. Mr. Stowers said the dogs will not be allowed on the great lawn or the playground and the dogs will be allowed to be unleashed on the trails and in the dog park. Ms. Eaddy asked about enforcement when dogs are found to be in the playground. Mr. Hughes said the enforcement city-wide is through the dog warden.

**** MS. EADDY MOVED TO APPROVE THE RESOLUTION CONCERNING THE
REGULATION OF DOGS AT CITY PARKS.
** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

VII. DISCUSSION

Budget discussion, Operating and Capital.

Mr. Stowers provided an overview of what they are requesting in this year's operating budget and said they had gotten a directive not to come in over 3.5% but found a way to orchestrate things. He said they will be requesting funds to retain the arborist until they can make the position full-time, currently, there is a lot of demand for her and every department has been using her including Oak Hills Park, she is very skillful and knowledgeable and can hopefully start to build a natural resource unit. He said they will also be requesting a manager for the community center, as well as more professional recreation team leaders, and he has been working with the finance team to bring the system analyst on full-time as she handles all the reservations in the financial system and is an integral part of their work.

Mr. Stowers provided an overview of the capital budget request and said one of the main projects is the Broad River complex so will be requesting funds for that. He said they will also be requesting funding for Calf Pasture Beach to enclose one of the pavilions to make space for summer camps for inclement weather and will also provide another rental facility. He said they will also be requesting funds to replace the Porta-a-Johns at Calf Pasture Beach as well as funds to complete the signage project so that the signs are consistent throughout all the parks. He said they continue to work on the new park's garage and the trades personnel have been doing most of the construction, they have done a very good job. He said they continue to work on sustainably with additional electric blowers and electric equipment so are requesting some funds for that. He said they will be requesting funds for playground renovations at two schools and will need to start planning for when the athletic synthetic fields come to their life cycle as they typically last 10-12 years. Ms. Young asked when that would be a concern. Mr. Stowers said within the next two years. Mr. Hughes said in 2027 they will need to start planning for the Brien McMahon complex.

Mr. Stowers said they are in the midst of a lot of growth and are still working with Grassroots on installing a tennis bubble in the fall. He said the recreation center will open until the turn of 2025 and will need to establish an Advisory Council for the community center. He said there were over 1,000 kids that attended the summer camps last year and their revenues grew almost one-third from the summer camps and have a lot of new programs and he thinks a good future is in front of them to continue to grow.

Mr. Lopez asked if the life cycle of the fields Mr. Stowers mentioned was for artificial turf fields. Mr. Stowers said "yes" Mr. Lopez asked what the life cycle is for grass turf. Mr. Stowers said if they are maintained they can last forever, but the issue is there are not enough fields to rest them so they can regenerate the nutrients it takes for them to be healthy.

Ms. Shanahan said she would like to endorse all the comments that Mr. Stowers made about the fantastic job that Ms. Cruz is doing. She is almost indispensable in the two years that she has been here and is supportive of finding the funds to keep her.

Ms. Shanahan said she is very concerned about PFAS and turf fields.

Ms. Shanahan said she is interested in hearing more about the community center and she knows they are very conscious about the taxes but wonders if some fee-based programs may be showing up in the community center that may underwrite some of this work and generate some revenue. Mr. Stowers said "yes" and there are three community rooms there and will work with a lot of the non-profit agencies that

need a meeting space as well as summer camps and based upon his experience his projections are between \$400,000 to \$500,000 in revenue over two years. He said they would like the Advisory Council to be responsible for generating ideas and maybe even write grants to help with the facility.

Ms. Dunn asked for an update on the Norwalk River Valley Trail and connectedness. Mr. Hughes said they are not involved in the expansion of the trail. Mr. Stowers said their only part maintenance and will be having an agreement with them that Recreation and Parks will do the maintenance, but they will need to find the money.

Ms. Dunn said she was told that Norwalk has the only cricket field in Fairfield County that is located in front of Ponus School and asked for the details about the cricket field. Mr. Hughes said there is at least one cricket league that has been here for over 16 years and was just contacted by a second league. He said at the field there is a cricket pitch, two soccer fields, and a baseball field, so it is not exclusive to cricket. He said the cricket fields are only used on the weekends so in his opinion it is not affecting the use of the field at all.

Mr. Hughes said they only request six months of salary for the arborist because the grant is in effect until December 2025, but they do need to make that position permanent. Mr. Stowers said the Community Center Manager is also a needed position. Mr. Hughes said even after all the requests in the operating budget he and Mr. Stowers got the request down to 2.99% so even though they are requesting positions they reduced the request in other accounts so came in under the pro forma.

Ms. Young said it is amazing where this department has come from and where it is headed. She appreciates Mr. Stowers's leadership, Mr. Hughes's commitment and knowledge, and all he does for the city and in supporting Mr. Stowers. Mr. Stowers said that Mr. Hughes is always there, even more than he would expect him to be, and has really been a help to him.

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

**** MS. SHANAHAN MOVED TO ADJOURN.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting was adjourned at 7:35 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Dilene Byrd