

**CITY OF NORWALK  
OAK HILLS PARK AUTHORITY  
REGUALR MEETING MINUTES - MARCH 19, 2026  
VIA ZOOM VIRTUAL CONFERENCE**

**ATTENDEES:** Richard Dellinger, Mary Verel, Gary Leeds, Geoffrey Schweitzer, Jennifer McAllister, Denise Brown, Robert Stowers, TJ Trimboli.

**STAFF:** Jim Schell, Mark Gartner, Jim Hollyday.

**OTHERS:** Jerry Crowley, John Lloyd

**I. CALL TO ORDER**

Mr. Dellinger called the meeting to order at 7:01 p.m.

**II. ROLL CALL**

Mr. Dellinger conducted the roll call. A quorum was present.

**III. ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES**

A. Regular Meeting: February 19, 2026

Mr. Dellinger asked for a motion to approve the minutes of the Regular Meeting of February 19, 2026. There were no questions or concerns raised regarding the minutes.

**\*\*MS. BROWN MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE FEBRUARY 19, 2026, REGULAR MEETING.**

**\*\*THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY. THE MINUTES WERE APPROVED AS PRESENTED.**

**IV. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

Mr. Dellinger noted that the new tennis instructor, Mr. Arlen Domoney, was present for public participation even though he will be on the agenda starting in April. Mr. Domoney provided a brief overview of how things are starting for him at the Tennis Center. He stated that he is busy working on building his website, which is up and running at oakhillsTennis.com, and is still building his platform for registration and memberships, planning to launch that within about two weeks around April 1st. He was asked about the ladies' teams, which are full with a waitlist of about 20 players across three teams, bringing in about 40 percent of the overall revenue. The courts are planned to be reconditioned the week of April 20th, weather dependent, and open May 1st. Mr. Dellinger asked if anyone had questions for Mr. Domoney about the Tennis Center. Mr. Gartner welcomed him to the club. Mr. Schweitzer seconded the welcome. Mr. Dellinger noted that Mr. Domoney has little ones at home. Mr. Leeds asked whether the Authority will put a link to the new website from the basic Oak Hills site where it says tennis. Mr. Dellinger stated that there is already a link on the golf site at the top to the new addition. Mr. Hollyday stated that if it

is not done yet, he will make sure it is done in the next few days. Mr. Dellinger asked Mr. Hollyday if there was anyone else on public participation. Mr. Hollyday stated there was not.

## **V. REPORTS**

### **A. Chair**

Mr. Dellinger, reporting for the Chair, welcomed both Mr. Domoney and Mr. Novak to the Authority. He stated that the next couple of months will be devoted to the budget for fiscal year 2026-2027. Mr. Gartner stated that starting next week and for the first two days of the following week, he will be full-time into budget preparation, sending templates to Mr. Novak, Mr. Schell and Mr. Hollyday, followed by quick meetings to go through the numbers, and that he will present it most likely at the May Authority meeting. Mr. Dellinger noted that contracts for both Mr. Domoney and Mr. Novak are available and that any Authority member wanting them should send an email to the Chair. He stated that new Oak Hills Park Authority members are coming and that he had sent out a draft orientation package, including bios for Mr. Domoney and Mr. Novak, and expectations for the executive committee. He had spoken to the Chair and Steve Shepherd about advertising for new members and had forwarded notices. He sent out a blurb this evening for the website about positions opening in July and encouraged people to apply on the city site. Mr. Leeds suggested putting the blurb on the tennis website as well. Mr. Leeds asked whether members must be Norwalk residents. Ms. Brown and Mr. Dellinger confirmed that they believe so. Mr. Dellinger asked if there were any other questions or concerns about those issues. There were none.

### **B. Restaurant: John Lloyd**

Mr. Lloyd reported that band night revenues and attendance have been down from last year, as have regular restaurant revenues, reflecting local trends. Private parties have been solid and are showing signs of major growth. The cost base has continued to go up. The business has kept its staff employed and new managers have settled in. He noted Ridgefield Golf Course opening April 7th or 8th. He expressed interest in learning the fate of Oak Hills outings and what will be allowed in terms of bypassing the restaurant. He stated it is unfortunate that despite two years of data and reasonable requests, they are still at square one. He hoped the arrival of Mr. Novak will attract new outing organizers with proper budgets. Mr. Leeds commented that he is with Mr. Lloyd and disappointed, suggesting that if an outing does not want to use the restaurant, the Authority should say thank you and find another place, and that the Authority should put its foot down. Ms. Verel agreed completely and stated the need to support the restaurant. Mr. Lloyd explained that a modest proposal for a minimum \$20 per person spend was rejected. Ms. Brown asked how it was rejected. Mr. Lloyd stated it was a unilateral rejection by the chair. Discussion followed with Mr. Gartner stating he agrees there is no way the restaurant should be cut out and that the Authority should stick with a 100-person minimum to close the course. Mr. Hollyday stated he has been managing communications with outing coordinators, has two new outings, one legacy outing is not returning, includes Odeen's menus in every communication, and has encouraged use of the restaurant. He noted a full schedule except for three dates in August and that contracts will go out next week. Ms. McAllister asked who organizes the outings and suggested increasing the per-person fee by \$20 to include a meal. Mr. Hollyday confirmed it was considered and rejected. Mr. Leeds suggested coming up with a policy that if they do not use the restaurant, the Authority does not want the outing. Mr. Dellinger suggested getting a group

together with Mr. Novak, Mr. Hollyday, Mr. Leeds, the Chair, and Mr. Gartner to come up with guidelines for the next agenda. Mr. Novak stated he is getting his arms around the outing situation, agrees it is strange, is on board that it must be addressed and adjusted, and noted leverage because Sterling Farms has dropped outings. Ms. Brown stated she received Mr. Lloyd's email about improving usage with the tennis community and will work with the tennis friends and Mr. Domoney to promote the restaurant.

#### C. Nature Advisory: Mary Verel

Ms. Verel reported that the committee has accomplished quite a bit over the winter and is now up to 12 members, including three city council members: Mr. Dellinger, Mr. Lopez, and Mr. Sawyer. The alternative natural lawn is being reworked due to a drainage issue. The food forest is still on board with one \$4,000 grant received and another pending. The composting area is in the works in the lower parking lot with Master Gardener Nisha Oliver. The first talk on February 21st, Composting 101, had over 75 attendees, with refreshments served by Odine's. More talks are planned for spring and summer. The Nature Center is being positioned as the Norwalk Nature Center. Partnerships continue with the Norwalk Garden Club, Parks and Rec, and city arborist Sierra Cruz. A BioBlitz is planned for the spring, along with continued events such as Tai Chi, walks, and forest bathing. Mr. Leeds asked about timing of events due to golfer parking. Ms. Verel acknowledged that parking will need to be balanced.

#### D. Tennis: Denise Brown

Ms. Brown reported that she is working with Mr. Domoney and the friends to support him and get everything up and running. Updates were made to the tennis drop-down menu on the Oak Hills Golf Course website thanks to Mr. Hollyday and Steve Shepherd, with plans to update it monthly with Friends of Tennis minutes. Discussion occurred on the new windscreens for courts 1 through 6. Mr. Schell stated that there are gates around the corner from where the windscreens are being installed and recommended we do not block the gates. Ms. Brown stated she will work with Mr. Domoney and the friends. Mr. Dellinger stated that starting next month Mr. Domoney will give the tennis report as part of his contract, Ms. Brown will report from the Tennis Friends perspective, and the Authority hopes to keep Ms. Brown involved even beyond her tenure.

#### E. Supporters of Oak Hills Park: Jerry Crowley

Mr. Crowley reported that letters of acknowledgement and thank you went out to all the donors recorded between him and Mr. Gartner. As a 501c3, people can use the letters as a deduction on their income tax. Mr. Dellinger asked why the letters came out later than usual and whether people can still use them. Mr. Crowley stated they came out about a week later than usual but were still within the February timeframe, and next year they will try to do better. Mr. Gartner stated that if the donor knows they gave the money, they can claim the deduction and use the letter later for audit support. Mr. Leeds asked whether the foundation is for all of Oak Hills Park, not just tennis, and whether donations can be restricted. Mr. Crowley confirmed it is correct and each letter acknowledges what it is for, whether tennis, golf, nature, or general. Mr. Dellinger explained the online donation drop-down menu options for golf, tennis, or nature. Mr. Leeds asked about automatic letters. Ms. Brown offered to help with letters for tennis and stated she is now a member of the Supporters. Mr. Crowley suggested discussing how to handle letters at the next meeting.

#### F. Long Term Planning: Gary Leeds

Mr. Leeds reported that some things are starting to happen. Mr. Schell had a review of the course done and put together a worksheet. He also reviewed the study Mr. Hollyday had done on the facilities. Activity is occurring at the first tee. The plan will not be done by the end of June but will move throughout the year. He suggested activating tennis ideas now that Mr. Domoney is on board.

#### G. Golf Professional: Nick Novak

Mr. Novak reported that he is excited to be at Oak Hills and appreciative of the warm welcome. His initial focus has been understanding current golf operations, connecting with staff, and organizing programming and systems. One operational improvement is standardizing the twilight tee time schedule based on sunset and civil twilight data for predictability. This unlocks additional 9-hole tee times after the last 18-hole time. The added twilight 9-hole tee times could generate substantial additional revenue. Mr. Gartner asked about cash being given to starters or rangers and requested to discuss it offline. Mr. Dellinger asked how interviewing for an assistant golf pro would affect the current teaching pro. Mr. Novak stated it should not, as the role is for tournament support, managing outings, and on-site leadership, and it is part-time for benefits but full-time during peak season. He is working with Mr. Gartner to include it in the budget. Ms. Brown asked whether the position would be part-time or full-time. Mr. Novak confirmed it is part-time for benefits but full-time for six months.

#### H. Superintendent: Jim Schell

Mr. Schell reported that the course has come through winter really well with no real damage. The greens will be prepped and open Saturday, with tees kept closed under covers for recovery. Ground staff will return next week. The assistant, Corey, is moving on to a position in Rhode Island. Things will ramp up quickly, and a couple of new hires may be needed. The new-to-us large area rough mower is ready. Discussion followed on the old mower under lease, which cannot be sold until the lease ends, and the even older mower that will be listed for sale. Mr. Leeds asked about refund for spare parts on the previous mower. Mr. Schell stated they are still waiting.

#### I. Controller: Mark Gartner

Mr. Gartner stated he will send the breakdown by category for all annual pass holders tomorrow. For February, the Authority broke even on net operating income while closed the entire month, with revenue from memberships, gift cards, and similar sources. Golf rounds and cart rounds are slightly above budget, but discount ID card and membership sales through January and February have been less than budget due to the frigid winter. Year-to-date, the Authority is \$183,000 over budget on net operating income and cash is higher than budget and last year. A \$55,000 transfer was made from the investment bank, and a large \$80,000 check run occurred this week due to the insurance bill and repairs. He cautioned against overspending in the short term. Ms. Brown asked when the new cart lease payments kick in. Mr. Gartner stated either April or May. Mr. Dellinger asked about the focus on bunkers. Mr. Gartner referred to Mr. Schell, who stated there is nothing new happening with bunkers as that project is finished, freeing up funds for fiscal year 2027.

#### J. General Manager: Jim Hollyday

Mr. Hollyday reported that the replacement of the sagging waste line is finished at a cost of \$9,500 and took three days. He has spent time onboarding Mr. Novak with Steve Shepherd. The first team meeting went extremely well. Revisions were made to the tennis section of the website. New windscreens are being purchased in the \$3,000 to \$5,000 range. A new cloud-based phone system with RingCentral is being installed, with the contract to be signed by the end of this week, at lower monthly cost than Optimum. City of Norwalk email addresses have been obtained with help from Joyce Liu. The request to join the City of Norwalk's Employee Health Insurance Plan is in process, with conversations begun with the new chief of staff, City Clerk, and Human Resource Director. Mr. Stowers stated they have talked to him, are working on it, and he sees no reason it cannot happen. He has given examples from other places and will keep pushing. Ms. Brown asked about the internet connection at the tennis house. Mr. Hollyday stated he will involve Scott Webb and asked Ms. Brown to text him a reminder so they can meet.

#### **VI. OLD BUSINESS**

There was no old business.

#### **VII. NEW BUSINESS**

There was no new business.

#### **VIII. ADJOURNMENT**

**\*\*MR. LEEDS MOVED TO ADJOURN THE MEETING.**

**\*\*MS. MCALLISTER SECONDED THE MOTION.**

**\*\*THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 8:10 PM.

UPCOMING MEETINGS

April 16, 2026

Respectfully Submitted,

Courtney Baldwin

Recording Secretary