

**TOWN OF SALEM
RECREATION COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING AGENDA
MONDAY, JANUARY 22, 2024 – 7:00 P.M.
SALEM TOWN HALL, CONFERENCE ROOM 1**

PRESENT

Mary Durkee, Chairperson
Deirdre Ahern
Casey Crafton
Eric McGlone
Agnes Valentini
Steven Wlodarczyk

ABSENT

Debra Delorimiere, Vice Chairperson

1. Call to Order

Chairperson Durkee called the meeting to order at 7:13 p.m.

2. Approval of Minutes

a. Regular Meeting Minutes of November 20, 2023

M/S/C: Valentini/Ahern, to approve the November 20, 2023, Regular Meeting Minutes. Discussion: None. Voice vote, 6-0, all in favor.

3. Alterations to the Agenda

The following alterations were made to the Agenda:

Addition:

10(g) Cross Country Course

Amendment:

Move the following items to follow Item 3, Alterations to the Agenda:

9(a) Salem Little League Request for Addition of Baseball/Softball Field

10(b) Salem PTO

10(g) Cross Country Course

4. Old and New Business

a. Salem Little League Request for Addition of Baseball/Softball Field

Salem Little League Board of Directors Members Jessica Fletcher and Chris Remiesiewicz presented a proposal to install a 200' skinned softball/baseball field where the soccer field is currently located. The league is growing and they have outgrown the number of fields available at the Round Hill Road Complex, limiting the amount of field time for practices and games. Three (3) estimates from local fencing companies were received and submitted. The estimates, which range from \$26,000.00 to \$44,000.00, reflect the cost of the fencing and development of the field. The clay, which is estimated to cost approximately \$6,000.00 (\$300.00/two (2) ton truck x 20 truckloads), is not included. In

addition, the current drainage/flooding issues would be repaired by grading the field and creating a 4" crown. Portable mounds would be utilized. It was noted that softball and baseball are the only recreational sports being offered by the town and the school has stated that they have no desire to utilize the soccer field due to the flooding/drainage issues. The League is willing to fundraise to raise the funds for the project. Following the installation of the field, an additional 150' would remain for other activities.

Discussion ensued regarding the possible usage of the Babe Ruth Field and Bingham Field as well as the possibility of installing lighting for evening games. It was noted that the Babe Ruth Field was used for practices during the spring and fall seasons and the final cost of transforming the field would be similar to the construction of a new field and result in wasted space. The League has enquired about utilizing Bingham Field but, due to scheduling conflicts related to school activities, it is not possible. It was noted that the town might also rent the fields for additional revenue. While the League is interested in completing the project before the season starts, there is approximately a two-month wait. Should lighting be installed, they would be turned off by 9:15 p.m., per Little League rules. The volunteers are open to constructing a dugout, if necessary. There are currently no Salem Middle School baseball/softball teams. The League will provide the number of players.

b. Flagpole Replacement

Salem Little League Board of Directors Member Remiesiewicz stated that the flagpole at the complex was broken and lashed together in two places and requested that it be replaced. In addition, a flag that was donated by the U.S. Navy that was being flown at the complex went missing last spring and a different flag was later anonymously placed in its stead. The flag, which once was lit, is no longer lit. It is requested that the flagpole be replaced before Opening Day on April 20.

c. Cross Country Course

Cross Country Coach Fletcher requested that work be conducted to improve the safety of the Multi-Purpose Path/Harris Brook Trail, which the team utilizes. Commissioners Ahern and Durkee will meet with Cross Country Coach Fletcher at the Music Vale entrance of the trail to review the requested improvements. It was requested that the repairs be made before the season starts in the Fall.

d. Salem PTO & Drop-In Friday Nights

Salem PTO President Fletcher felt that, while middle school students have several activities available to them, elementary school students do not. As such, she felt that it would be more beneficial to offer activities in the Multi-Purpose Room on Friday evenings to the second to fourth graders. Because there may be an issue with the Commissioners running activities in the school, she will enquire whether it would be possible for her to act as a liaison and be present for the activities.

Commissioner McGlone questioned the possibility of offering afterschool activities on school half-days. It was noted that the school is available for use after 5:00 p.m., even on half-days, making it difficult for any outside entities to host after-school activities.

5. Public Comment/Guests/Correspondence – none

6. Budget Report

a. FY2024/25 Capital Plan Request

Chairperson Durkee reported that she presented the Commission’s request to move the Volunteer Park Pavilion from the FY2025/26 Capital Plan to FY2024/25 to the Board of Finance during their January 11 Regular Meeting. Commissioner Valentini also attended the meeting.

b. FY2024/25 Operating Budget Request

The Commission’s FY2024/25 Proposed Operating Budget was submitted to the Finance Department. The total budget request of \$50,182.00 includes the following adjustments:

Line Item	Requested Amount	Proposed Increase
5-645-925, Holiday Activities	\$ 1,700.00	+ \$ 500.00
5-645-929, Community Outreach/ Other Appropriate Expenses	\$ 6,000.00	+ \$ 1,000.00
5-645-945, Weekend School Access	\$ 7,182.00	+ \$ 210.00

7. Recreation Program Coordinator’s Report

The Commissioners reviewed the Coordinator’s Report. Items of note include:

National Fitness Campaign – designs Fitness Courts as healthy hubs for adults of all ages, abilities, and fitness levels in parks and along trails that promote pedestrian access. The estimated total cost of the court is \$150,000 to \$225,000.00. The organization provides approximately \$30,000.00 in grant funding to help offset the costs. The goal is to provide a sense of culture and connect communities throughout the nation through the fitness courts. It was determined that it may not be appropriate for the town at this time.

Weekend Custodian – The School remains without a weekend custodian and is currently paying their current custodian overtime pay of \$37.16/hour. The budget should be able to accommodate the increase as the custodian is/will be working on Saturdays only between December and May. Discussion ensued regarding their ability to have some input in the use and prioritization for the weekends.

RHR Bathrooms – At the request of Salem Little League, the bathrooms at Round Hill Road Fields will be opened for the season. Little League has agreed to clean the bathrooms. Included in the Operational Budget Narrative is the maintenance costs of \$1,325.00, as

determined by the Public Works Foreman. Opening the bathrooms will eliminate the cost of renting two (2) of the porta-potties for the fields.

A summer soccer camp has been scheduled. The possibility of hosting a spring and/or fall soccer camp on the weekends will be investigated. The possibility of supplementing the program to help offset the costs for the parents was raised. Other possible future activities include disc golf, volleyball, and youth basketball clinics. The possibility of hiring an individual to run a weekend recreational basketball program was also raised. Commissioner McGlone felt that the parents and children would most likely lean towards joining East Lyme Youth Basketball which offers practices and competitive games over a recreational basketball program. He reiterated the need for a full-time Recreation Director to spearhead a youth sports program, rather than relying on volunteers. He added that the surrounding towns, including Preston, have Directors who run the programs and stated the importance of offering opportunities. Commissioner Valentini proposed requesting a part-time, rather than a full-time position, to keep within the town's budgetary means. The possibility of funding the position through the revenue earned through the programs and/or running a summer camp, like Preston, was raised.

8. Salem Seniors Group Report

Commissioner Valentini reported that the Salem Seniors hosted a successful Holiday Luncheon with food catered by *Two Brothers Restaurant*. The Salem Seniors have been actively collecting donations of non-perishable food items for Care & Share of East Lyme. The Lions Club's Kids and Adult Sight Screening was canceled due to inclement weather. Other upcoming activities include BINGO, a Potluck Lunch and Talent Show, a Sunday Bowling event at Norwich Ten Pin, tickets to the Connecticut Flower and Garden Show, a bus trip to Newport, Rhode Island, and a Miniature Golf event. The Salem Seniors formed a Fundraising Committee to raise funds for their senior activities. She also shared their 16-page newsletter, which includes a Year in Review summarizing their events and activities and the results of a Seniors' Activity Survey.

9. ARPA Projects

a. Round Hill Road Bathrooms

It was preliminarily confirmed that the location of the proposed bathrooms is outside the 100' Upland Review Area. The Proposal Form and Packet for Town-Related Projects will be completed and submitted for approval by the town departments to begin the process. Upon approval, the Architect and Engineer will be requested to draw up the plans for the project to go out to bid.

b. Trails & Kiosk/Info Center – Emergency Trail Markers, Harris Brook Trail Signage

The main (red) trail was flagged in December. The Working Group will review and mark an additional trail this Thursday, January 25, at 10:30 a.m. Interested Commissioners are welcome to meet at the Music Vale Entrance of the trail and/or walk the trail at any time

and provide input. After the trails are marked, Emergency Services will be requested to review the trail to finalize the placement of the markers.

10. Unfinished Business

a. Salem Little League Request for Addition of Baseball/Softball Field

Extensive discussion ensued regarding the request and the funding for the project. Arguments in favor of an additional field included the popularity of the sport, the sustainability of the program, baseball/softball being the only youth recreation sport that is offered by the town, and utilizing a field that is currently not being used. Concerns included the possibility of baseball dwindling, the return of soccer, other recreational needs of the town, and the cost of transforming the Babe Ruth field. The Commissioners also discussed the funding for the project. Chairperson Durkee expressed her concerns regarding planning for the future based on the present day, which can change.

M/S/C: McGlone/Ahern, to support the addition of a skinned baseball/softball field on the existing soccer field at Lou Ulffer’s Sports Complex by Salem Little League. Discussion: None. Voice vote, 6-0, all in favor.

M/S/C: Durkee/Valentini, to request an amount not to exceed \$35,000.00 (thirty-five thousand dollars) in ARPA (American Rescue Plan Act) Funds to help fund the addition of a skinned baseball/field on the existing soccer field at Lou Ulffer’s Sports Complex by Salem Little League. Discussion: The Commission’s existing ARPA Funds will also be reviewed. Voice vote, 6-0, all in favor.

b. Holiday Activities & Tree Lighting event Recap

A successful event was held, with approximately 45 to 50 children in attendance. Due to the mild weather, the event was held outdoors.

Commissioner Crafton departed the meeting at 9:44 p.m.

c. Field Use Policy

Highlights of the draft of the Field Use Policy, which is based on that of East Lyme, were presented to the Commission. The Commissioners were requested to review the document and send their comments to either the Chairperson or Coordinator.

d. Public Safety Day Event

A meeting with the Salem School Principal is scheduled for next Wednesday, January 31, to discuss the event, which is planned for April. The possibility for Recreation hosting a booth with information and interactive activities centered around bike safety and sports safety, including stretching, hydration, equipment, and dealing with injuries was proposed.

e. Plan of Conservation & Development Action Steps (Five-Year Plan) – *no discussion*

f. Drop-in Friday Nights for Middle Schoolers – *see item 4(d)*

The Commissioners were encouraged to think of activities for the event.

g. Newsletter

The Newsletter will be scheduled for delivery to each household in early March.

Chairperson Durkee thanked the Commissioners for their time and energy organizing and hosting their events and activities.

h. Working Group(s)

Details for upcoming Working Group meetings will be e-mailed to the Commissioners.

11. New Business

a. Salem Little League Baseball/Softball – see item 4(a)

b. Salem PTO – see item 4(d)

c. Easter Egg Hunt

The Lions Club will be contacted regarding any assistance they might need. The event will be held on Sunday, March 23.

M/S/C: Durkee/Wlodarczyk, to allocate an amount not to exceed \$500.00 to the Salem Lions Club for the Easter Egg Hunt event. Discussion: None. Voice vote, 6-0, all in favor.

d. Seniors Activities – see item 7

Commissioner Valentini reported that the Salem Seniors President is interested in inviting seniors to a BBQ before the Summer Concerts. Discussion regarding the possible need for health approvals and infringing on the sales of the food trucks ensued.

A questionnaire completed by the seniors for activities they might be interested in was briefly reviewed.

e. Round Hill Road Bridge

The Round Hill Road Bridge, along the Harris Brook Trail, was washed out during one of the recent rainstorms and was de-installed for safety reasons and stored in the Public Works Department.

f. Memorial Day Parade

The Commissioners were encouraged to think of activities for the event.

12. Adjournment

M/S/C: Wlodarczyk/McGlone, to adjourn the meeting at 10:20 p.m. Discussion: None. Voice vote, 6-0, all in favor.

Respectfully Submitted by:

Agnes T. Miyuki, Recording Secretary for the Town of Salem