**FINAL**

**Salem Parks and Recreation Commission**

**Minutes of Meeting**

**Date and Time: Tuesday, December 15, 2020 at 6:47 P.M.**

**Meeting Location: Via Zoom**

**Members Present: Debbie Amaral, James Shea,**

**Bob Callahan, Amy Everitt**

**Also Present: Patricia O’Brien**

**Clerk: Kathleen Fitzgerald**

**Meeting Called to Order**

Debbie Amaral called the meeting to order at 6:47 P.M. She welcomed everyone to Zoom and stated that the Board would approve the Minutes from the September 15, 2020 meeting and then the public would have a chance to speak for a maximum of three minutes. The Park & Rec Commission would ask questions first and the public would need to raise their hand and be recognized to speak. Debbie advised that when the Commission votes, there must be a roll call.

Amy Everitt makes a motion to approve the November Minutes. James Shea seconds. Roll call was then taken and the Minutes were unanimously approved.

First on the Agenda:

**Katheryn Soto** – This request was to use the Salem Common Gazebo on January 31, 2021 for an intimate special event with a small band and amplification.

James Shea made a motion to approve the event, seconded by Amy Everitt with the understanding that any vote taken today must meet the outdoor gathering regulations of the Governor and the Mayor and that she must check in prior to the event and find out what regulations and ordinances are in place at that time. Roll call is taken, and this is unanimously approved contingent on the above.

Next:

**Willows Phase I Approval** – Jason Babowski the landscape architect from Hatch Engineering, provided an update on this project. He said it was approved to remove an additional bank of parking off Fort Avenue. He advised that the first improvement project at the Willows would involve restoration of the hill landscape and parking area. He stated that the parking lot has areas that don’t drain and made the tennis courts inaccessible. The idea is to create a place safe for pedestrians and park users and to introduce and establish some native plants and to add benches and bike racks and create an overlook to the water. The parking lot will be curbed, and there will be sidewalks for pedestrians.

There was a discussion about the impact of sand from Dead Horse Beach and the pavers to be used and a lengthy discussion on the types of plantings to be used to include black oak, sassafras, sweetgrass, bayberry, sumac, Canada rush, black-eyed Susan, switchgrass, butterfly weed, etc.

Mr. Babowski stated the timeline as follows:

* Design/construction documents – January 2021
* Out to bid – January 2021
* Construction – Spring/Summer 2021

Debbie Amaral asked how much lower the percentage of new trees were as opposed to back in the day. Mr. Babowski said approximately the same number of trees, just relocated differently.

Bob Callahan stated that in the last 50 years a tremendous number of trees had been lost and that the importance of doing this could not be emphasized enough because we want to save the trees for generations.

Mr. Babowski said 10 trees had been lost since he started work on the project.

James Shea said it was important that the tennis courts be done with this project as it is an important part of the entire park.

**Councilman McCarthy** said it was a great plan to revitalize trees and that he agreed with James Shea regarding the tennis courts being included in the project. He asked about the loss of parking spaces. Mr. Babowski said that approximately 20 spaces were lost to green space. Councilman McCarthy stated his concern because the loss of parking spaces could mean parking in the neighborhood, etc.

Trish O’Brien said she thought it was a loss of about 4 parking spaces. Mr. Babowski said he would follow-up with the exact number.

**Lisa Greenberg, 153 Fort Avenue** -- Asked when you looked back to the 1980’s regarding plantings and what the park looked like, did you look at Fort Avenue? Mr. Babowski said he didn’t look to try to create what was there in the 80’s. He stated residents of the Willows as well as people visiting the park would be able to enjoy the views. Ms. Greenberg asked what consideration was taken when putting forth the plantings plan. Mr. Babowski advised the decision was for an unimpeded view at the top of the hill and that they received good feedback from stakeholders, etc.

James Shea makes a motion to approve Phase I Plan of Redevelopment of the Willows, Amy Everitt seconds, roll call is taken and the motion passes unanimously.

**New Business:**

Golf Course – Scott McDonald runs the registration. Trish O’Brien stated she wanted to talk about potential increase in revenue. Per Scott, we have not had a price increase in a few years. Paul wanted to wait until everything was completed before increasing fees. Trish O’Brien said we are thinking of doing a small increase, and when the bunkers are straightened out, we want to look at this again.

Bob Callahan stated that Scott has done a tremendous job. He said that the rates presented are on the low side, fair to residents, and extremely fair to non-residents. He stated that the one issue he saw was the fee for carts and stated he thought it was appropriate to go to $16.00 for a single cart which may do away with the cheating.

James Shea stated he agreed that they did a great job and agreed in increasing the single cart rate or even eliminating it. Scott McDonald stated some income would be lost by eliminating the single cart fee. James Shea asked if there were still rangers on the greens. Scott said he thought we should get in touch with the Pro Shop to see who paid for carts and check. Bob Callahan said whatever Scott thought was appropriate he was all for it.

Debbie Amaral asked how the Board felt about a $2.00 increase for single cart and asked if Scott was comfortable with that. Scott McDonald said yes.

**Councilman Robert McCarthy** said he echoed everything previously said and concurred that the golf course was in great shape. He asked about the extended season and at what point did the season membership end. Scott McDonald said the last two years they had shortened seasons and that some years members got a great deal and some years not based on weather. Bob Callahan stated he thought the membership rates worked out very well.

James Shea made a motion to approve all increase suggestions. Bob Callahan seconds, roll call is taken and passes unanimously.

Website to be updated.

**Superintendent’s Report:**

Trish O’Brien advised that a $16,000,000.00 bond passed the City Council last week and that this was an incredible opportunity based on projects we were working on now and put us in a position of power when asking for grants.

James Shea stated he would like to thank Mayor Driscoll for pushing forth the bond issue so we could enjoy the parks for generations. Bob Callahan stated he echoed that. Debbie Amaral said she would also like to thank Councilman McCarthy and asked that he pass along the Board’s thanks.

A motion to adjourn is made by James Shea seconded by Bob Callahan. Roll call was then taken, and unanimously passes.

The meeting ended at 8:06 P.M.

Next meeting – Tuesday January 19, 2021 via Zoom.

Respectfully Submitted,

Kathleen Fitzgerald, Clerk