



Parks & Recreation Committee - Board of Representatives

Linda Cannady, Chair

Patrick White, Vice Chair

Report of Meeting

Date: Tuesday, July 20, 2010

Time: 7:00 p.m.

Place: Republican Caucus Room, 4th Floor, Government Center,
888 Washington Boulevard

The Parks & Recreation Committee met as indicated above. Present were: Chair Cannady and Vice Chair White and Committee Member Reps. DePina, Fedeli, Franzetti, McGarry and Taylor. Absent/excused were Committee Member Reps. Heaphy and Pia. Also in attendance were Reps. DeLuca and Savage; and Mickey Docimo and Laurie Albano, Parks & Recreation.

Chair Cannady called the meeting to order at 7:08 p.m.

Item No.	Description	Committee Action
1. PR28.009	REVIEW; of enforcement of rules regarding out of town use of city fields, parking and alcohol consumption.	REPORT MADE

Chair Cannady stated that correspondence from Reps. DeLuca, Gabriele and Savage initiated this review (see [PR28.009](#)). Mickey Docimo testified:

- Following years of declines in the enforcement account, the entire budget was wiped out this year. (Last year, the beach enforcement account was cut from \$100,000 to \$80,000, and he was able to tweak the program and still provide good coverage.)
- Six years ago this was a major issue, and at that time the administration provided funding for parks police and ambassadors. These types of problems then went away.
- In 1981 they had 31 parks police. Today, there are 3 part time officers for a total of 10-12 hours per week each. Part of this problem has to do with contractual issues with the police union. (Rep. Franzetti stated that the union issues were resolved years ago by the State of CT when it required 800 hours of education and field training in order to wear a shield and function as a parks police officer. No one wants to invest in that type of

training for these positions. He added that the regular police force respond to all calls originating from the parks.)

- Total staff reductions in his department this year are: 4 rangers, 16 ambassadors, 12 seasonal workers and 4 full-time maintenance staff.
- What does **not** appear in his budget are the 3 monetary givebacks from last year – 2% in July, 2% in August and 1% in December. He has been told that there will be further givebacks this year.
- The police do not enforce periphery issues such as unpermitted field use, disallowed use of grills, etc.
- He has been trying to establish parks rules for a long time. There is no consensus as to what the rules should be among the members of the Parks & Recreation Commission or among the members of the Parks & Recreation Committee yet alone between the Commission, the Committee and the administration.
- It is difficult to even define what “renegade” play is, how many members constitute a “family picnic,” etc.
- Fields in Stamford are not designed, constructed or managed as they are in many other communities. For example, when Lione Park was redone, the neighborhood housing groups requested that the field not be over-scheduled to allow local residents use of it. Today, only cricket is scheduled for this field. It is primarily used by neighborhood residents because there is limited parking in the area. West Beach is a \$2 million field with no fence and thus no restriction to access.
- Mr. Docimo cited examples of other towns, like Trumbull, which charges to enter turf fields, has 16 full time parks rangers, and does not experience any of these problems. Laurie Albano stated that Calf Pasture Beach in Norwalk is similarly monitored.
- Enforcement creates issues, also. Last year, the parks police were routinely ejecting what appeared to be organized players from the West Beach fields. The players then complained to the Mayor’s Office, citing discriminatory practices, and the Mayor ordered that they cease ejecting these groups. This year, they have returned to the practice of ejecting any group that appears to be organized. (They determine this by uniforms and numbers of out of town cars.)
- In response to Rep. Savage’s question regarding asking for additional help from the Stamford Police Department, Mr. Docimo advised that he had tried with the previous police chief and basically got nowhere. Director Orgera is currently trying to schedule a meeting with the new police chief to see if he can assist.
- Parking tickets are issued by the traffic police. There is a collection process in place, and Stamford traditionally receives payment on about 95% of the tickets issued. Mr. Docimo stated he would definitely check on the parking enforcement at Lione Park.

Rep. Fedeli asked if Mr. Docimo had considered permitting the parks along with the beaches. One sticker would allow access to all parks & beaches. Mr.

Docimo responded that this is possible, but it would require about \$210,000 in start-up costs, which he has never been successful at getting. The Committee discussed creating a self-sustaining account, and it was agreed that they could never generate enough fees from the parks to make this happen.

A lot of out of town cars in Scalzi are using the skate park. Rep. DePina noted there is limited parking there, and every spot is always taken. The park is over-utilized. Rep. White stated that they could institute a parking pass similar to the beaches, and Ms. Albano agreed this was possible. Again, Mr. Docimo mentioned that there would have to be some enforcement.

The Committee agreed that leadership and committee chairs should meet with the Mayor and Mr. Larobina to discuss this on-going and increasing problem. Mr. Docimo stated that if he was given funding for 15 parks police, these problems would be solved. Rep. Franzetti noted that every night there are 60 firefighters in station houses throughout the city and 18 police officers, discounting the chances that 15 parks police would be considered.

The Committee discussed the issue of illegal food vending in parks, adding that on Sunday mornings “vendors” begin setting up their concessions. When confronted, all insist that they are merely picnicking and sharing expenses among family and friends. Mr. Docimo agreed to contact the health department as the committee felt there are already ordinances banning this type of practice.

After discussing the inability for the commission to come to an agreement on the rules, Rep. Fedeli suggested tackling the issues piece by piece through the enactment of ordinances. Rep. Franzetti added that the police can only enforce ordinances, it cannot enforce parks rules.

Rep. Fedeli also stated that it is a waste of capital money to build expensive fields and then have no restrictions/enforcement on their use, and this should be brought to the Mayor’s attention during the meeting. She added that the Board of Representatives has never cut parks enforcement funds; it has always been the Board of Finance. Mr. Docimo stated that this year he has \$16,000 for skate park enforcement, only because they can’t get insurance without a staff person being there.

Rep. DePina noted that Scalzi is a special problem. There is grilling and selling of food there and no enforcement. However, she is concerned that innocent people not be caught up in aggressive enforcement practices.

2. [PR28.006](#) REVIEW; permitting for sports fields.

**HELD IN
COMMITTEE
7-0-0**

