

TOWN OF RED HOOK RECREATION COMMISSION

7340 South Broadway, Red Hook, NY 12571

Phone: 845-758-4625 Fax: 845-758-5313

RECREATION DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Monday, 11 May 2020

Submitted by John D. Kuhn, Park and Programs Director

2020 Summer Recreation Programs

In these times of the COVID-19 pandemic, this is the most important topic for the Recreation Commission and the Town Board to consider. I have spent much time following developments, talking with the Dutchess County Board of Health, and considering all the issues involved.

As Recreation Director and the one who would safely implement the programs, I want to state my opinion clearly and unequivocally and my reasons why I believe the 2020 summer programs should not be held.

It is not possible to disinfect a playground or restrooms to make them safe for children:

Most viruses can live for several hours on a surface that they land on. A study shows that the COVID-19 coronavirus can last for several hours on various types of surfaces. The study showed the virus lived for up to 4 hours on copper, up to 24 hours on cardboard, and up to 2 to 3 days on plastic or stainless steel. That means that if someone touches the surface contaminated with the virus, they could transmit the infection to themselves by touching their mouth, nose, or eyes or potentially to someone else by shaking their hands or hugging, for example. That's why it's important to disinfect surfaces to get rid of the virus.

This would also involve all the games, balls, bats, etc. used by the kids and even the picnic tables in the pavilion and throughout the park.

The Recreation Playground is for children ages 6-12 years old. How would 200+ kids socially distance in a program designed specifically for social interaction and team building? Would all the kids wear masks? As anyone who has ever worked with kids knows, social distancing or the practices required for safe interactions simply would not occur.

Communications with other Recreation Directors revealed similar concerns. Livingston, for example, has cancelled their summer programs. The Taconic Camp in Milan is cancelled for this summer. I suspect others will follow no matter what NYS allows. Here is a response I wrote to an email inquiry:

Yes, it is a bit of a nightmare considering the problems with restrooms, picnic table surfaces, playground equipment – the list goes on and on. Can we have 150+ kids come to the park dropped off and picked up by parents and grandparents every day safely? Is social distancing even possible in a program where interaction is the whole point? Other programs like basketball, volleyball, tennis, pickleball, field hockey, lacrosse, tee ball, softball with smaller numbers would be difficult, but a rec playground program seems impossible. How would staff be kept safe? That is assuming I can find enough staff willing to work under dubious conditions.

Many staff members come from Bard College where they have had several cases and over 300 foreign students hunkering down on campus because they can't go home. Do you think there would be liability for the town if participants or staff contracted COVID-19? Could we be responsible if our safety precautions were deemed inadequate?

How are you going to handle all this? I talked to the Red Hook Pool Inc. director a few minutes ago, and he told me that the swim championships are cancelled for this year and that there will be no swim team in Red Hook. They are thinking about some sort of reservation system for pool time with restricted access to meet the guidelines. Also, no swim lessons this year.

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As you already know NYS has guidelines for reopening with seven hurdles each region will need to overcome to restart businesses. The criteria includes at least 14 days of decline in total net hospitalizations or under 15 new hospitalizations in a three-day average. A region would have to show a decline in hospital deaths and new hospitalizations and ensure it keeps 30% of its total hospital capacity available for a possible spike in cases.

It would also have to document at least a 90-day supply of PPE and have the capacity to conduct 30 tests every month for every 1,000 residents.

If all the conditions are met, then the plan has four phases of reopening at two-week intervals:

Phase 1: Construction, manufacturing, wholesale supply chain, and select retail, mainly curbside pickup

Phase 2: Professional services, finance and insurance, retail, administrative support, real estate/leasing

Phase 3: Restaurants/food services; hotels/accommodations

Phase 4: Arts/Entertainment/Recreation; Education

Today's *Daily Freeman* read: Dutchess County Death Tolls Tops 100. Over the weekend Northern Dutchess Hospital announced its 1,000 COVID-19 patient.

Doctors are shouting NOT SO FAST!

Doctors, nurses, EMTs, are all fearing a second wave of virus.

We are constantly learning of how the virus is affecting children in unusual ways like artery inflammation and blood clots!

These are very scary times that require safe actions.

The Recreation Park is open to the public during the times that our programs are in session. Walkers, runners, picnickers, dog walkers, bikers, grandparents with pre-school kids on the playground, and many others are present. Will they all be virus free and follow safe practices?

Wouldn't all Recreation Program Staff have to be tested regularly for COVID-19? If the virus has reached even into the White House, how could it be kept out of the Recreation Park – especially the playground.

In conclusion, I do not want to be remembered as one who contributed to the sickness and possible death of children, parents, grandparents and other vulnerable community members by running summer programs unwisely. This is a time to err on the side of caution. There is too much we do not know to take chances.

Turco Golf, Inc. & All-Purpose Field

Turco resumed work on the field on Monday, 4 May. Loads of stone are now stockpiled in the south parking lot. Tighe & Bond Engineers will provide an update on progress and expected completion date. Each day Turco replaces the gate by the basketball court for security. During the day the all the south gates are open, but signs tell people not to enter. So far this has not been a problem.

Tennis Courts

The tennis court are not locked. Users park by the pool and use the courts. It appears that players do adhere to the distancing guidelines. Many users are

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families with children. Many municipalities have closed down their tennis courts and pickle ball courts. The location of our courts away from the rest of the park may allow us to leave things as they are. This is a judgment call for the Recreation Commission/Town Board.

Parking by the Pool

Paul Petersen, the new Red Hook Pool president, gave us permission to use the pool parking area while the park lots are closed.

Parking by the South Entrance Gate

People insist on parking on the grass area east of the south gate. This has turned the area into a muddy mess. This past week we repaired the area with topsoil and seeded it. To prevent further parking, we placed the three telephone poles alongside the roadway. Once the grass grows in, these will be removed.

Tree Line by the South Entrance

Last week on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday we cleaned out all the debris along the tree line. Four of us worked five hours per day for a total of 60 man hours. This project was long overdue with pine needles, limbs, vines, etc. often over eight inches deep! All the hanging limbs and dead limbs were removed so that in the future a mower can pass safely underneath. The area between the trees will be trimmed regularly to prevent a repeat of the debris buildup of the past. The town owns the trees and several feet beyond on the south border of the park. We are now able to mow along the south side of the trees. I met with our neighbor to explain our plan to keep this tree line open and clean. Rather than pile their yard debris along the property line, I requested that it be put elsewhere or put in a pile where we can remove it with our tractor to combine it with our fallen limbs. I believe we can all cooperate to keep the south entrance to the park looking well kept.

Dead and Dangerous Trees

Two cherry trees, a locust tree, and an elm tree grew in between the pines along the south side of the park. These trees are now huge and very dead. The largest cherry tree is hollow and could fall across the entry road. I contacted Craig Kurkela who has the tree contract for the town to recommend a course of action. He is only permitted to do emergency work during the pandemic, so he may only be able to remove the trees that pose an imminent threat. When he is able to work, his crew will fell the trees, chip the brush and leave the wood for Park Staff to process as in the past.

Maple Tree by the Basketball Court

Park Staff cut down, cut up, and removed this tree. The tree compromised the northwest corner of the basketball court and blocked the LED lighting. We were asked to remove this tree before the new basketball court was completed. Howie Callies planned a way to remove the tree without damaging the new fence posts already in place.

Pine Tree Limbs on the West Border

This past winter caused a huge section of one of the pine trees to split off the main trunk. This has now been cut up and removed. This tree section was larger than most of the trees in the park!

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Pickleball Courts

The nets are up on the courts, but no play is going on. The park is closed and no one has come in to use the courts.

Skate Park

Skate boarders are constantly at the skate park. It is impossible to keep them out since they come in at all hours of the day and evening. This is a concern for the community.

Park Staff/Park Police

I have instructed the park staff to avoid confrontations with those who enter the park despite the plethora of signage indicating that the park is closed. Beyond stating that park is closed, no other action is taken by park staff. Getting into arguments with community members about park use is not advisable and should be left to police agencies trained to do it.

Fence Line by Pool Parking Area

When we removed the fencing in the Middle Field to prepare for the All-Purpose Field, I kept all the top rails and the 2" posts. We cut them into 6' lengths and Patrick Jones drilled the posts so that nylon cord could be threaded through. He then replaced the wooden posts along Linden Avenue with metal ones, painted them white, installed post caps, and installed two strands of nylon cord at the top. Dutchess County Department of Transportation required that all entrances and exits from the pool parking area be closed so that only the south entrance could be used to enter and exit the park. To have people entering and exiting the pool from several location where road sight lines were inadequate posed great risks. Park Staff closed off the second roadway into the pool, put it hundreds of yards of topsoil and seeded the area. This area is now lawn.

Park Staff also installed wooden posts and signs indicating NO EXIT and DO NOT ENTER. The wooden posts became a maintenance headache because people kept breaking them off. The new metal posts should be more maintenance free. They were also free!

Six new metal signs will be installed this week to complete this major project.

Phase II Project

Gleason has installed all the bollards in the North Parking Lot. Site work for the sidewalks is underway. They did not work this past week, but they are back today to continue the project.

Recreation Park Rule Sign

The north entrance rule sign was in the way of the new sidewalk planned in the front of the pavilion. Park Staff removed the sign and the concrete footings. The sign is stored between the two Recreation Playground Sheds until the Phase II Project is complete. At that time we will select the best location and reinstall the sign.

Recreation Park West Development

Fastracs has returned to the project. Work on the infield is underway. The areas around the ball field will be completed in the near future. The concrete slabs for the dugouts are done.

The drawings are available for review. There will be no play on this field in 2020.

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Dugouts for Rec Park West and Rec Park East

Doug Strawinski has met with masonry contractors to get cost estimates for the four new dugouts.

Pickleball Court Center Straps

Paul Hughes will install the ground sleeves for the center court tie-down straps before the courts open in the spring. I spoke with Paul, and we are on his schedule as the weather permits. Now that the courts are not being used, this would be a good time to get this done.

Park Closed Signs

The locked gates and park closed signs have done little to stop park users. Those who walk the mushy track leave deep footprints that will have to be repaired in the spring. Because we cannot keep people from using the playground, I have regularly removed fallen limbs and other debris from the playground. It is impossible to close the park effectively. The contractor has put up better signage and more wire fencing, but those who wish to ignore them can always find a way around. As noted earlier, the Park Staff has been instructed to avoid confrontations with people who insist on entering the park despite the signs.

Cutting of Construction Fencing

The construction fencing is orange plastic. When some folks find the fencing blocking their way, they simply cut the fence and walk through. Keeping up with repairs to the fencing is tedious but necessary. This past week Park Staff retied all the orange fencing. Time will tell how long it last.

Soil Piles in Rec Park West

The Highway Department will load and deliver 100 yards of topsoil from the pile in Rec Park West to St. Margaret's Home and to the Red Church Cemetery I met with Rick Schloemer, Ryan Morrison from Tighe & Bond, and Riley Cookingham from Fastracs to determine the best way to do this. Given the current work restrictions this will be done as schedule permit.

This project would improve STMH and the cemetery, but if it cannot be done we can certainly get by without it.

Soil Pile in Rec Park East

I am told that there will be extra soil from the project at Rec Park East. The huge piles in the parking lot are impressive. This soil should be moved to the south part of Rec Park West. Having soil on site for the constant repairs needed on ball fields and other parts of the park would be a big help. Not having to buy it would be a major savings.

Storage of Synthetic Field Groomer

We currently do not have room in the maintenance building or the storage barn to put the groomer. The manufacturer recommends interior storage of the groomer. Simply throwing a tarp over it when not in use is probably a bad idea since it would be vulnerable to vandalism.

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Recreation Park West Ball Field

I have received requests to consider have a skinned infield to accommodate softball. This concept requires thorough discussion by the Recreation Commission and all interested parties. This would constitute a change to the original plans and would require input from the engineers and Fastracs. Tom Gilbert submitted a report to the Recreation Commission, the Supervisor and the Town Board explaining why making this field a softball field is a better choice for Red Hook.

Here is a copy of that report:

Subject: New Field in Rec Park West

There is a question on the best configuration of the new field being cut in at our Rec Park West site. The debate is whether it should be a Little League Baseball Field or a Softball Field.

After a careful review of both field usage and field availability, the following was determined:

Baseball field

Field usage - 12 year old and under boys Little League Baseball only

Field availability

- Wager Field, Father Carroll Field and the Milan Rec Park Field - All these fields are available for both minor league and little league.
- The new All-Purpose Field at Rec Park East is also available with Little League Approved Musco Lighting and the best portable mound money can buy.
- The available fields more than meet the needs for Little League practices and games now and well into the future.
- The Rec Park West Field could also be used by simply rolling out a portable mound.

Softball field - Field usage

- Little League Girls' Softball
- Modified, JV and Varsity Girls' Softball
- Northern Dutchess Freedom Softball
- Red Hook Men's Softball League - Currently only able to play on Sunday afternoons
- Women's Adult Softball League (Currently there are 10 women's teams playing at Stone Church who would like to play at the Red Hook Rec Park)
- Youth Little League Baseball/Tee Ball (with an inexpensive portable mound)
- Red Hook Recreation Softball/Tee Ball Summer Programs
- Local church groups and fire companies play softball games not baseball games. This field could be used by these local groups if it were a softball field.
- Families using the ball fields play softball, not baseball.

Field availability - Two Fields at Rec Park East

If we build a baseball field it most likely will only be used by 12U Boys' Baseball.

If we configure it as a softball field it can be used by programs of all ages and can **also be used by LL baseball with a portable mound.**

Configuring the field as a softball field with a skinned infield will create the most flexibility/versatility for the Town of Red Hook.

Given the number of Little League Fields already available that are underused, it is most likely that making Rec Park West only usable as a Little League Baseball Field would find unused most of the time.

Conclusion

The Rec Park West Field should be made a softball field now during its construction. Doing it later when the demand is obvious will be much more costly.

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I believe that the Town Board agreed that this change is clearly the best choice for Red Hook. Tighe & Bond Engineers were given a change order last week. The complete sets of specifications for the Rec Park West field are available for review.

Dutchess County Board of Health Requirements

All the paperwork submitted last year is once again required for permission to operate. I will also have to drive down to Millbrook to meet with Michelle Kelley once again to submit and review all the required documentation. I prepared all the necessary 2020 Application Paperwork – Safety Plan, Amusement Device Report, Staff Qualifications, Facility Description, Medical Packet, Permission Forms, etc. so that if conditions improved the camp could be held. All is done except for the Sex Offender Registry that would be completed online with NYS. I emailed Michelle Kelley about the hiring of the directors, and I suspect that this is going to be an exasperating process once again with many hoops and hurdles to overcome since she is challenging their qualifications. Apparently the fact that both Nanda Fogle and Leslie Martin have master's degrees and experience is not enough for approval. We will see what else is expected.

As I stated in the first item of this report, I do not believe this paperwork should be submitted in 2020 and the programs should not run.

Recreational Park of Red Hook Sign

The park sign was faded and stained. Joe Coon primed and repainted the sign with red semi-gloss acrylic latex paint. The letters and plaques were removed for the painting and then reinstalled. Prior to the painting I installed a 5/4" x 6" top board to prevent some of the water stains from recurring.

Once all the tree droppings have stopped, we will install black mulch around all the shrubs in front of the sign and around the hedge behind the sign.

Soft Ice Cream Machine in the Snack Bar

This is a water cooled machine that requires water running through it whenever the compressor is operating. The Dutchess County Board of Health is concerned that the amount of water put into our septic system at the park would cause it to fail. Determining how much water would be needed for the ice cream machine is not clear. Until the B of H is satisfied that our septic system would not be compromised, they will not allow the ice cream machine to be hooked up.

At this time I do not see a viable way to hook up the machine.

Basketball Court Electrical Panel

I will get an estimate to replace the electrical panel on the west side of the basketball court. The current panel is over 40 years old and cannot be kept free of bees. Despite two padlocks the front cover can be displaced by those who want to get at the timers when the lights go out at 10:00 p.m. This has happened several times. The cost would be covered with the existing 2020 park budget. I do not believe it will be overly costly, and since we have a new court, new fencing and new LED lights, it makes sense to complete the whole upgrade now rather than later. The power to the Maintenance Building comes from the panel by the basketball court.

Given the budget concerns caused by the pandemic, this electrical panel replacement can certainly wait for better times.

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Wi-Fi for Security Cameras

Denis Collet has been working with Frontier and Spectrum to find the best way to provide the necessary equipment to support security cameras at the Recreation Park. The infrastructure at the park in the 21st. century needs to have enough security to prevent vandalism.

LED Lights in the South Parking Lot

When the current lights fail again, I want to get a price for LED replacements. Repairs require a bucket truck that is costly. At least once a year we have to have a repair done on the parking lot lights. LED lights would last 20 years. Again, this is an improvement that can wait since the current lights are working.

Ball Fields

Even though the ball fields are not being used, they are mowed and maintained to keep them in good condition. Not grooming the infields allows grass and weeds to establish deep roots in the Beam Clay that is difficult to remove.

West Tree Line at Recreation Park East

The next major project scheduled at the park is the cleaning/clearing of the tree line along the park's western border. Limbs will be trimmed and the undergrowth cleared. Hopefully some of this work can be done with the York Rake to limit the amount of hand raking required.

Pavilion Ceiling

The plywood pavilion ceiling continues to delaminate. Large strips of plywood layers come down periodically. Since the park is closed and the pavilion not used every day, this might be a good time to address the problem.

Snack Bar Hot Water Heater

When the electrical service in the Snack Bar Storage Room was replaced, the breaker for the hot water heater was turned on. Since the hot water heater was drained for the winter, I am sure that the elements have been burned out. They will have to be replaced before the Snack Bar can reopen. Also, the new automatic faucets planned for the restrooms have mixers for hot and cold water. I will check with the plumber from Ashley Mechanical when the restroom work resumes. At present the restrooms are completely gutted.

Restroom Windows and Painting

While all the partitions, sinks, toilets, urinals, hand dryers and soap dispensers are removed, we took the opportunity to prime and paint all the parts of the wall behind the fixtures that have been unpainted since the Snack Bar was built. We also filled the many holes left in the walls from all the various changes made over the years. The new windows put in last year were caulked and painted again. All should be ready for the new installations.