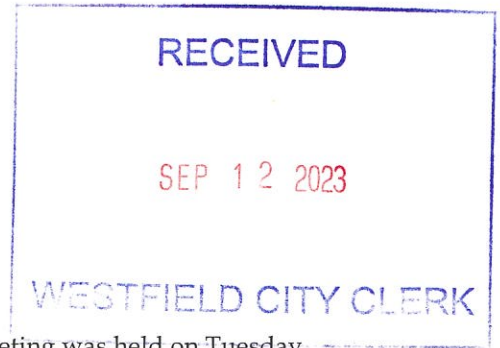




August 15, 2023



A regular meeting of the Westfield Parks and Recreation Commission meeting was held on Tuesday, August 15, 2023, at 6:30 pm. Location: City Hall in room 201 at 59 Court Street, Westfield, MA.

Commissioners present by a roll call were: Jane DeBarbieri, Scott LaBombard, Vincent Olinski, Kenneth Magarian, Douglas Morash, Michael Tirrell and Peter Lurgio.

Commissioners absent: Sara Unger.

At 6:30 pm Chairman LaBombard called the meeting to order and explained that public participation would be limited to 3 minutes of speaking time per person and 15 minutes maximum time.

Approval of the July 10, 2023 minutes moved by Vin Olinski and seconded by Mike Tirrell. The following roll call vote was taken:

	<u>Y</u>	<u>N</u>
Scott LaBombard	X	
Kenneth Magarian	X	
Jane DeBarbieri	X	
Douglas Morash	X	
Michael Tirrell	X	
Vincent Olinski	X	
Peter Lurgio	<u>X</u>	
	7	
		0 Motion passed

Mike Tirrell moved, Vincent Olinski seconded to move item #2 on the agenda ahead of Public Participation. The following roll call vote was taken:

	<u>Y</u>	<u>N</u>
Scott LaBombard	X	
Kenneth Magarian	X	
Jane DeBarbieri	X	
Douglas Morash	X	
Michael Tirrell	X	
Vincent Olinski	X	
Peter Lurgio	<u>X</u>	
	7	
		0 Motion passed

Public Participation: Nancy Stolpinski, Mayor McCabe, Cindy Monti, Joyce O'Connell, Chris Dorr, Bernie Puza, Lynn Barszcz and Greg Rota.

City Council Communication: No City Council communication to discuss as the liaison was not present.

Business or Items for Discussion: Items on the agenda with Chairman LaBombard presiding

1. Mayor Michael McCabe discussed the background behind the funding and the plan for the Municipal Playground renovations. Mayor McCabe explained he keeps out of commission business but he wanted to explain the funding. The city received \$10M in ARPA funds, approx. \$7M was for water, infrastructure and other items; the remainder was discretionary and the Mayor asked for input on how to

use the funds. Approximately \$375,000 was dedicated for the downtown area from King St. to Franklin St. including the municipal playground. Most of these funds were dedicated to renovating the tennis courts, basketball courts and horseshoe pits. Mayor McCabe dedicated a portion of these funds for the tennis courts. He noted that in the city the demographic of 55 plus residents is one of the largest demographics in the city and Pickleball is one of the fastest growing sports in the country. Mayor McCabe explained that normally funding for this type or renovation comes from setting the budget and then gets applied to departments but ARPA is not normal funding. Money is also being dedicated for Jachym Field, Sadie Knox Park, and Bullens Field. Mayor McCabe explained that the allocation for the municipal playground is approximately \$10,000 for the north tennis courts, \$100,000 for the Pickleball courts, \$100,000 for the Basketball courts, and \$25,000 for the Pavillion and Spray Park renovations. Mayor McCabe explained that there was discussion of moving Pickleball to the new space being built at the Newbury lot downtown but the Pickleball association expressed a desire to keep the courts at Municipal Playground. Mayor McCabe explained that the funds for municipal were allotted by the Finance department and through ARPA not the general budget process as was explained previously. Mayor McCabe explained that courts 1 & 2 or the south courts would be converted to Pickleball courts and the existing multi use court was ok. Mayor McCabe said the commission can vote to approve this tonight. The Mayor thanked the commission for allowing him to speak first to explain and thanked all those attending for their time and attention.

Public Participation

Chairman LaBombard then opened up the meeting for public participation and explained the timing again.

Chairman LaBombard called on Joyce O'Donnell of 157 Loomis St, Southwick to speak. Ms. O'Donnell explained that she was a teacher for 30 years and she explained the need for more courts as the popularity of Pickleball grows and grows. She explained many come from out of town to the court in Westfield and there is a huge need for extra capacity and courts.

Chairman LaBombard called next on Chris Dorr of 138 Main St. #8 Westfield to speak. Mr. Dorr explained that Pickleball has 36.5M players in the US and is the fastest growing sport in the US. 18 to 34 year olds are the fastest growing group of players. He explained the Westfield association has 224 members, they have had 70 attend clinics, they have a ladder league that has a waitlist and the players that come from out of town to play in Westfield spend money in Westfield. He stressed that the association needs more courts.

Chairman LaBombard called next on Bernie Puza of Falley Drive Westfield to speak. Mr. Puza explained that Pickleball attracts all levels of players and is accessible to many ages in the community. He said the disadvantage of multi use courts is that the nets aren't tournament approved and dedicated courts would be better. The addition of more courts in Westfield would make Westfield one of the biggest Pickleball complexes west of Worcester. He explained that the tennis courts are not needed or used.

Chairman LaBombard called next on Lynn Barszcz of Villa Drive Westfield to speak. Ms. Barszcz read a letter that was written by Deana Polvieri.. The letter explained that the social aspect of Pickleball builds community and helps keep citizens physically active which results in healthier communities. Dedicated Pickleball courts will boost business in Westfield.

Chairman LaBombard called next on Greg Rota 2 Hemlock Drive Westfield to speak. Mr. Rota explained he was a retired AD and he has been working with MIAA to get Pickleball to be a varsity sport in High School. He said it will be a club sport first and the MIAA will vote again in several years to decide if it will be a varsity sport. He explained that it is already popular in college and Alabama has a state tournament for high school Pickleball already. He explained that the Alabama tournament has a \$420,000

impact in the town where it took place. He also said that in the US there are 30 tennis players per court vs. 250 Pickleball players per court. There are not enough Pickleball courts.

Chairman LaBombard thanked the speakers for their public participation and explained that he has experienced the community and social aspects of Pickleball himself as a Pickleball player.

After Public Participation the agenda returned to Business or Items for Discussion: Items on the agenda with Chairman LaBombard presiding.

2. Kenneth Magarian moved and Peter Lurgio seconded to convert only the 3 south tennis courts at Municipal Playground (the ones closest to the parking lot and furthest from Franklin Ave.) into 8 dedicated Pickleball courts. Mike Tirrell asked that the motion be amended to include that approval of the conversion of the courts is conditional upon verification that the new courts will meet ADA compliance and guidelines. Vincent Olinski asked about the three front courts and it was explained the motion doesn't pertain to those courts. Kenneth Magarian asked about funding and it was explained that it is up to the Mayor.

The following roll call vote was taken:

	<u>Y</u>	<u>N</u>
Scott LaBombard	X	
Kenneth Magarian	X	
Jane DeBarbieri		X
Douglas Morash	X	
Michael Tirrell	X	
Vincent Olinski	X	
Peter Lurgio	<u>X</u>	
	6	1 Motion passed

Prior to the vote, Nancy Stolpinski handed out a fact sheet on Pickleball and a diagram showing how the new Pickleball courts could be designed and laid out. She also handed in a petition with 215 signatures to demonstrate community support to convert the south tennis courts into 8 dedicated Pickleball courts. Ms. Stolpinski explained that the tennis courts are rarely if ever used. She explained also keeping the courts as both tennis and Pickleball so St. Mary's could use them by keeping tennis for just a few matches for a few hours each year vs. many more hours of usage and activity if they are dedicated Pickleball courts. She explained that the plan would be to add fencing to the new 8 courts and the Pickleball Association would raise the funds for this if necessary. Michael Tirrell spoke and explained this was the first he had seen of the diagram for the 8 courts and he thanked attendees for their time and passion. Peter Lurgio also thanked the attendees and asked if Ms. Stolpinski thought they would need to expand the restrooms and bleachers. Ms. Stolpinski said she didn't think so. Douglas Morash commented that he wanted to make sure sufficient tennis courts were still available in the city and thanked the attendees for their passion and commitment. Kenneth Magarian noted the social aspect of Pickleball and agreed that in today's world, this social aspect was vital. Scott LaBombard explained that the commission needed to act in the interest of the full community and not just Pickleball. There was a discussion of the all abilities court and what would happen to that.

3. Peter Lurgio moved and Vincent Olinski seconded to approve a permit for usage of the Pickleball courts for the Western Mass Charity Dance a thon Pickleball Fundraising Tournament presented by Cindy Monty for September 30, with a rain date of Oct 1 from 2:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m..

The following roll call vote was taken:

<u>Y</u>	<u>N</u>
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Scott LaBombard	X
Kenneth Magarian	X
Jane DeBarbieri	X
Douglas Morash	X
Michael Tirrell	X
Vincent Olinski	X
Peter Lurgio	<u>X</u>
	7

0 Motion passed

Prior to the vote, Cindy Monti provided some background on the Western MA Charity Dance A Thon. She explained that the tournament would raise funds to help with profits in the community. This is the first year doing the tournament and we are estimating 14 teams of 2 potentially. Vincent Olinski explained that if they had a food truck they would need to get health department approval.

4. Scott LaBombard explained that there was a question regarding the Little River Playground and if it is under Park and Recreation’s responsibility. He said it was confirmed that it was. He explained that more research needs to be done to determine the exact borders of the playground and then decide what to do with the playground based on these findings. Scott Hathaway will provide a map of the playground at the next meeting for further discussion.

5. Schedule of Bills (attached)

6. Monthly Staff Reports, Jim Blascak -No report due to vacation. Scott Hathaway explained that Whitney Fields will be fraze cut and reseeded to level out the field and get the grass in good shape for next Spring. The goal is to have the fields ready in Spring and Summer for the naming of Chico Field. Fixing the lighting is out of scope at this point due to the extreme cost of lights. Scott also explained that Parker Park estimate for new sidewalks was submitted at \$30,000 but the cost came in at \$100,000 so the sidewalks can’t be installed until the fall. They will work on this with the goal of being ready for Veteran’s Day but Scott will let us know if it won’t be ready so we can communicate that to community groups. Discussion occurred about an issue at the Whitney fields and Vincent Olinski said that he was told there is a Park and Rec employee at Whitney during leagues and tournament play. Scott Hathaway will ask Jim Blascak to present more information and a report regarding the incident at the next meeting.

The next board meeting is September 11, 2023

Adjournment: Ken Magarian moved, seconded by Mike Tirrell to adjourn the meeting. All in favor, motion passed.

The meeting ended at 8:45 pm

Documents: Agenda, minutes, schedules, Permits, Naming facilities, sign in sheets and reports

The review of minutes approved s by Douglas Morash, Secretary of the Commission