



# MINUTES

## WATERTOWN PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

DATE: May 7, 2026

TIME: 7:00 PM

LOCATION: Town Hall – Parks and Recreation Conference Room  
61 Echo Lake Road, Watertown, CT 06795

### I. Call Meeting to Order:

Chairman Bill Donston called the regular meeting to order at 7:05 p.m.

### II. Roll Call:

Members Present: Bill Donston, Pat Rinaldi, Alan Mickel, Joseph McGrail

Absent: Margaret Germain  
Karim Belica  
Tadd Johnson  
Herm Desena, Town Council Liaison

Others Present: Mark A. Raimo, Town Manager; Michelle McHugh, Town Council Vice-Chair;  
Michael Ganem, Director of Parks & Recreation

*Al Mickel moved to add under Old Business #D, "discussion about tennis courts" to the agenda, and to move Old Business #D up on the agenda. Motion passed unanimously.*

### Old Business #D:

Discussion about the tennis courts at Crestbrook Park. Many ideas were presented and shared between the commission and others present. Councilperson McHugh is excited that ideas from experts will make their way to the Town Council and the community. The Staver Fund was further considered. Mark A. Raimo shared his experience of working with certain studies and long-range master planning. These things will better prepare Watertown to qualify for a larger number of grants that may be available or attainable at lower costs and in phases. There are several accounts related to Parks and Recreation that may be utilized towards investing in a plan and/or tennis court project. Councilperson McHugh looks

forward to having the commission bring a plan forward to the Town Council with its priorities and plans on behalf of the entire community.

The Director recommended that concerned citizens tour the tennis courts.

Michele McHugh questioned how we will pursue grants. The Town Manager stated that he and his office will assist us in identifying state and federal grants. He suggested that SLR make a presentation about how to develop a Master Plan, phases, and costs. Crestbrook Park needs to be included in the Master Plan.

An open discussion with the Board of Education will be scheduled.

**III. Public Participation:**

**IV. Approval of Minutes:**

A. April 2, 2026, Regular Meeting

*Motion: Alan Mickel seconded by Joe McGrail to approve the minutes of the Regular Meeting of April 2, 2026. Motion passed unanimously.*

**V. Correspondence:**

- a. Concepts for new Pickleball and Tennis Courts at Crestbrook Park
  - i. The commission discussed the costs of expansion and the current financial challenges. Perhaps the Staver Fund can be leveraged to fund the need to replace the courts. The director will gather updated quotes to replace the 4 courts using the same footprint.
- b. Letters in support of new pickleball and tennis courts
- c. Monthly report from the department

**VI. Reports:**

- A. Chairman -- presented the report from Carrie Godfrey, Recreation Supervisor.
  - a. The Eagle Scout project previously presented is currently on hold
  - b. The Memorial Day parade is going North this year
    - i. This is sponsored by the Veterans Council with support from several Departments
  - c. There was damage to the golf course by the bull that lives across from the course
- B. Director -- thanked the members of the public, the commission, Councilwoman McHugh, and the Town Manager for attending this evening and for sharing their experience and ideas with us. Provided a written report for the record. There are several projects in the works: paving, line stripping, fence repair, and tree trimming. The department is working hard to prepare our facilities and staff for summer use, including the town pool. Can the Fire Department assist us in filling the pool? Summer staff training will take place on June 22 in the Council Chambers. The Director read a letter that was presented to the Sub-Committee earlier this evening.

There was discussion about the enterprise fund and the current financial status of Crestbrook Park Golf Course. The surcharge, aka the course improvement fund, needs to be kept separately. It is the opinion of many in the room that a reasonable exception is that these revenues be isolated and invested specifically in improvements, rather than in maintenance or operations, which are normally expensed. How golfer rates were established was reviewed. The goal is for the revenue to offset the expenses of operating the golf course. However, industry trends show that municipalities experience similar financial opportunities to benefit from golfers' fees. This "course improvement fund" should be broken out from the budget and be transparent.

C. Sub-Committees – Golf.

**VII. Old Business:**

- A. Policies and Procedures – No update
- B. Discussion on Crestbrook Park Golf Course
- C. Maintenance List Update

**VIII. New Business:**

- A. Review and Consideration of Submitted Applications for 2026 - Nonnewaug Football 8/2/26.

*Pat Rinaldi moved to approve the application from Nonnewaug Football, as recommended by the golf subcommittee. Seconded by Al Mickel*

*Motion passed unanimously.*

- B. Account Balances for Parks and Recreation – No Report

**IX. Adjournment:**

*Motion: Alan Mickel seconded by Pat Rinaldi, to adjourn the meeting at 9:25 pm*

*Motion passed unanimously.*

Respectfully submitted,

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William Donston, Chairman  
Watertown Parks and Recreation Commission

Approved:

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Susan King, Clerk

# Director's Report, May 7, 2026

**To:** Parks and Recreation Commission

**From:** Michael Ganem, Director of Parks and Recreation

**Subject:** Monthly Operational Update and Strategic Overview

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First, I want to take this opportunity to thank the members of our Parks and Recreation Commission, our colleagues, and the supporting departments. The collaboration and talent provided by these groups allow us to execute our initiatives effectively. I am grateful to be part of the discussions that continue to shape our parks and facilities for future generations.

## High Priorities of the Parks and Recreation Commission:

- Replace the pickleball and tennis courts at Crestbrook Park
  - Previous discussion points:
    - The courts will not benefit from any reasonable repair and need to be replaced. Short-term efforts have failed, and closure of the courts is imminent
    - Funding was provided in this fiscal year for preliminary design concepts, with the focal point being the urgency to solve the problem of the tennis courts
    - To locate tennis courts at other parks or locations would hurt the benefits of offering "dining, golf, tennis, and a chlorinated swimming pool" as a unique amenity for Watertown taxpayers
    - Given the current financial pressures, a larger-scale project, like those discussed at our previous meetings, is not a realistic recommendation that the Parks and Recreation Commission bring forward to the Town Council
    - Replacing only the existing courts may be immediately affordable if the Staver Fund is leveraged
    - Alternative locations for stand-alone pickleball courts should be considered in the future. The footprint for 4 pickleball courts is substantially smaller than the footprint for 4 tennis courts
- Working with stakeholders to develop a comprehensive Master Plan to address the Town's future needs and wants of our parks and park features, including playgrounds, fields, and facilities.

## Maintenance and Infrastructure Projects

Our team is currently prioritizing capital and routine maintenance to enhance safety and accessibility:

- **Paving and Surface Repairs:** We are repairing or re-paving several hundred feet of park sidewalks, including targeted repairs at **Crestbrook Park** (Old hole #4) and the walking trail at Veterans Park.
- **Facility Enhancements:** Ongoing work includes ball field fence repairs, line stripping at public buildings, and critical tree maintenance across various locations to ensure public safety.

**Seasonal Operations:**

- **Crestbrook Park Golf Course:** The course opened on April 3rd. We have seen steady turnout and positive feedback regarding early-season conditions.
- **Aquatics Preparation:** The municipal pool is targeted to open on **June 22**.
- **Seasonal-Staff. Hiring and Onboarding** are nearing completion, with comprehensive training scheduled for **June 25**.
- **Operational Transition:** We are managing the transition following the departures of our long-time Aquatics Coordinator and Pool Operator. New operational plans are being integrated to ensure a seamless start to the season and beyond.

**Budget and Fiscal Assessment**

As we approach the fiscal year closeout in June, we are closely monitoring departmental spending and projections.

- **Closeout Planning:** We are currently synthesizing final data to determine the percentage of the budget remaining through year-end.
- **Overtime Analysis:** Current projections account for increased overtime requirements driven by a harsh winter, and the expanded maintenance needs of additional facilities.

**Summary of Upcoming Milestones**

Event / Milestone	Date	Status
Municipal Pool Opening	June 22, 2026	In Progress
Summer Staff Training	June 25, 2026	Scheduled
Fiscal Year Closeout	June 30, 2026	In Progress

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Respectfully Submitted,

Michael Ganem, Director of Parks and Recreation