

MINUTES OF THE TOWN OF CHESHIRE PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY, MAY 6, 2026, AT 7:00 P.M. AT THE HARMON LEONARD YOUTH CENTER, SOUTH MAIN STREET - CHESHIRE CT 06410

Present

Dr. Patrick Duffy, MD, Chairman

Commissioners: Paul Fracasse, Erin Mutty, Michael O'Donnell, John Perosino Ray Stewart, Steve Trifone

Absent: Elizabeth Mayne, Program Supervisor
Brendan Moran, Program Coordinator

Staff: Mark Cunningham, Highway Superintendent
John Gawlak, Director of Parks and Recreation
Fiona Pearson, Council Liaison

1. CALL TO ORDER

The Chairman called the meeting to order.

2. ROLL CALL

The Clerk called the roll and a quorum was determined to be present.

3. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The group pledged Allegiance to the Flag.

4. PUBLIC COMMENT

Karen Schnitzer, 18 Courier Place, Chair, Environment Commission, spoke about NEMBA and the Yankee Highlands. She was invited to go on a walk on the trails and is pleased with how things are being done.

5. ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES – March 11, 2026

MOTION by Mr. O'Donnell, seconded by Mr. Trifone

MOVED to approve the minutes of the meeting of April 8, 2026

VOTED The motion passed unanimously by those present

6. PARKS UPDATE - PUBLIC WORKS

Mr. Cunningham stated that work is proceeding as normal.

7. TOWN COUNCIL LIAISON REPORT

Ms. Talbot was not in attendance at this time of the meeting.

8. COMMUNICATIONS

Mr. Gawlak shared with the members communication from Francisco Perez of CT NEMBA giving periodic updates that included photos. He reported the first bridge that was approved will be installed this weekend.

Mr. Gawlak stated that the \$50,000.00 grant received by the town will be used for trails improvements, such as signs and kiosks.

9. CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

The Chairman distributed numerous emails/complaints received regarding adequate field access, field quality, from members of Cheshire Reds. These were sent to the Town Manager, Commission members and Park & Rec staff. The Chairman reiterated what has been done in the past few months. All of the efforts by this Commission are reflected in the previous meeting minutes. Chris Marini attended and spoke at the April 8 meeting and provided his contact information that the Chairman forwarded to Heather Fitzgerald, who is now a member of the Board of Education, to discuss the school fields.

Heather Fitzgerald stated that Mr. Marini did contact her and they discussed the issues. She informed him that Doolittle and Highland fields may be available soon and also asked him for more input and ideas that she could share with the members at this meeting. She has not heard back from him.

Mr. Cunningham reported the benches are in and the breakaway bases have been done.

The Chairman quoted Eldridge Cleaver: "IF YOU ARE NOT PART OF THE sOLUTION, YOU ARE PART OF TH EPROBLEM"

10. NEW BUSINESS

A. Approval of Fee for Rental of Bartlem Park Bandshell

Discussion ensued and the following motion was made:

MOTION by Mr. O'Donnell, seconded by Mr. Duffy

MOVED to Charge \$750.00 for use of the Great Lawn and bandshell for town residents
And businesses plus extra fees required by the public gathering permit form,
From May 6 to December 2026, at which time the Commission will reassess the
Fees.

VOTED The motion passed unanimously by those present

11. OLD BUSINESS

- a. **Kate Glendon, MPH, Director of Health, Chesprocott Health District** was not in attendance.
- b. **Adaptive Field Project Cheshire Park 1**
Mr. Gawlak reported that a meeting took place on March 27 with SLR and town staff, to review project and timeline, design phase and soil sampling.
The project is moving along.
- c. **NEMBA MOU Yankee Highlands**
Mr. Gawlak distributed to members a report and photos to show project progress.
- d. **CCAP 2026 Mixville Cyclocross Race**
This was scheduled for Mixville but after talks with all parties, it will be put off until next year due to the unknowns of the proposed construction of the new large pavilion.
- d. **Eagle Scout Projects**
 - a. Mr. Gawlak reported that a Boy Scout wants to redo the high school storage shed as his Eagle Project; replacing the roof and changing the siding and restoring shelves inside for better storage.
 - b. C Dyer – 9 holes Teepads and J. Moody – 9 holes Teepads – (at Cheshire Park)
The materials have been secured. This project will be completed in the next month.

12. DIRECTOR'S DEPARTMENT REPORT

Mr. Gawlak's full report is attached to the minutes. Red line items are new submissions.

The pool will be closed Labor Day weekend for general pool maintenance including the liner.

The Environmental Review Yankee Highlands group has a scheduled walk for May 13 at 9 am. The group will meet at town hall.

A copy of the proposed budget was distributed to the members.

13. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION by Mr. Trifone, seconded by Mr. O'Donnell

MOVED to adjourn the meeting at 8:00 p.m.

VOTED the motion passed unanimously by those present.

Respectfully submitted,



Angela Izzo

Cheshire Parks & Recreation Commission

Director's Report- May 6, 2026 - (Bold print underlined in red are new submissions).

Bartlem South UPDATE:

Need to discuss field use, band shell, policies and fees. Town of Cheshire has marketed publicly an RFP for Sound and lighting at Bartlem Park Band Shell. Proposals will be opened Feb. 9, 2026. PowerStation Events LLC Cheshire has been selected. A comprehensive bid with the focus of controlling/preserving the electrical components of the band shell as well as providing personnel through the duration of events also providing several free community events. Drafting a contract and the town is pursuing purchasing a storage structure so AV lighting components can live on site reducing costs. ARC Sound Stage \$16,525 per prod, HB Live \$11,705 per prod, PSE \$7,500 per prod.

Mixville Master Plan: Engineering Dept. has been working on a plan to incorporate both increased parking, accessibility pathways/boardwalk, remove sides to the changing room for a covered bench on the concrete pad, new signage kiosk, relocate sand volleyball courts and add a permanent seasonal rink Engineering Dept. has created a multi-phase plan incorporating the priorities mentioned above. DPW has completed the parking lot improvements piece of the project. The rink is completed and looks great. Town of Cheshire is recipient of 2025 STEAP Grant for Mixville Park phase II \$1,000,000 plus additional Town match \$281,800 for a total of \$1,281,800 project cost. Project will include boardwalk and sidewalks from the main parking area along the beach with connections to the south side of the park, new pavilion Bid was opened last month (FEB) for design and eventual construction, suspension bridge for better trail passage between the 2 ponds, bocci court, benches and way finding signage.

Improvement Updates to Mixville Park: Bridge Update: Design complete and now is in environmental permitting stage; Pavilion Replacement Update: Bids received for design services of the pavilion replacement. Consultant has been selected. Design has started. Boardwalk Update: Plans for boardwalk have been submitted to CTDEEP and waiting for DECD Flood Management General Certification before this portion of the project can be bid for construction.

1. Community Pool:

- Main deck repairs: Community Pool Deck Repairs/Epoxy Floor capital project estimated \$100,000 _Remove failed joints and install self-leveling joint sealant from the west end of the pool and around the Kidde closing
. Resurface pool deck and diving board footings. Will need to put out to public bid 2 options for treatment do not seem to be the best options to pursue. I will be seeking technical advice on what direction and application is best for the pool deck. Project on hold as funds were re- appropriated for the boiler project.
- Lobby roof: Town retained Silver and Petrucelli to provide recommendations and costs estimates to repair the lobby roof. Final action report has been received. Public Building Commission has been tasked to oversee the bidding process, and installation. PBC has recommended S&P provide a design, bid docs and construction management. The bid has been awarded. The work will begin April 13th with staging areas April 8th 7am start each day roughly 4 weeks to complete. Roofing project should be completed by the end of this week.

- Met with B&L Engineering Consultants and Town Staff for an initial planning meeting for the development of the Splash Pad to be located on the south side of the pool. Project did not pass recent referendum. Meeting on Feb. 5th to discuss potential for repurpose of the grant (Community pool upgrades) to take care of pool updates (Kidde pool, locker rooms, showers, scoreboard etc.)
 - Town Council bid waiver to perform approved Capital Projects 2025 for main filter laterals and sand filter media replacement. Two heat exchangers also need to be replaced. Sheila is planning to have this work completed with the pool shut down after Labor Day. Some pool liner work needs to be done as there is an area that has pulled away from the side. After July 1 DPW will be handling all Pool and building maintenance as requested by the Town Manager.
1. Things to ponder: 1-2 multi use rectangular fields with lights (aid lacrosse, football rugby), add lights to existing field, Bartlem South Project, Challenger Field baseball/soccer combo, Disc Golf Course. Filed lights to softball/baseball fields. Cheshire Soccer Club memo dated Oct. 17, 2023, recommending to school building committee to consider expanding soccer fields to accommodate two 9v9 10-12yr old's, three 7v7 for 8-10yr old's, three 4v4 for 4-7 yr olds. This allows field scheduling flexibility and the ability to rehab fields. Quininiac Park is reaching full capacity. Just an FYI the Department has been fielding calls from nonresident organizations for all kinds of turf and field requests see handout.
 2. **Cheshire Park Disc Golf Course:** Honeypot Disc Golf @Cheshire Park FB page. The local organizers will be working next to complete the tee pads and adding permanent signage. The course is the 9th most played course out of 63 courses statewide. Eagle Scouts Dyer and Moody each will be constructing and installing the tee pads with guidance from course ambassadors. Tee pads surfacing and materials for the wood frame construction should be commencing soon.
 3. **MacNamara Park:** Meeting June 20th was held with Town Staff to review Mac field proposal advertising, batting cages, pavilion and storage shed, concessions building CYB held elections for the upcoming year with changes on the board. Meeting January 9 to discuss building project and regional tournament hosting this summer. Meeting takeaways include working with Asst. Town Manager to draft field banner policy, DPW/ENG will plot a field map with proposal for Pavilion, Larger behind backstop storage containers and batting cages. As far as the Tournament DPW agreed to work with CYB jointly to pull off the tournament if there is enough interest (East Shore and N.Branford Sportsplex both host weekly summer tournaments). Met today on Banner Sponsorship policy with Asst. Town Manager-Draft policy, P&Z review, TBC review, locations, amount, seasonal only, fee schedule.
 4. **Meeting with Challenger Sports** to discuss short- and long-term plans of programs and fields. Met with Derek Hayden to discuss Cheshire challenger sports and their goals. **State Bond Commission early June 2024 awarded the Town of Cheshire \$750,000 for an Adaptive/Miracle**

type baseball/soccer field. A design group will be assembling sometime this spring to kick off project planning. Meeting was held on May 16 with a follow up June 6th. Some locations were discussed as well as turf types and athletes' abilities to use regular type surfaces. Next meeting July 23 to draft a Project RFP for design. Design RFP specs have been drafted by John G and forwarded to Andrew Martelli and Dan Bombero for final edits with hopes that it can be posted publicly. The RFP for Design is finalized and publicly bid. Bid results December 12, 2025. Meeting coming up to kick off project and award the design proposal. **Project kick off meeting was held March 27 with SLR and Town Staff to review project, timelines and project site. Currwently in the design phase including, site survey, Geotech investigation, soil sampling and permitting through May/June.**

5. Lock 12 Pavilion:

6. Town Manager Adopted goals and objectives for Recreation: 2026

RECREATION Goal #5: Promote and expand recreational, leisure and cultural opportunities to enhance the quality of life for all Cheshire residents and promote positive physical, social and emotional experiences.

Key Objectives – Ranked in Priority:

1. Conduct a Cheshire Community Pool master planning process to identify and quantify future capital projects necessary to continue to operate as critical components continue to reach end of useful life within this 25-year-old facility.

2. Explore the feasibility of acquiring access rights for the construction of a second parking area for the Yankee Highlands open space on the southern side of the property and oversee the approval process for the proposed CT NEMBA network of mountain bike trails on this property.

3. Support the design and construction of the Adaptive Turf Field Project.

4. Implement construction of Phase 2 of the Mixville Park Master Plan including grant-funded construction of trail/interconnectivity improvements, along with a new pavilion and a new pedestrian bridge.

5. Reprogram STEAP grant funding from splashpad proposal to other interior aquatic enhancements at the Community Pool including the kiddie pool area.

7. Open Space discussion-

- Discuss management plan look at each make recommendations to Town Planner Review and walk each open space property over time to become familiar, promote use and program potential long range
- Made a connection with David Irvin, Central District Service Forester. David has agreed to meet with us this summer to walk an open space parcel that is a priority of the town that may have health or ecological concerns or recreational interest and provide a road map of improvements. The Yankee Highlands walk occurred on Oct. 17th I appreciate

the members of the Environment Comm who joined David. David indicated we will be receiving the report over the next few weeks. David provided the survey form for the next property to be studied Boulder Knoll. Boulder Knoll site walk was conducted on March 18th most members of Environment Commission were in attendance. Waiting on David's report and findings which will provide us with 4 Open Space parcels studied with a few more to go so we can get into updating the Management plans for the open space.

- **Yankee Highlands Open Space Town of Cheshire and CTNEMBA trails agreement.** The Project received all necessary approvals and both the Town and NEMBA agreed to terms of the MOU. The MOU will now need Town Council approval at its next meeting. Meeting held a few weeks ago was successful, CTNEMBA along with Environment Commission were able to work out some differences regarding the MOU. In summary CTNEMBA has been green lighted for upper western part of the parcel to develop 7 miles of single-track trails can take up to a year. Environment Commission wanted an ERT to be performed and reviewed to understand native botanical, amphibious creatures and wildlife prior to approval of the lower section of the Yankee Highlands. Andrew Martelli applied to DEEP which was accepted (first request for them this year) they will review and will be a part of the March 11th Environment Commission meeting via zoom to discuss further. Review may take up to 8 months. March 10th Town Council Approved Land Use agreement with CT NEMBA. April 7th agreement was executed with The Town of Cheshire and CT NEMBA. A project kick off meeting and review of the \$50K State of CT grant for the project was held April 21st. Work has begun on the trails April 25th weekend see handout.
- Environment Commission: Environment Comm is creating an Open Space database with objectives and goals, a fluid document for the Volunteer Trail Stewards Projects. It has filters by property and levels of priority. Trail Stewards will be logging work sessions.
- DEEP ECON Officer 203-710-2364 Ofc Maciejko regarding the hunting incident and deer stands.
- David Irvin the DEEP Forester we have been working with, has made us aware of a CT DEEP Resilient Forestry Practices grant upwards of \$150,000 to assist with recommendations from open space walks. Karen Schnitzer and I put a pause to this proposal, and we will explore the next year when it becomes available. There is just so much on this group's plate to have time to satisfy all the requirements for a proposal which may include survey work and mapping.
- **The Town of Cheshire has requested an Environmental Review of the Yankee Highlands property: A 300 acres parcel of open space that the town acquired in 1995. As Christian Swanson Energy and Environmental Programs Coordinator Connecticut Resource Conservation & Development Area, Inc. is compiling her Environmental Review Team, they are hoping that you would like to participate in the site visit as a member of the team. The Town of Cheshire has entered a MOU with New England Mountain Bike Association (NEMBA) to investigate the potential for a network of managed recreational trails. The Town is seeking a better understanding of the**

natural resources on the property and recommendations for protecting them. The initial site visit is slated for May 11th

8. **Special events:** Fishing Derby April 7 (42 part.), Mixville Mud Run April 8 (145 part.), Touch A Truck Bartlem Park April 9, and Chalk It Up at Bartlem April 10 (110 part.). Barb Costello did a FANTASTIC job coordinating and executing the events. DPW was very instrumental in assisting Barb with set up /take down and displaying their equipment at the Touch A Truck.

9. **Bartlem Beats:** The concert dates and bands have been selected. July 17 Best of Times, August 7 River of Dreams, August 21 Vivid, Sept. 4 Orchard Hill, Sept. 18 Women of Rock

Bid for stage and sound/lighting productions is for this summer only as we transition to our permanent stage we will need to rebid for sound and lighting only. Working off a Audio Visual State of CT contract that Power Station has we have agreed to their pricing proposal just need to execute agreement (\$8525 technical services vs \$8750 previous year bid). **To date the**

sponsorship program has netted \$12,000

A HUGE Thank you to our 2025 Bartlem Beats Sponsors: \$12,750

Presenting: Richard Chevrolet

Platinum: AIT Insurance; Cheshire Lions Club

Gold: Advanced Dentistry; DW Gem Services, LLC; Feldman Orthodontics; Gaylord Physical Therapy; Knott & Santoro, LLC; B.H. Burke & Co., Inc.; Saint Bridget of Sweden Church; Holiday Hill Day Camps; Saint Bridget School; Cheshire Coffee, Blacks Road Self Storage, Liberty Bank Ricci Construction Group

10. **Emergency Action Plan-** CJF concerned about the NFL player and his injury experience. The organization is creating a EAP and wanted to know what the Town had in place. The Town's EAP Plan is not park specific. Chief Casner was part of the recent meeting and believes we should explore and create a plan specific to each park. Steve Trifone forwarded the CHS EAP Plan that we will use as a template. Cheyanne Beach Cheshire resident and pediatric cardiologist at Yale and medical director of PROJECT ADAM. Project ADAM is a national network of affiliate sites that work together to optimize sudden cardiac arrest preparedness in schools and communities. She would like to meet and share some ideas also to gain an understanding of what is in place in Cheshire. In the process of setting up a planning meeting to discuss further and waiting on Dr. Beach to submit recommendations using the school plan as a model.

11. The Town of Cheshire Planning Department will be planning the next POCD plan for the next 10 years. In the very near future, we will be contacted for input regarding all park and recreation items. Mike O'Donnell and I attended the POCD meeting and spoke for 1 hour+ on Sept. 11, 2024 about current/future needs. Mike Glidden explained P&Z is early in the process and there will be additional opportunities to meet and discuss.

12. Eagle Scout Eric Downy completed his Gaga ball pit for Cheshire Park north side of the playground. Gabe Delaney installed the Bike Repair station at Lock 12. Brendan Middendorf

Youth Center Tennis storage shed rehab. Jehan Mody and Colin Dyer are building the 18-hole course tee pads Honeypot Disc Golf Course. Kyle Shutts is working with Sean Henri of the Environment Commission on a project proposal for Boulder Knoll Trails. Aaron Buhrer Lock 12 sign at entrance and pathway

13. **Park benches and memorial bench program discuss Bartlem South locations**
14. **Dog Park** DPW has made the repairs to Gazebo #2 in the large dog area. There is a donor willing to donate \$1,000 towards a purchase of the Gazebo #3 which used to be on the east side of the park near the solar panels. Gazebo #1 small dog area will need the legs to be repaired like #2. Park users are requesting pot holes to be repaired in the parking areas and there is a report that the water source is not functioning properly.
15. Requesting DPW as time permits us to update and recreate park field maps with the drone. See current map photos. Dan B from DPW is assisting us with map generation with the Towns consultant New England Geosystems. Elizabeth is working with the vendor to redo all our park maps and field layouts. Hopefully we will see some draft versions prior to finalization and viewing on all town web pages.
16. Capital Budget FY25 great news Council approved at a recent meeting the Bartlem Park Skate Park ramp upgrades along with new surface completed, Van to transport program and special event materials completed, Open Space /Park improvements including Disc Golf course Completed Court conversion for 2 pickleball courts COMPLETED, General Park signage, Pool parking lot paving, Pool Boiler and roof replacements IN PROGRESS along with funds to design Adaptive turf field IN PROGRESS, bleachers and player benches completed . All great things to enhance an already robust parks system something everyone should be prideful about!
17. PBC is working on Youth Center improvements (AC for great room, restrooms, floor, window upgrades)
18. Projects at various stages: Adaptive Field planning/design, Yankee Highlands CTNEMBA mountain bike trails regulatory phase/Town land use agreement, Mixville Phase II planning, Splash Pad, Pool Boiler/roof, Open Space parcel review #4 Boulder Knoll with State Forester Dave Irvin.
19. Pool scoreboard and touch pads will no longer be supported by Daktronics, making it a candidate for replacement. Cost to replace it is roughly \$70,000.
20. Some skateboarders were disappointed that the park did not include a half pipe element. The project intention was to reconstruct a surface that was in dire need of replacement. I was able to introduce some new ramps to complete some of the open spaces once the new pad was in place utilizing the American Ramp Company designers. The designers selected ramps that would complement existing ramps at not a large investment. I do have American Ramp Company working at sketches on where a half pipe can fit with associated costs. I should receive it in October. If it works, I can arrange to meet with boarders/BMX bikers to see if there is interest in fundraising, say half for a future project. See handout and price estimate of \$50,000 per bid or purchasing coop.
21. Request for lights at Bartlem Skateboard Park as well as Mixville Volleyball courts. Park users want to be able to continue activities when daylight savings occur if possible. I met with Bob

Casner recently to review the location, discuss options available and forward price estimates when possible. Volleyball courts may be moved at some point in line with the Master Plan recommendation closer to the beach.

- 22. Recreation Commission needs to make a recommendation on use of the Great Lawn/ Band Shell and fee structure. Many groups have expressed interest in using space this year, Ostermann 50th Anniv picnic and games, School of Rock recital, Cheshire Theatre Shakespeare in the Park, The Lab on Cornwall Dance and singing, Vox Church etc
- 23. Cyclecross at Mixville Park in Oct. CCAP request. Brian Wolfe and Lucas Huesman will be put off until next year due to the unknowns of the proposed construction of the new large pavilion.
- 24. Division revenues are trending in the right direction see handout.
- 25. Bartlem Park Pick up adult soccer

Respectfully submitted:

John Gawlak

John Gawlak CPRP
Director Parks & Recreation