

**ENFIELD TOWN COUNCIL
MINUTES OF A SPECIAL MEETING
MONDAY, MAY 17, 2021**

A Special Meeting of the Enfield Town Council was called to order by Chairman Ludwick on Monday, May 17, 2021. The meeting was called to order at 6:00 p.m.

ROLL-CALL – Present were Councilors Bosco, Cressotti, Hemmeler, Ludwick, Mangini, Muller, Riley, Sferrazza, Szewczak and Unghire. Councilor Cekala was absent. Also present were Town Manager, Christopher Bromson; Assistant Town Manager, Kasia Purciello; Town Clerk, Sheila Bailey; Town Attorney, James Tallberg; Chief of Police, Alaric Fox, Chief Information Officer, Paul Russell.

SPECIAL GUESTS

Department of Environmental and Energy Protection – Scantic River Park Update

Present for this item were Colonel Chris Lewis from DEEP; Thomas Tyler, DEEP Director of State Parks; Chief of Police, Alaric Fox; Senator John Kissel and State Representative Carol Hall.

Mr. Bromson stated Enfield is fortunate to have the Scantic River Park, however, there is very inadequate parking, so it is a constant effort for the Town and the State to deal with that and yet keep the park open for local residents who want to use it for hiking and walking, as well as people coming from other areas who have more protracted plans to stay there with families, which includes picnicking. All these uses pose some real burdens and stress to the park itself.

Mr. Bromson thanked Colonel Lewis and Chief Fox for addressing concerns. He noted they recently enhanced patrols by police and DEEP with great success.

Colonel Lewis stated DEEP hired a core group of seasonal employees, who do go through training. He noted these individuals will be unarmed rangers with limited enforcement ability. He stated they have one individual assigned to the Scantic River Park, and his schedule will commit him to every Saturday from 8:00 to 4:00 p.m. He noted they also have Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday committed and every Friday and Monday alternates depending on this individual's primary work schedule. He noted Sunday is not available to this individual. He stated in addition to this individual, they are working at having more traditional seasonal officers for the northeast corner of the state, which will augment their ranger patrol in that area.

He stated their goal is for a more increased and educational presence to nip any problems in the bud before they get out of control.

Mr. Tyler stated visitor attendance has increased significantly at state parks, which coincides with the pandemic. He noted they are up over 20% year over year attendance. He stated last spring compared to the previous spring, they were probably up by a 100% increase year over year. He stated it is not known whether this year will be another record-breaking year like last year now

that so many more people have discovered state parks, or perhaps numbers will decrease as a result of things getting back to normal with families going back into sports and family vacations.

Mr. Tyler stated DEEP is gearing up as well as they can for another season. He noted everyone knows that the Scantic River Park will remain an attractive spot that continues to bring in crowds that will over-tax that park's ability, therefore, enforcement is an important key.

He stated DEEP's state park division manages the recreational aspects of 110 state parks and 32 state forests, which amounts to about one-quarter million acres. He noted the division headed up by Colonel Lewis has law enforcement responsibility of state lands under DEEP's control. Mr. Tyler stated his division handles other aspects of managing property, i.e., litter removal and other supervision of the properties.

Chief Fox stated there will be an increased presence by DEEP to have a physical presence at the Scantic River Park, and this person will be a ranger, who has the ability to enforce park regulations to the infraction level inside the facility. He noted local police can respond when needed. He stated under the direction of the Town administration and the Town Council, local police will be addressing parking issues on the Town side.

He stated one item beyond the control of Colonel Lewis and Mr. Tyler relates to the ability to allow walk-ins and the expiration of the Governor's executive order.

Colonel Lewis stated last year, according to the Governor's executive order, they prohibited walk-ins at any of the state parks once capacity was reached, however, but that expired at the end of last year. He noted some executive orders were renewed, but that was not one of them. He added they are anticipating that going forward all parks and forests will be operating as they were before Covid when they were not allowed to restrict walk-ins. He noted they can control the parking lot, and when the lot is full, they will close the parking lot, but if someone parks legally elsewhere, they cannot prohibit that person from walking into the park.

Mr. Bromson stated last year they erected signage at critical junctures saying the park was closed, and that was effective. He noted they will have officers there on Saturdays and Sundays, and people will be notified when the parking lot is closed. He stated his belief with DEEP's enhanced personnel and the Town's vigilance with their officers, they should be on top of things.

Councilor Sferrazza stated this is a problem that he dealt with for many years when he was the Chief of Police. He stated he is very happy to hear the park will have a ranger on Saturdays. He stated despite so many people trying to fix the problem, on Monday morning Enfield residents go to this area and find the area trashed. He spoke about the importance of having a physical presence there. He stated his belief they will not have the problems they did in the past while rangers are present in the park.

Councilor Szewczak stated she receives a lot of calls about this park. She noted the problem is that this is a passive recreation park, and the parking is designed for that use of the park. She stated she has a problem when people are allowed to have large drop-offs and are then redirected to the Town's nearby parking lot, which results in no parking spaces for people coming for baseball. She

noted she would not be opposed to people being redirected to another state park that has parking available, but she is opposed to people being directed to Town parks where the parking is specific for the use of that Town park. She stated her belief they are off to a good start.

Chairman Ludwick stated when they use the word “education”, perhaps they could involve high school or college volunteers to get credit in environmental studies. Mr. Tyler stated they focused more on a seasonal entry position as opposed to internships. He noted individuals who take these seasonal entry positions can see if they would like this as a career.

Chairman Ludwick recessed the meeting, and the Council went into Executive Session at 6:32 p.m.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

The Executive Session of the Enfield Town Council was called to order by Chairman Ludwick at 6:33 p.m.

ROLL-CALL - Present were Councilors Bosco, Cressotti, Hemmeler, Ludwick, Mangini, Muller, Riley, Sferrazza, Szewczak and Unghire. Also present were Town Manager, Christopher Bromson; Assistant Town Manager, Kasia Purciello; Town Clerk, Sheila Bailey; Town Attorney, James Tallberg; Chief of Police, Alaric Fox; Deputy Director of Economic & Community Development, Nelson Tereso, joined at 7:10 p.m.

During Executive Session, the Council discussed Real Estate Negotiations and Security.

ADJOURNMENT

MOTION #5784 by Councilor Muller, seconded by Councilor Mangini to adjourn.

Upon a **SHOW-OF-HANDS** vote being taken, the Chair declared **MOTION #5784** adopted 10-0-0, and the Special Meeting stood adjourned at 6:58 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Sheila M. Bailey
Town Clerk
Clerk of the Council

Jeannette Lamontagne
Secretary to the Council