

RECREATION ADVISORY COMMISSION MEETING
May 15, 2002

I. Call TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

A meeting of the Town of Palm Beach Recreation Advisory Commission was held on May 15, 2002, at the Recreation Center. The meeting was called to order by Mrs. Gail Coniglio, Chairperson at 9:00 a.m. Commission members in attendance were Mrs. Coniglio, Mr. Gross, Mrs. Morris and Mr. Ochstein. Alternate members in attendance were Mrs. Agnello, Mr. Spaziani and Mr. Fishman. Absent from the meeting were Mr. Shore and Mr. Shulman. Staff members in attendance were Mr. Bitzer, Mr. Brown and Mrs. Walkowich

II. APPROVAL OF AGENDA - Mrs. Coniglio asked for a motion for the approval of the agenda. Mr. Spaziani made the motion to approve the agenda. Seconded by Mr. Gross, all were in favor.

III. APPROVAL OF MARCH 13, 2002, MINUTES - Mrs. Coniglio asked for a motion to approve the March 13, 2002, minutes. Mr. Ochstein made the motion to approve the minutes. Seconded by Mrs. Morris, all were in favor.

IV. OLD BUSINESS - none

V. NEW BUSINESS

A. FY-2003 Proposed Budget

Mr. Bitzer reviewed the Recreation Department FY 2003 Proposed Budget:

311 - Administration: This budget is down approximately 12% which is primarily due to the reallocation of personnel and contractual services to other divisions.

312 - Tennis: Down 1%

313 - Adult Programs: Has an increase of approximately 12% which is do to the reallocation of our maintenance man. Part of his salary is now in this budget. Increased revenues will offset 100% of adult programs.

314 - Youth Programs Estimated to be down 11% due to a reallocation of staffing.

Total Recreation Department Budget is down approximately 8% due to the facility maintenance budget being transferred to Public Works.

Capital Improvement Project

Mr. Bitzer said that staff has recommended a second water source for the athletic field at a cost of approximately \$24,000 to be included in the FY-03 budget. Our turf grass consultant has advised us that a second water source is necessary as the existing system cannot adequately water the field.

401 - Golf Increased 2.58% - Retirement, insurances and salary increases from the pay for performance system. The main increase is water which is about \$30,000.

Recommended Fee Increases:

Golf (Winter Rates): Small Range Bucket - \$3.50 to \$4.00
Large Range Bucket - \$5.00 to \$6.00

Anticipated increase in revenue from this change is \$20,000.

Tennis: Resident annual permits from \$220 - \$240
Resident semi annual permits from \$110 - \$120
Non-Resident annual permits from \$400 - \$440
Non-Resident semi annual permits from \$200 - \$220

Anticipated increase in revenue from this change is \$12,000.

Mr. Gavigan made the motion to recommend the approval of the FY-2003 proposed budget. Seconded by Mr. Fishman, all were in favor.

VI. ANY OTHER MATTERS

Mr. Bitzer said that last week staff met with the Palm Beach County School Board project manager and their architect regarding the renovations to the Public School. At that time they had a preliminary plan and wanted to get staff's input as to any comments or suggestions. He said that they would try to take those suggestions into consideration in the plan that they would be bringing to the Town Council. Mr. Bitzer said that after the meeting he was concerned how close the proposed school building was moving towards the recreation center and how much open green space would be lost. He said that the plan didn't look quite right. It appeared that the recreation center building was further to the east on the plan than it actually is, therefore, the proposed plan would impact us even more. Mr. Bitzer said that the architect said they did not have a survey and would be getting it in a week to 10 days and that they would be re-doing the drawing. Mr. Bitzer said that he requested a copy of the corrected drawing when it was completed. He also suggested that they attend the commission meeting today and give their presentation. At that time they agreed to attend the meeting but have since changed their mind. He said that they felt as if they didn't have an adequate drawing to really show the advisory board and that when they did, they would come back and make a presentation. Mr. Bitzer said that he spoke with the Town Manager and suggested that this was something that perhaps the advisory board should review. Mr. Bitzer said that Mr. Elwell agreed.

Mrs. Coniglio said that she would like to keep an open mind about the expansion of the public school. She said that the Town and our Recreation Center, the Day School and the Public School have had a very symbiotic relationship over the years. She said that when she and Mr. Gavigan were on this commission 8 years ago there was tremendous concern that the baseball field not be compromised by 1 foot less than regulation for the older children. With this renovation, she felt that the relationship will change 100%. Mrs. Coniglio said that our Town and our children will lose a tremendous amount in addition to green space, and the character of our recreation center will change completely. She said that as members of this commission they should call the Town Council members and alert other families to their concerns.

Mr. Ochstein said that he was absolutely opposed to losing the school. He felt that we needed to keep this school in the Town of Palm Beach. It's been a part of the Town for a long time. He stated that he had two kids go there and even though there is not a large number of Palm Beachers going to the school now, that doesn't mean that it won't change. He said that he was opposed to the proposed expansion that will destroy the only baseball field in Town and it would do so much damage. Mr. Ochstein said, "It is silly to have a giant school in that little foot print, it can't be." He said that he felt the Town should really discourage that.

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Mr. Gavigan asked if we knew why they were enlarging the school. Mr. Bitzer said that he wasn't sure of their exact reasons but that he would make inquiries and get that information for the

commissioners for the next meeting. Mr. Gavigan asked what position the Town was taking on whether or not the school would continue.

Mr. Bitzer said that he thought it was still under discussion but as it stands right now they were trying to work with the school board so that they could keep the school.

Mr. Gavigan said that he felt the commission should concern themselves with how the expansion of the school will effect the recreation department property, not if the school should be there or not. He said, "I'm not sure why you would expand a school when they're not even sure they want it in the first place, for one, when it's only getting 1% use from Palm Beachers. I mean you could have a school there in the future, maintain the same size. I mean the problems you outlined out there were pretty severe. You not only lose a baseball field but your losing the soccer field." Mr. Brown said that the soccer field would only be compromised if they kept the baseball field.

Mr. Gavigan said that it was an issue of giving up something. He said that he would hope that the school board would have alternate plans that wouldn't infringe on the athletic field. Mr. Gavigan said that this expansion would also impact our open space by the tennis courts and felt that with the loss of the open space, the school was now going to infringe on the recreation centers open space, which is limited, increasing the use that the athletic field which already gets pretty rough treatment and by increasing the number of students it was going to be worse.

Mrs. Coniglio said that she was concerned about the increase in traffic congestion and parking and the safety of the children.

Mrs. Agnello said that she was concerned about the proposed pavilion so close to the tennis courts. She said, "I can guarantee your tennis revenue will go down because people will not want to play there."

Mr. Fishman asked what percentage of the students are Town of Palm Beach residents? Mrs. Coniglio said that it was between 1% and 5%. Mr. Fishman said that he totally agreed with the comments that had been made and that the proposed renovation plan totally changes the character of the recreation center. He said that with only 1% to 5% of the Town's children using the school, why would we not be against the school being there since what they were proposing was going to effect 100% of the Town's children. He said that every child would be effected plus certain adult programs. Mr. Fishman said that he understood Mr. Ochstein's

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comments and that history is good but the whole character of the recreation center would be changed. He said, "One to five percent is minuscule, I don't think it behooves the Town at all for that percentage to maintain any kind of school there. We're not close to any number that would

justify it and to effect the whole recreation situation 100% of the children and the adults for 1% to 5% attending there, makes no sense.” He asked Mr. Bitzer when residents would have an opportunity to appear before the Council and discuss the issue about the school.

Mr. Bitzer said that the preliminary plan was on the fast track and expected the architects to have it completed in a couple of weeks, a month at the most. He said that the commission may want to call a special meeting to review this plan. He said he would notify the commissioners when this item was put on the Town Council agenda.

Mr. Fishman asked if the Town Council meeting would address whether the school should be there or the expansion. Mr. Bitzer said that it would be about the renovation.

Mr. Bitzer said that he thought the Town would like to see the school stay here if they can solve some of their problems. Mr. Bitzer said that he told the school board architect that we have been good neighbors with the Public School for many years. He said that the open space created by the School Board and Town properties works both to our benefit and the kids who go to the public school. Mr. Bitzer said that he told them that he hoped they could find a way to do whatever they need to do without impacting on the open green space. He said, “That’s what I left them with and they kind of just smiled. I said is that possible and they said probably not.”

Mrs. Morris said that she agreed with Mr. Ochstein and Mr. Gavigan. She said that one of the issues that this Town is also facing is run off and when you cover that much green space with building it just adds to the problem. She said that we have other groups in the community that would certainly have an interest in this. Mrs. Morris said that she had spoken to someone in the Garden Club today and they were very interested in what happens to the open green space in this town and suggested inviting them to the next meeting to see the plan.

Mr. Gross said, “I’m looking across the way and I see three story buildings there, four story buildings. Is there any way the school could go up one story and compact it a little more so we wouldn’t lose all this green space?” Mrs. Coniglio said that it may be a possibility but when you look west all your going to see is a huge wall. Mr. Bitzer said that Mr. Brown had asked that same question at the meeting they had with the school representatives and they said no, they were even talking about doing parking underground but they couldn’t because kindergarten had to be on the first floor.

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Mr. Spaziani said, “I vehemently object to any of this construction. I also suggest to the Town once again that if something happens where the school decides to back out of this area that we have a first right of refusal to purchase that piece of property. I suggested that once before and I think that’s

something that they should do.”

Mr. Gavigan said, “That would be good, that would be nice to get. It’s one thing to have the public school there even with the pros and cons, it’s worked well with this recreation center. You get a development in there or something and there’s no telling what you’d be facing over there, how the place would be used, that could be a big problem.”

Mr. Ochstein said, “The only thing we’ve all read about is that if they go the Four Arts is going to get this and the Day School is going to get this and I haven’t read anything about the recreation center is going to get anything. So maybe we ought to stick our nose in there and say if you go, don’t for get us.”

Mrs. Coniglio said, “And I think the Town would be making a serious error not to.”

Mrs. Agnello said, “If they do approve the expansion, the pavilion that’s going to go over here next to the walkway by the tennis courts is truly going to impact that tennis facility. I mean when we play team tennis matches its unbelievable, and that’s just with the day school noise and the kids.”

Mrs. Coniglio said, “On the other side of the street?”

Mrs. Agnello said, “Absolutely, and Ken I know your in that morning group, I mean if it’s that noisy I know some of these people will go else where to play. Because it’s just very hard to concentrate and I think it will truly impact your tennis revenues too.”

Mr. Fishman said that he didn’t feel there was one single positive to this proposed expansion. He said, “The comments Mrs. Agnello made about the buildings, the comments about greenery, you have a soccer field with the infield on it, I mean we could make up a laundry list of the problems. The parking situation is already, you know, terrible so there isn’t one positive thing. My personal feeling is we should fight it, like you said Michael, vehemently because it’s a terrible negative and it will change the total character of the whole recreation program whereas if the school weren’t here and we could have the land it would be a tremendous plus. We’re talking about the adults and more so the children of Town who use all this and grew up with it. I think it’s an extremely important issue. Mr. Fishman said that to allow the school with only 1% to 5% of resident children enrolled take precedence over the Recreation Center and it’s programs was outrageous.

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Mrs. Congilio said that when the school board came back with the proposal it was extremely important that all the commissioners attend that meeting and since it was an open meeting, if there were people that they thought would be interested, they are more than welcome to attend.

Mr. Spaziani said, “I want to make one more comment. Once this green space is gone, we’ve lost it forever.” He said that he thought there was also another issue about zoning, which may require a variance because of the land to building ratio, and felt that was a major factor in the decision also.

Mr. Ochstein felt that we need to mention that with this expansion we would lose the lacrosse field.

Mr. Brown said, "Only if we keep the baseball field. There will still be enough distance for lacrosse." Mr. Ochstein said, "Right, there will be distance but there will be a baseball diamond in the middle of it." Mrs. Coniglio said, "Or there will be a fence." Mr. Brown said, "There will be a fence approximately 15 to 20 feet behind the end of the field." Mr. Gavigan said that this could create some potential safety factors for the children.

Mrs. Coniglio asked for a motion. Mr. Fishman said, "I vote that we are totally against this proposed expansion in every way. It's not a question of a few feet here or there, it's once you have the baseball infield, you lose the soccer field, buildings, noise at the tennis there are a thousand reasons."

Mrs. Coniglio said, "So the motion is that, I move that we reject the expansion or the renovation in total? Is there a second." Mr. Spaziani said, "Here."

Mr. Ochstein said that he was not opposed to any expansion just the current proposed plan was not acceptable.

Mr. Gavigan said that we needed to add the words the conceptual plan as described to us that limits the use of the recreational facilities, the green space, safety issues in any way.

Mrs. Coniglio asked if everyone was in agreement to that motion and if there was any more discussion. Mr. Fishman asked when the baseball field was built, was it new. Mrs. Coniglio said that it was not new but had been recently renovated a few years ago.

Mr. Brown said that the last time it was renovated it was shifted and the infield was changed to grass. Mrs. Coniglio said that she recalled it had something to do with the addition they had put on the school and having to maintain a certain number of feet. Mr. Fishman said, "It's a beautiful field now, right now you have baseball, lacrosse, you have soccer."

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Mr. Bitzer said, "It would be wonderful if they could find a way to do what they have to do without impacting on the Town's recreation facilities." Mrs. Agnello said, "Absolutely." Mr. Ochstein said, "Well they're also impacting both schools." Mr. Gavigan said that this expansion adversely affects the total use of this facility.

Mrs. Coniglio said that the way the motion is now is that the commission is totally, vehemently opposed to the current conceptual expansion of the public school. She called for a vote. The motion passed unanimously.

Mrs. Coniglio said, "The second part of the issue is that in the possibility that the public school and the school board decide not to continue with the school there that we as the commission would like

to present to the council our position that the Town look strongly into acquiring that property.” Mr. Ochstein asked if they could somehow say that they didn’t want them to take the school away. Mrs. Coniglio said that was the school boards decision, all she was presenting was if they make that decision, we would like our Town Council and the Town as a whole to strongly consider purchasing that property.

Mr. Spaziani made the motion that should the school district decide to leave that facility that the Town initiate a first right of refusal so that we be first in line to purchase that piece of property or parts of that property. Seconded by Mrs. Agnello.

Mrs. Coniglio asked if there was any discussion. Mr. Ochstein said, “Well I don’t see anybody jumping up to say let’s keep the school and it’s really not our business. It’s my personal opinion the school should stay in this town but I absolutely agree with the motion.”

Mr. Gross said, “ I feel the school should stay in the Town too.”

Mrs. Congilio asked if there was any more discussion on the motion on the table which was in the event the Palm Beach County School Board does not continue to operate a school in that location that this commission strongly advises our Town and Town Council, as a first right of refusal, to investigate that purchase of the property or some parts thereof. She called for a vote, all were in favor, motion passed unanimously.

Adjournment - The meeting was adjourned at 10:30 a.m.

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**RECREATION ADVISORY COMMISSION
Record of Attendance 2002**

<u>Regular Members</u>	1/9	3/13	5/15	9/11	11/13
Gail Coniglio	P	P	P		
James Gavigan	E (legal)	E (legal)	P		
Arthur Gross	P	P	P		
Eileen Morris	P	U	P		

Larry Ochstein	E (illness)	P	P		
Allen E. Shore	E (illness)	P	E (illness)		
Stuart Shulman	P	P	E (illness)		
<u>Alternate Members</u>					
Milissa Agnello	P	P	P		
Michael Spaziani	E (illness)	P	P		
Ken Fishman	P	P	P		

LEGEND: P = Present
 E = Excused
 U = Unexcused
 A = Absent Pending Classification as "Excused" or "Unexcused"

**RECREATION ADVISORY COMMISSION
 Conflict of Interest Record 2002**

<u>Regular Members</u>	1/9	3/13	5/15	9/11	11/13
Gail Coniglio					
James Gavigan					
Arthur Gross					
Eileen Morris					

Larry Ochstein					
Allen E. Shore					
Stuart Shulman					
<u>Alternate Members</u>					
Milissa Agnello					
Michael Spaziani					
Ken Fishman					

LEGEND: X = Conflict of Interest