

Crystal Pond Park Commission

Annual Report: July 1, 2020 – June 30, 2021

2020-2021 was a very unusual, yet productive year for Crystal Pond Park. The COVID-19 pandemic had both positive and negative effects on us. The Park was closed on the July 4th weekend due to the potential for overcrowding. The beach remained closed for swimming for a number of months in 2020. Several scheduled rental events were canceled. However, gradually the restrictions were lifted. Although we have no way to measure this, by all appearances a greater number of dog walkers, hikers, kayakers, fishermen and disc golf players than usual came out and enjoyed what the park has to offer. Perhaps it was a welcomed escape from home confinement and because other avenues of recreation were unavailable.

The Commission undertook its normal maintenance activities, winterizing the Park buildings on October 24, 2020 and then reopening, cleaning and prepping the buildings for use again on April 17, 2021. Quarterly water quality testing and fire safety inspections were completed.

A new trail was established called The Old Connecticut Path Trail. A new trailhead sign and five small informational signs were installed along the trail summarizing the history of the “Old Connecticut Path” - a trail used by Native Americans and later by early settlers while traveling from Cambridge (MA) to what was to become a new settlement called “Hartford”.

Hurricane Isaias took down several trees and large branches at the Park, including the main power line, which was repaired by Eversource, and power to the Arts & Craft Building. A later storm also took down the power line to the Lakeside Cabin. Woodstock Valley Electric was hired to remove the line to the Arts & Craft Building, and replace the line and upgrade the electrical panel for the Lakeside Cabin.

Several trees around the Dining Hall were taken down by the Commission because they were either dead or dying. Some were rotten almost to the point of falling over. We hired Lindon Tree Service to cut down a very large tree leaning over the Caretaker’s Cabin, and three dead/diseased trees along the north property line at Walker Lane. We also addressed several downed trees within the Disc Golf Course.

The Commission also dug out many stumps and rocks from the Dining Hall lawn and parking lot. A section of the lawn near the Lakeside Cabin was flattened and seeded with grass. New plantings were added along the split rail fence.

With the recent complete renovation of the Dining Hall kitchen, previous exterior painting, the addition of cushioned chairs, new lighting, etc., the Commission decided that a substantial increase to our rental rates for 2021 was warranted. Rentals have been strong this year. In January, we started advertising the rental opportunities at the Park via Google Ads. Google Analytics data has shown an increased effectiveness in attracting potential renters to our website. This has

greatly increased the number of rentals, along with increased revenue, which will be used to further improve the Park. A new on-line rental application was added to our website. The website was also updated with new information regarding recent renovations at the Park.

The Commission wants to thank the Selectmen of Woodstock and Eastford for helping us address a bothersome insurance issue. After several months of discussion, CIRMA (the Towns' insurance agent) created a portal to its TULIP (Tenant User Liability Insurance Program) website to enable Park renters to easily and quickly purchase co-insurance for their events (weddings, parties, family reunions, etc.). This new feature has made it much easier for potential renters to purchase the required insurance.

While the Commission has made great gains in renovating the buildings that are of value and in constant use at the Park, there are a number of smaller buildings at the Park that have been deteriorating ever since the Boy Scouts terminated their summer camping program in 1977. These buildings were beyond repair. We thank the Woodstock Public Works Dept for helping us demolish and remove an outdoor shower stall, two outdoor latrines and three other small buildings that were an eyesore and of no value to the Park. We also thank the Eastford Public Works Dept for assisting with demolition debris cleanup and assisting in chipping downed trees.

The Commission met with the Woodstock and Eastford First Selectmen to discuss the recent inspection of the Trout Pond Dam and the need for action. The Commission internally discussed the pros and cons of breaching versus repairing the dam, and concluded that it was their recommendation to breach the dam. This recommendation was sent to the Select Boards. The Woodstock and Eastford Select Boards agreed, and in turn added \$20,000 to their LoCIP plans to fund a plan of action. This project is now under the control of the CT DEEP Dam Safety Program.

The Commission publicly thanks three Commission members who left the Commission this year (Dave Mullen, Chris Mayhew and Jim Trowbridge) for their service to the CPPC. The latter two served as Commission Chairman for several years and gave much time and effort to serving the needs of the Park.

To learn more about the Park you are welcome to visit our website at www.crystalpondpark.com.

David Barlow – Chairman