

PARKS & Recreation DEPARTMENT

Annual Report FY 2022-2023

Introduction

Mission

The mission of the Parks & Recreation Division is to provide the highest quality, cost effective preventative maintenance and upgrades to all properties owned by the City of Stamford so they are accessible, operational, and safe for all citizens, employees, and the visiting public. It is also the mission of Stamford Recreation Services to create and offer comprehensive and inclusive leisure opportunities and experiences for the youth and adult population of Stamford.

At-A-Glance

<i>Parks & Recreation - At-a-Glance</i>	
Number of Employees on Staff Now	33
Number of Vacancies in Parks & Recreation/EG Brennan GC/TCR	2
Number of Vacancies in Marinas	0
Number of Acres Maintained	900
Number of Public Parks	58
Number of Athletic Fields	22

Staff & Stats Insights

The merger of Parks & Recreation Service Division consists of a City staff of (33) full-time employees, including Director of Parks & Recreation, (2) Assistant Superintendents of Recreation, (3) Customer Service, (1) Ice Rink Manager Specialist, (1) Superintendent of Greens, (1) Administration Assistant Data Analyst, (1) Recreation Supervisor and (1) Recreation Leader, (1) Operations Foremen, (2) Landscape Specialists, (1) Marina Supervisor, (12) Park Maintenance Workers, (3) Ice Rink Operators, (1) Assistant Superintendent of Greens and (2) Groundskeepers.

The Parks & Recreation Division is responsible for the overall maintenance of 900 acres of general parkland and open space. This encompasses 58 public parks, 22 athletic fields, 4 beaches, 3 synthetic artificial turf fields, 2 marinas, 1 Ice rink and 1 municipal golf course.

Division Requirements & Responsibilities

The Parks & Recreation Division aggressively seeks the most cost-efficient pricing from outside vendors through the City's RFP and Bidding processes. These purchases include but are not limited to hardware goods, on-call emergency and non-emergency contractual services, and janitorial goods.

In FY-2022/2023, the Park & Recreation Division merger was a proactive move which included coordination with other operation divisions performing in-house repairs or assisting outside contractors with actual construction-type projects, resulting in a substantial savings to the City.

In FY-2022/2023, the Facilities and Parks Maintenance Division was part of a reorganization, which included the separation of Facilities from Parks and adding Recreation to the Parks Division. This reorganization is designed to better serve the residents for the leisure and sport activities as well as improve productivity and enhance the City's infrastructure which will ultimately give major emphasis on all City buildings for ongoing and future development.

Division Requirements

The reorganization over the last two years of the Facilities and Parks Maintenance Division has proven to be very effective and is continually being refined to be even more proficient and effective.

- Continuation of the reimbursement program for overtime costs incurred by the Division. The Division continues to bill outside organizations (as well as other inter-City departments) for services provided by the Division that are outside of their normal responsibilities. This has proven to be a very effective way to meet the needs of the various departments that we would not normally be able to provide.
- Continue to monitor the budget very closely through several self-instituted budget tracking mechanisms. This has allowed us to know the real numbers without having to rely on the outdated accounting system.
- Continue to add line items within the different budgets to improve budgetary monitoring to get historical data as to the needs of each department. This has not only improved budget knowledge but has also improved record keeping and accountability.
- Monthly budget meetings are held after six months with the main purpose of monitoring actual spending to budget.
- Performing monthly audits of the various budgets within the Division.
- Continuation of the Playground Rehabilitation Program to ensure that all City playgrounds are safe and meet all State and City regulations.
- Continuation of aggressive procurement procedures to ensure the City is getting the best pricing for all their building, fields, janitorial and park needs.

Accomplishments (Fiscal Year 2022-2023)

Parks Maintenance 2022/2023 Accomplishments

- Continuation of the Park Attendant Beach and Park Program to assist with quality-of-life issues within our parks.
- Expansion of Park Attendants to monitor northern parks to assist with quality-of-life issues within our parks.
- Lione Park playground damage from automobile accident completed and reopened for use.
- Continuation of Landscape Maintenance Program at Fort Stamford.
- Continuation of installation and construction of grills/picnic tables as part of the yearly replenishment program.
- Renovation of the men's and women's bathrooms at Cummings Beach Bathroom and Lifeguard Pavilion.
- Renovation to the tennis court at Dorothy Heroy Recreation Complex.
- Repair of the sink holes in the Kosciuszko Park parking lot.
- Implementation of the Barrett Park Master Plan.
- Upgrades to the Scalzi Park street hockey rink/pickleball courts.
- Continuation of preventative maintenance program for artificial turf fields and Scofieldtown Park.
- Continuation of maintenance and upgrades of all athletic fields to organic.
- Upgrade of bleachers at Cubeta Stadium.
- Renovation and installation of pickleball courts Citywide.
- Aerate and seed all athletic fields per the Organic Program.
- Renovation of Dorothy Heroy Little League field/dugouts.
- Renovation of Scalzi Park softball field.
- Painting of (7) grass soccer fields.
- Renovation of tennis court at Dorothy Heroy Complex.
- New cricket pitch at Lione Park artificial turf field.
- Installation of (4) safety polls to protect well head at Dorothy Heroy Park.
- Continue to remove invasive species and weeds from City parks, with emphasis on Kosciuszko, Chestnut Hill, Mianus River and Cove Island Parks.
- Installation of (200) plantings in Kosciuszko Park meadow with the Pollinator Pathways.
- Planting of (100) annuals for the Stamford Veterans Park Partnership at Veterans Parks flowerbeds.
- Install anti skateboard rods in granite walls around Veterans Park and installation of no skateboarding signs.

- Install (8) new City memorial benches in various City parks.
- Repair (3) sections of seawall at the Halloween Yacht Club Marina.
- New playground installed at Courtland Avenue.
- Continuation of press conference set-ups throughout the City for the Mayor/administration.
- Setup and coordination for City Memorial Day/Veterans Day Parades and Ceremonies.
- July 4th Firework Celebrations at Cummings Park and West Beach.
- Installed new park signs at Woodway Park and Susan Nable Park at Chestnut Hill Park.
- Installed new dedicated plaque at Carwin park.
- Cummings Park softball field fence upgrades to Fields 1 & 2.
- Vine Road Little League fence upgrade.
- Coordination of well service and pump service at Heroy Pool Complex.
- Continuation of Organic Fertilization Program for 24 athletic fields.
- Continuation of sport line painting for all soccer fields.
- Field renovations to Dorothy Heroy and Kosciuszko Park Little League fields to accommodate 50/70 dimensions.
- Hosted 2023 State Tournament Little League at Scalzi Park.
- Hosted 2023 FCIAC Championship at Cubeta Stadium.
- Continuation of park/sport lights maintenance and repair Citywide.
- Continue to work in partnership with the following groups: Pollinator Pathways of Stamford, DSSD, Czescik Park and Harbor Conservancy, Friends of Mianus River Park and the Stamford Veterans Park Partnership.

Forestry 2022/2023 Accomplishments

- Planted (5) trees at Lione Park for Arbor Day celebration.
- Tree City USA recognition for 36 years.
- Planted (12) Trees with the Shippan Point Association.
- Planted (16) Trees with the Shippan Point Garden Club.
- Continued to complete work order requests in a timely and productive manner.
- Assisted other departments, especially Board of Education for tree removal at their various locations.
- Completed an Aerial Rescue Safety Training Program for staff.
- Continued Citywide Tree Planting Program.
- Continued working with Pollinator Pathways volunteers.
- Worked in conjunction with Eversource Energy removing dead City trees in proximity to power lines.
- Transplanted several plants and grasses from the entrance of Katrina Mygatt Recycle Center to Czescik Park. Added soil, edging and new plants.
- Continued working with the Riverbend Neighborhood Association at Horan Park planting trees and trimming/removing dead trees.
- Removed (5) dead ash trees and replanted 3 red maples at Carwin Park for safety and enhancement.
- Maintained bucket truck operation certification.
- Filled vacant tree climber position.

Marinas 2022/2023 Accomplishments

- Built (7) finger docks and installed (9) finger docks.
- Cove Island Park Marina dredging Phase 1 is completed.
- Repaired numerous main docks in both Cove Island Park and Czescik Park marinas.
- Repaired and painted (4) lifeguard chairs.
- Replaced (5) more chains with piling hoops at Cove Island Park marina.
- Installed and removed (9) swim buoys and swim lines at (3) beaches.
- Replaced 200' of water line on the bulkhead at Czescik Park marina.
- Repaired numerous broken water lines and valves at both Cove Island Park and Czescik Park marinas.
- Pumped out numerous sinking boats and assisted with (3) sunken boats.

- Continued replacing broken/rotted boards on the main and finger docks at Czescik and Cove Island Park marinas.
- Designed/built and installed a new lifeguard chair at Cove Island Park beach.
- Assisted with any emergencies as they arose with City marinas.

Next Fiscal Year's Goals

2023/2024 Goals

The following Initiatives and goals for the Parks & Recreation Department have been set for the upcoming fiscal year:

Division Wide 2023/2024 Goals

- Continuation/Implementation of the Parks Strategic Plan.
- Expanding and upgrading fields and game courts Citywide.
- Continuation of creating and expanding all-inclusive leisure opportunities, camps, and programs.
- Continuation of implementing and managing operating budgets within the City of Stamford new financial system.
- Transparency within new Parks & Recreation website for all programs activities and live calendar.

Parks Maintenance 2023/2024 Goals

- Continue to work in partnership with the following groups: Pollinator Pathways of Stamford, DSSD, Czescik Park and Harbor Conservancy, Friends of Mianus River Park and the Stamford Veterans Park Partnership.
- Completion of the Sleepy Hollow Park swing installation which includes access and safety fencing.
- Kosciuszko Park walking path lights to be updated to remove harbor safety hazard.
- Cordination of volunteer groups within our parks and expanding Friends Groups to assist within all parks.
- Continuation of City Construction Project update meetings for all park upgrades.
- Renovate and install new infield at Chestnut Hill Park Little League field.
- Install new backstop at Cubeta Stadium.
- Continuation of Organic Program year #3
- Renovation of (12) tennis Game courts at Scalzi Park.
- Turf upgrades for Lione Park and West Beach turf fields.
- Implementation of the Barret Park Master Plan and construction.
- Implementation of the continuation of Cumming Beach pavilion upgrades, beach promenade and entry circle improvements.
- Renovation of Boccuzzi and Kosciuszko Park bathrooms and maintenance buildings.
- Renovate the Conti Building bathroom facility.
- Renovate the Bocce Courts at Scalzi Park.
- Renovations to the Stamford Dog Park at Courtland Avenue
- Upgrades to Carwin and Hatch Field Park spray parks.
- Continuation and installation of new grills and park benches within Citywide parks.
- Continuation of City of Stamford Memorial Bench Program.
- Continuation of invasive species and weed removal program for City parks.
- Install new backstop at Cubeta stadium.

Forestry 2023/2024 Goals

- Hire additional licensed Tree Climber/Arborist to improve productivity and efficiency of the Tree Crew.
- Continuation of Forestry Certification for EHAP (Electrical Hazardous Awareness Program).
- Continuation of planting trees Citywide.
- Assist other departments, especially the Board of Education for tree removal at their various locations to keep expenditures at a minimum.
- Complete an Aerial Rescue Safety Training Program for all Forestry employees.
- Continuation of our Citywide Tree Planting Program.
- Continue working with Pollinator Pathways volunteers.

Marinas 2023/2024 Goals

- Continuation of upgrades for Czescik Park and Cove Island Park marinas.
- Reopening of new boat ramp at West Beach.
- Continuation to build/replace finger docks at City marinas.
- Continue to replace broken/rotted dock boards.
- Continue to replace piling chains with piling hoops.
- Replace bathroom fixtures at Czescik Park marina bathrooms.
- Cummings and Cove Island Park marina house roof replacements.
- Continue to build new lifeguard chairs (new design) to replace existing chairs and ladders.
- Assist with dredging phases of Stamford harbors and marinas.

RECREATION SERVICES

Annual Report FY 2022-2023

Introduction

Mission

It is the mission of the Stamford Recreation Services to create and offer comprehensive and inclusive leisure opportunities and experiences for the youth and adult population of Stamford.

At-A-Glance

Aquatics - At-a-Glance	
Learn to Swim Program participants	266

Recreation Administered Adult Leagues - At-a-Glance	
Registered softball teams	165
Registered Volleyball teams	120
Registered Coed Beach Volleyball teams	101
Registered Kickball teams	57
Men's Basketball Teams	8
Tournaments	24

E. Gaynor Brennan - Trends			
	2020-21	2021-22	2022-2023
Players	43,688	39,071	42,189
Player revenue	\$1,275,667	\$1,188,940	\$1,262,134
Increase/decrease in player revenue at Brennan from prior year	\$349,735	\$86,727	\$73,194

Youth Programming - At-a-Glance 2020/2021	
Activity Camps	1
Day Camps	4
Specialty Camps	40
Special Needs Children participating	70
Playground Program	1

Recreation - Trends					
Years	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
Children participating in all summer camps & Specialty Programs.	3,949	1044*	2087*	3257*	4084

**Number reflects reduced programming during summer due to canceled camps because of the ongoing COVID-19 Pandemic. Also the use of one less site for summer camps due to school construction.*

Staff & Stats Insights

Aquatics

The Aquatics Learn to Swim Program had a total of two hundred and sixty-six (266) participants for the FY 2022/2023. The Aquatics team also supervised the four (4) Stamford public beaches. In total (35) Aquatics personnel contribute to the safety and instruction of Aquatics participants and public swimming. FY 2022/2023 the Aquatics program collected \$37,106.

Adult Leagues

We also offered annual Adult Sports Leagues in FY 2022/2023 which had one hundred and sixty-five (165) USA registered softball teams, Spring/Summer and Fall season. We hosted twenty-seven (27) Competitive National and Local Charity Tournaments throughout the year.

Our May Labor Fall, Winter and Spring Indoor Volleyball Leagues were able run with a total of one hundred twenty (120) teams for the year. Our Men's Indoor Basketball League had eight (8) teams for the year. Our Spring/Summer FY 2022/2023 Coed Beach Volleyball Leagues had one hundred and one (101) teams participate as well as Kickball we had a total of fifty-seven (57) teams participate.

Recreation administered Adult leagues and contracted sports programs collected \$521,180 in FY 2022/2023 which was an increase of \$82,220 from FY 2021/2022.

Terry Conners Rink

As a newly created Special Revenue Fund Terry Conners Rink (TCR) now must raise revenue via user fees to cover all its direct and indirect expenses. This includes capital upgrades. TCR completed the 2022/2023 fiscal year slightly higher in revenue than the previous year (\$1,163,000 in FY 2021/2022 vs \$1,177,000 in FY 2022/2023). (*Not included in overall revenue was \$53,000 of Board of Education ice time for the two local high school ice hockey teams practice and game ice.)

Terry Conners Rink continues to offer residents year-round public skating sessions, open hockey sessions, freestyle sessions for figure skaters and a strong learn to skate lesson program.

Our summer camp experienced an upturn with (456) campers over 9 weeks (a record for us) bringing in \$137,000 in revenue. TCR's Learn to Skate Program experienced an uptick also as we had (928) skaters (\$130,000) in FY 2022/2023 vs 820 (\$102,000) in FY 2021/2022. We look to improve upon those figures this coming year.

The Stamford Youth Hockey Association is based at our rink and begins practice the first week of August. Youth games can be attended free of charge most weekends from September through February. Two high school hockey teams also call TCR home, the Westhill / Stamford Boys team, and the Stamford / Westhill / Staples Girls team. Both teams return to the ice in December after winning the 2022/2023 campaigns. Games begin the first week of December and continue through February. Admission is \$8.00 per game. For viewing the youth hockey or high school hockey schedule check www.tcrink.com for dates and times.

Our local Southern CT Synchronized Skating Club hosted the Synchro Open (a synchronized skating competition) after a two-year hiatus. The competition will be December 2nd & 3rd this year.

Our biggest challenge remains revenue exceeding expenses in a world where utility expenses are at their highest ever! We continue to offer the most value for the customers' dollars compared to all area ice rinks. The rink may seek nominal increases to counter expenses. A new flat roof installation in FY 2023/2024 may lead to solar panels which could defray expenses; time will tell.

E. Gaynor Brennan Municipal Golf Course

E. Gaynor Brennan Golf Course came out of the pandemic with many challenges. The golf course experienced a "COVID spike" in play in FY 2020 since golf is one of the few recreational activities that one could do while being outdoors and socially distanced. The challenge was to retain those players while other recreation was opening back up. E. Gaynor Brennan experienced 42,189 player rounds in FY 2022 compared with 39,071 rounds in FY 2021. There was a slight increase in player rounds. FY 2022 had more than the budgeted \$38,000, approached our record COVID numbers and represented a 16 per cent increase over the 10-year average.

Value remains the governing factor in driving the business. In an increasingly competitive golf course market, the goal at E. Gaynor Brennan is to provide exceptional value for the money. Improving course conditions and customer service helps keep E. Gaynor Brennan relevant in the market. The course re-routing of a couple of years ago and 10-minute tee time intervals improved the pace of play resulting in customer satisfaction. A capital project for a new irrigation system is in the planning stages. Improved irrigation will result in better overall turf quality overall improving the player experience. Also in the pre-planning stages are renovated bunkers and new cart paths which will bring E. Gaynor Brennan Golf Course to the forefront of places to play in lower Fairfield County.

E. Gaynor Brennan is committed to helping create a greener Stamford. Two of our gas-powered utility vehicles were replaced with zero emission electric vehicles. The goal is to convert to electric wherever possible, as technology allows.

The golf course did not raise rates amidst increasing utility costs and supply chain issues. The increase in expenses was offset by strong fiscal management and increased player revenue. Overall, E. Gaynor Brennan was profitable adding to our Fund Balance to pay for future capital improvements.

Summer Day Camps

We offered (7) out of the (8) camp programs we traditionally offer but could not offer a summer camp at Still meadow School once again due to summer construction. The summer camp programs that we held were one (1) Activity Camp at Newfield Schools, and (4) Day Camps at Davenport, Star Center Camp, Westover, Heroy, (1) playground at Barrett Park and a Pre-School Camp at Roxbury School. Continued activities at all sites varied and included sports, games, crafts, color wars, camp Olympics, themes, health programs, reading, Book Mobile, camp shows and other special events. Also scheduled were various entertainment events such as, Foam Party, comedians, Animal Embassy, magicians and more. Summer camps employ (145) local youth and adults and supervised (1,012) children up (28) participants from 2022. With the loss of Stillmeadow Camp we once again were down (165) spaces for children plus we had an overall wait list of (276) children looking for camp spots. Twenty-four (24) of the staff members were special education staff to work with the (63) special needs children in camp.

Summer camps in FY 2019/2020 collected \$562,372.74; in 2020/2021 collected \$641,781; in FY 2021/2022 collected \$641,781 (continued pandemic guidelines by the state) and \$664,652 in FY2022/2023.

We also had sixty-three (63) special needs children in summer programs with one-on-one Para Educators available allowing them the ability to participate in all the camp activities on a daily basis. In all, (4,084) children participated in our wide variety of summer camps offered this summer, which is up (827) participants from the 2022 summer.

Special Programs

Special programs included the very popular Birthday Parties, the 22nd Annual Hayride with Santa at Cove Island Park, Halloween Event, and Ice Cream with the Easter Bunny. We also offered a wide range of Friday night programs for youth and teens at the Star Center and once again ran a full season of Friday night ski trips for teens during the winter months.

Preschool Programs

Pre-school and after school programs for children ages 6 months to 15-years-old as well many contracted vendor enrichment programs remain very popular at the Recreation Star Center with wait lists. We also brought back adult trips for the first time since the pandemic began and offered two casino trips. We will also look to be offering more trips in the upcoming year.

After School Club

The after-school club, five days per week that currently accommodates (41) children from 2:30pm - 6:00pm at the Star Center has a waiting list of (53) children. We continue to offer The Stay and Play Preschool for children ages 3 to 4 at the Star Center. The program runs three days a week for 3-year-olds and four days a week for the 4-year-olds from 9:00am - 12:15pm. The program follows the public-school calendar and accommodates 16 children. We have also added a lunch bunch program two days a week to the Stay and Play Preschool extending the day until 1:30pm for the 4- year-olds. This allows children to be better prepared for the start of kindergarten the following fall. Also, we continued to expand our 40-minute preschool science, art and gym programs for children ages 6 months to 4-years-old in the mornings. We also continue to expand our youth & teen dance, ballet, fitness, and music programs for children ages 2 to 14, increased the number of children's technology programs in the science and computer areas and expanded the various arts programs that we offer. We continue to see an increase in special education children participating in after school and vacation programs and have one-on-one Para Educators available for those that need one.

Another addition now that we have our own building is we offer one day programs on days off from school during the school year for parents that need childcare. These programs range from science, art, cooking fitness or just fun day camp for children grades K-5

Special Vendor Programs

For the FY 2022/2023 year we continue to work with contracted vendors to offer as many programs as possible that are in demand from families and residents. We also are seeing a demand for after-school care programs and school vacation day programs from residents as well as programs for homeschool children which we have been offering.

Division Requirements & Responsibilities

The Recreation Services Division provides direct leadership and coordination of services to numerous youth and adult sports leagues such as tennis, baseball, basketball, soccer, football, indoor and beach volleyball, kickball, and softball, as well as conducts programs in arts, STEM, music, swimming, youth sports, summer day camps and special interest activities. Recreation Services manages lifeguards at City beaches, the Heroy pool and the Westhill High School pool, and schedules all City Park athletic fields for community-based youth/adult sports leagues and tournaments issuing 26,500 field permits annually.