



GORDON OLIVER  
CHAIRMAN

STATE OF CONNECTICUT – COUNTY OF TOLLAND  
INCORPORATED

# TOWN OF ELLINGTON

## Parks and Recreation Commission

31 ARBOR WAY P.O. BOX 187  
ELLINGTON, CONNECTICUT 06029-0187

THOMAS BOSCARINO  
CYNTHIA COSTANZO  
KEVIN HAYES  
ROBERT LAREW  
THOMAS STAUFFER  
SHAY DRAKE  
CHRISTOPHER WEITZ  
JENNIFER MULLIN

### Parks & Recreation Commission Minutes of the Special Meeting Tuesday, June 21, 2016 8:30 pm, 31 Arbor Way

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Cynthia Costanzo, Jennifer Mullin, Thomas Boscarino, Shay Drake, Kevin Hayes, Tom Stauffer, Chris Weitz

**OTHERS PRESENT:** Robert Tedford, Director, Parks and Recreation  
Julia Connor, Administrative Secretary, Parks and Recreation  
David Giordano, Volunteer Coach, Parks & Recreation  
John Hintze, Ellington Parent

I. Call to Order: The meeting was called to order at 8:30 by Thomas Boscarino

#### II. Executive Session

##### A. For the Purpose of Performance Review Regarding a Volunteer Coach

- a. For the record, David Giordano, Lacrosse Coach, was notified of an Executive Session and has requested that the matter be discussed in an open meeting.
- b. The meeting is taking place due to an issue brought to attention by John Hintze regarding the alleged behavior at a lacrosse game by Coach Giordano.
- c. John disclosed his experience as a licensed psychologist, professor at UMass and a youth coach to provide background to his insight into the alleged incident.
- d. Thursday, June 16th, the Junior Boys lacrosse team was playing in a first playoff game against Somers, who was dominant and the better team, as stated by John. During a period of goalscoring by Somers, John claims that Dave loudly told his child that “those four goals are on you,” which John felt was inappropriate and humiliating. He stated that this phrase was used multiple times leading up to halftime, causing his son, Johnnie, to begin crying on the field. John says that he told Johnnie that they could leave at halftime, but Johnnie chose to stay for the remainder of the game. He said that Johnnie told him that during halftime, other comments were made regarding his performance, but he did not provide specifics. After a missed shot by Somers later on in the game, John stated that Dave told Johnnie “you’re lucky, that would have been the fifth [goal on you].” John stated that Dave’s main criticism was in regards to Johnnie not properly clearing the ball, which was not practiced all season. He believes that the repeated, public

comments made by Dave towards his son fall under the category of abuse; it was demoralizing, humiliating and belittling, in his opinion.

- e. Tom Boscarino took a moment to ensure that John Hintze was properly introduced to all members and individuals present at the meeting. Shay asked if there had been an assistant coach present at the game in question. The assistant coach, John Tait, was present on the sidelines but he has not offered insight into the incident.
- f. David Giordano began by stating that when he begins any coaching season, he has three rules he explains to his team: No talking when the coach is talking, when he asks a question he expects a “yes coach” or a “no coach”, and that the most important thing is that they give their best effort, and that he will accept nothing less than their best effort. He stated that his emphasis is not on winning, but on playing their best and giving 100% effort. Dave admitted that they do not work on clearing during practice, due in part to a lack of time, but that his direction to Johnnie in regards to clearing the ball is to always clear to the outside of the field to his team’s attacking players. The first time Johnnie threw a clear to the middle of the field during the Somers game, Dave says that he told him to remember to throw the ball to the outside of the field, not down the middle. The second time it happened, Dave says that he took a timeout and said to Johnnie “don’t forget, you have to throw the ball down the alley, not the middle of the field, because they’ll intercept it.” The third time it happened, Dave says that his comment was “three times you have thrown the ball into the middle of the field and three times they’ve scored.” A couple of minutes later, the same type of clear occurred and Somers scored again. Dave says he repeated his previous comment, adding that it was the fourth time. At halftime, Dave saw that Johnnie was emotional and considered taking him out of the game because he was not following his direction and because he seemed to be willfully disregarding his instruction, but he decided to keep him in the game. At this point, Dave disagreed that the comment was made that he told Johnnie that he was lucky that Somers missed a shot, and he says that there was no further commentary of the plays. Dave said that later that night, as well as the following day, he tried to reach out to John to check up on Johnnie, but did not receive a response from John. Dave said that he was frustrated with what he took as a clear disregard of his instruction. He does admit that his instruction was audible and vocal, as it is a large field. Dave asked John if the facts of the game that he presented were incorrect and John said that the facts presented were correct. With that, Dave concluded his presentation of the issue.
- g. Cyndi, acknowledging that both have experience at a youth volunteer level, asked what both of them thought of the policy that is expected of them and of all coaches at this level. Dave admitted to not knowing of any set Parks and Rec policy but reiterated his previous focus and emphasis on effort and improvement as opposed to winning and losing. John’s understanding of the town policy on youth sports is that the town provides an array of recreational activities geared towards a healthy development of children in physical and social aspects of sports. She also asked Dave if he is considering removing Johnnie from the game at

halftime was based on his performance or if there were other factors. Dave stated that he considered it due to performance but that he chose to leave him in the game because he felt that pulling him would cause him to become further distraught, which he did not want. Cyndi asked if children at this age were recommended to stick to one position or if they tried different positions, and Dave said that players are versatile at this age and most of them experience different positions. Cyndi asked John if his son had chosen to be a goalie, which John confirmed. He took a moment to state that he sees a difference between coaching and teaching, and that in his opinion, if a player is not following what is being coached, then he is not being properly taught, and that if the behavior is not being modified, alternate approaches ought to be taken. Kevin asked if the situation had occurred during a regular season game and if it had been a pattern throughout the season, and Dave said he had prior conversations with John in regards to his son not clearing the ball up the center of the field. John stated that during more evenly matched games, clearing had not been a problem, only during games where they were overmatched. It was agreed upon that Coach Dave's alleged behavior during the June 16<sup>th</sup> game had not been an issue that had been continuing throughout the season. Cyndi asked if there had been a pattern of bad decisions by the players followed by consistent verbal remarks by Dave. John said that his son had not been singled out and had not been the target of any criticism throughout the season. His issue with this alleged incident was the repeated nature and frequency of the criticism over the course of that game, to the point of his child breaking down emotionally. He stated that his goal is not to bring Dave down or revoke his coaching privileges in any way; he wants it to be a learning experience for both the coach and the Recreation Department. He wishes to see coaching styles match the age level of the team, as well as for parents to feel comfortable expressing their opinions.

- h. Kevin Hayes commented on the discrepancy of verbiage between the two accounts. Tom asked if John himself heard what he claims was said, which he did. Dave believed his own recollection to be true. Jen Mullin had been at the game and did not recall overhearing anything being said regarding Johnnie's performance at the game; she did remember hearing Dave say "throw it to the alley, Johnnie." She also recollects seeing Johnnie smash his stick into the ground, defeated, after a goal. She brought up the question of whether Johnnie was crying over Dave's commentary or because of the position he was in during that game, with the score being driven up. John said that Johnnie had been "lit up" previously in the season but has never reacted in the manner in which he did during the game in question, leading him to believe that the frustration was not a result of the score. Dave expressed that he was also frustrated during the game, as he had, in his opinion, been disregarded by his player. It was agreed by the Commission that they would not be able to definitively determine what was said, and that John and Dave both believe what they heard and said was accurate. Cyndi stated that the importance was rectifying the situation in a way that would prevent similar issues from arising moving forward, and that educating future

volunteer coaches needs to be a priority, as the majority of coaches are untrained parent volunteers. Chris Weitz asked if there was a backup goalie, and Dave stated that there was a game where another player stepped in when Johnnie was sick. Chris asked whether, after the second occurrence of a miscleared ball during the game, Dave could have substituted him out to address the clearing errors in a different manner. Dave stated that while it was an excellent point, due to his position as goalie, a quick substitution really isn't feasible as it is with other position players. He also stated that he welcomes parents' thoughts, opinions and suggestions, and that he always needs to be mindful of coaching to his audience. He made it a point to state that his intent was never to belittle or humiliate Johnnie during the game. Shay asked Dave about his coaching certification, which is required at the high school level and is geared at that level. However, the majority of youth town coaches are volunteers who have no psychological training of what kind of behaviors are appropriate at different age levels and that such training would be beneficial moving forward. Dave also stated that open communication between parents and coaches is another important point of emphasis.

- i. Tom Boscarino summarized that the issue that arose at the game was not resolved between the coach and parent and that it was then formally brought to the Commission. Having heard both sides, and with both parties having been asked questions by each Commission member, it was stated by Mr. Hintze that he would be satisfied by an acknowledgement, via email to the parents of the team, by the Recreation Department that there was an issue during that game and that it will be something that the Recreation Department will address in moving forward. This was the first time this idea had been brought up in the meeting. The second thing he would like to see is someone from the state or protective services lead a short session on emotional abuse, and the various occurrences that can be considered as such, for all coaches. He wants to raise awareness among all coaches of how children may react to such kinds of "error corrections." He stated that his intention is to not see Dave removed from his position as a coach in the future. Chris Weitz stated that there may be further discussion into the matter, but it was agreed that the matter was settled for the purposes of the current open discussion. The Commission agreed to continue the conversation of planning sensitivity training for future coaches and looking into utilization of currently offered programs and material.

### III. NEW BUSINESS

#### A. Review Current Guidelines Regarding Special Events

- a. With the new website, there is a new facility request system. An increased number of requests to rent town facilities are being submitted through the system, as opposed to a few previously being directly presented to Bob via phone or email requests. It is being brought to the Commission with a recommendation to form a consistent policy in regards to these requests.
- b. Jen feels that usage of the pavilion is a reasonable request, but that the fields should not be readily available. Tom believes that fields/courts should not be open

to outside organizations, as a general rule. Town residents, organizations and events should be given precedence. Bob will draft a formal policy and send to commission members for review.

IV. ADJOURNMENT:

MOVED (BOSCARINO), SECONDED (COSTANZO), AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY TO ADJOURN THE MEETING AT 10:23 PM.

Submitted by: Julia Connor, Administrative Secretary, Parks and Recreation