

New Haven Board of Park Commissioners

Meeting No. 1464

Zoom Conference Meeting

February 16, 2022

New Haven, CT 06513

Present: President Belowsky, Commissioners Carl Babb, Harvey Feinberg, Ernie Santiago, Hector Torres, Kevin Walton; Alder Salvatore DeCola; Anna Pickett, Chris Ozyck, Colleen Murphy-Dunning, Patricia Wallace, Will Klein
Staff: Deputy Director William Carone, Director Gwen Williams, Tariq Dasent, Katherine Jacobs, Giovanni Zinn

- I. Minutes of Meeting #1463: Motion to approve Minutes of Meeting 1463. Motion Seconded.** President David Belowsky, Commissioners Carl Babb, and Hector Torres voted to approve. (Commissioners Harvey Feinberg, Ernie Santiago, and Kevin Walton had not yet joined.) **Closed.**
- II. Treasurer's Report: Motion to approve Treasurer's Report. Motion Seconded.** President Belowsky, Commissioners Babb, Torres, and Ernie Santiago voted to approve. (Commissioners Feinberg and Walton had not yet joined.) **Closed.**
- III. Annual Election of Officers: Motion to approve the slate of officers. Motion Seconded.** President Belowsky, Commissioners Babb, Torres, and Santiago voted to approve. (Commissioners Feinberg and Walton had not yet joined.) **Closed.**
- IV. New Business:**

Park Score Presentation – Colleen Murphy, Katherine Jacobs, & Will Klein

Urban Resources Initiative, the City of New Haven, and Trust for Public Land undertook a new initiative to track the inventory of city parks. Park Score is a national ranking of the 100 largest cities. Cities use Park Score to make a case for park investments and guide local improvement efforts. Although New Haven is not included in the 100 largest cities the methodology was applied to answer a couple of important questions.

There were 136 sites, over 2,000 amenities, and over 1,000 acres that were surveyed. State Parks, Preserves from Gather New Haven, public schoolyards, and community green spaces were also included in the Parks Score. Acreage, access, equity, investment, and amenities are five different metrics reviewed across a city's park system. Each category is scored on a scale from 0 – 100 (which can be viewed as percentiles). The City of New Haven results are:

- **Access** (percent of people within a 10-minute walk to a park) – 96%. New Haven is one of the best in the country.
- **Acreage** – 36% which is the national average. Driven by New Haven's smaller parks.
- **Investment** – 35% Funding is around \$77 per person per year. There is less funding going towards parks in New Haven than in most cities in the country on a per-person basis.
- **Amenities** (mapped out distribution by acreage) – 65%. Neighborhoods with a higher percentage of people of color have half as much park space as those that are mostly white.

This data will be used to get the maximum value out of the resources the city does have, distribute them equitably, and ensure park assets are serving the community. An example is Kimberly Field. Kimberly Field is just under 9 acres and is not used often due to a lack of relevant amenities, cleanliness issues, and safety. Kimberly Field can transform into a park

that is used by the community with funding. Regarding maintenance Deputy Director Carone stated he will work with Katherine Jacobs, the commissioners, and URI so they can create and design features that will lower maintenance demands. This should help with all parks getting the proper maintenance they deserve.

Commissioner Torres questioned why baseball and softball fields were not mentioned on the amenities list. Colleen Murphy stated although it was not shown there is data for baseball and softball fields. President Belowsky asked why the golf course was not included. Carone stated the focus was on employee maintenance responsibility and since the golf course is not maintained by the Parks Dept it was not included. Commissioner Santiago asked if amenities were labeled as functional and non-functional in the report. Murphy stated yes. Patricia Wallace asked if any consideration was given to a community-based planning process to look at all this data and create a plan. Colleen stated as a first step the results were given out in a community meeting in October. President Belowsky believes the funding per person (\$77) is low and should be addressed. Commissioner Feinberg asked what a reasonable spending figure would be to aim for in the City of New Haven. Will Klein stated they do not give those kinds of suggestions however they provide data on other cities which can be used as a guide. Klein pointed out other cities receive private funding, so this is not something the city has to figure out alone.

V. Old Business:

Historical Marker Installation

President Belowsky asked if the sign would be permanent and what would be on the sign. Carone said yes and shared an image of the sign. **Motion to approve sign at the beginning of the Farmington Canal Heritage Trail. Seconded.** Commissioner Santigo asked why there wasn't a vote at the last meeting. Commissioner Torres stated there was not a quorum. President Belowsky stated signs are not usually added in the parks. Commissioner Babb asked if the sign is necessary. Carone thinks the sign will be good as it will provide history to people using the trail. President Belowsky asked who wanted the sign. Carone stated the State Historic District for CT, the Mayor, and the federal government want the sign. Carone suggested inviting them back next month. **Commissioner Feinberg withdrew his motion. Tabled until next month.**

VI. Director's Report Parks & Public Works:

- Currently in winter maintenance mode
- Attention to hard surfaces (cleanups) such as tennis courts and basketball courts
- Hiring seasonals
- Will send the commissioners April volunteer cleanups
- Thankful to Chris Ozyck and his team for helping with clean-up.
- City bench lease will be up in a couple of months.

Director's Report Youth & Recreation:

- Applications are out for the Summer 2022 program
- In the process of hiring 2 park rangers
- The Black History dinner giveaway will be held on February 23rd from 12 pm – until food runs out. There will also be testing and vaccination available.

Meeting Adjourned: 6:35 PM

Minutes submitted by: Tariq Dasent, Executive Administrative Assistant to Parks & Public Works

Next Meeting: March 16, 2022

Location: Zoom