

New Haven Board of Park Commissioners

Meeting No. 1468

Zoom Conference Meeting

June 15, 2022

New Haven, CT 06513

Present: President Belowsky, Commissioners Carl Babb, Ernie Santiago, Hector Torres, Kevin Walton; Alder Jose Crespo, Alder Carmen Rodriguez, Alder Steven Winters; Javier Ortiz
Absent: Commissioner Harvey Feinberg
Staff: Director Jeff Pescosolido, Deputy Director William Carone, Director Gwen Williams, Deputy Director Catherine Schroeter, Rebecca Bombero, Katherine Jacobs, Tariq Dasent

I. Minutes of Meeting #1467: Motion to approve Minutes of Meeting 1467. Motion Seconded. Unanimously approved. Closed.

II. Treasurer's Report: Motion to approve Treasurer's report. Motioned Seconded.

President Belowsky stated there is a large balance in the Pardee Flower Account and 10 % of the balance needs to be spent. Commissioner Carl Babb questioned why the money needed to be spent. President Belowsky stated if the account grew too large some of that money would have to go to the city. Katherine Jacobs questioned what the funds were restricted to and if they applied to any public space in New Haven or only parks. Rebecca Bombero stated in addition to funding the Horticulturist, the Pardee Flower Account is for all things beautiful in New Haven which has been interpreted as all things flowers and gardens in the parks.
Unanimously approved. Closed.

III. New Business:

506 Winchester Ave Park Improvements – Cathy Schroeter

Cathy Schroeter presented improvements to 506 Winchester Ave Park which LCI committed to turning over to the Parks Department. The community requested a time lock on the gate, security lighting, and cameras. The gate will be locked during off hours. Commissioner Babb asked who would clean the park. Schroeter stated LCI set aside funding for the improvements however maintenance will be the responsibility of the Parks Department. President Belowsky asked if there was room for a splash pad. Schroeter stated there is no room and the community never requested a splash pad. Commissioner Babb asked if this was a finished product or a product that needed to be finished. Schroeter responded it is a finished product to the community because they gave their input. Commissioner Ernie Santiago questioned how big the stone climber would be, what the age group was, and what material was it made of. Jacobs stated the rocks are specially fabricated rocks made by a playground manufacturer. The rock is made from concrete with stucco surfacing to give it a natural rock texture. The rock is just a couple of feet high and will be surrounded by wood chip safety surfacing. All the play equipment in this proposal is in accordance with best practices and required safety standards.

President Belowsky asked what is next to the lot. Schroeter stated to the right is a rental with a bar under it and on the other side is a housing unit structure. Commissioner Santiago stated when the plan was originally presented, commissioners were told the bar was closed. Schroeter stated she knew it was closed for COVID but was not aware of it being closed now. Schroeter stated the community is aware of its presence and is in favor of the playground. Commissioner Kevin Walton asked if this project would be impacted if the Kensington project was held up. Schroeter stated no, this project was moving forward once approval was received from the commissioners. Commissioner Walton asked when will the park be built. Schroeter stated the project would start in 2023. Commissioner Babb asked if any member of the committee had

concerns with the bar and the park being so close. Schroeter stated concerns did come up regarding the bar and the liquor store down the street. However, concern faded when it was noticed the bar and the park would not be active at the same time. Jacobs suggested closing the parks in the evening when the bar opens. Commissioner Babb pointed out that bars open at 5 o'clock and that would be an ideal time for children to play at the park. Schroeter stated the community was concerned and noticed bar activity did not begin until 9 pm. There has been more police presence and the community was informed they would not move forward until they were comfortable with the park being where it is. President Belowsky asked if a wooden fence would be better on the side of the bar. Schroeter stated they do plan on putting a wooden fence on that side. Commissioner Santiago does not think a wooden fence is sufficient. Commissioner Santiago asked if this was a time-sensitive matter as he would like more information and would like to vote next month. Schroeter stated it does not have to be voted on tonight. Commissioner Santiago stated he would reach out to Alder Winters to voice his concerns. Commissioner Walton would like to have the Alders present at the next meeting to answer questions. **Tabled.**

Hannah's Dream Improvements – Katherine Jacobs

President Belowsky asked when Hannah's dream was built. Rebecca Bombero stated it was done in the late '90s. There was a safety surface upgrade in 2014 or 2015 at the twenty-year mark. Jacobs stated there were always issues with keeping sand in the sand area. The Goodwill Foundation and the group that provided the original donation for Hannah's Dream have found some extra funds. They reached out and asked if there were any improvements that could be done. Jacobs put together a proposal to replace the sand with engineered fiber wood, replace the diggers with a multi-use ADA-accessible spinner, and use ADA rubber mats on top of the engineered wood fibers to provide wheelchair access to the spinner. This would be funded mostly by the donation and a couple of thousand dollars of park's capital. Commissioner Santiago asked when this would be done if it is approved. Jacobs stated she is hoping it will be done by the fall, but it depends on the lead time for the spinner. Jacobs does not need approval however since it is a big improvement, she did want to run it by the commissioners.

Rink Rate Schedule Proposal – Rebecca Bombero

A market analysis of fee rates was conducted, and New Haven is well below the market for ice time and rentals. Would like to come closer in line with the market to ensure our Enterprise Fund which maintains the facility and keeps the ice rink off the tax rolls remain successful and robust.

- New Haven is charging residents \$330 and non-residents \$450 whereas the current market is much closer to \$500- \$600. Our public skating rates are significantly below the market as well.
- There is abuse of the resident rate. Bombero proposed maintaining a resident rate at less of a discount but also having Youth & Recreation validate teams like what they do to youth fee waivers.
- The operator suggested all children under five with the purchase of an adult should be free and delete the under 18 rates as that is hard to implement.
- A senior member of the Advisory Board suggested adjusting the senior rate from \$3 to \$5.

Commissioner Hector Torres asked if any money was made last year renting the rink. Bombero stated the audit has not been finalized but the skating rink was revenue positive for the year. Anticipating next year will be better as 10% of all concessions revenue, the monthly base rate, and the percentage of revenue will be included. Commissioner Torres asked where the money goes. Bombero stated it goes to the Enterprise Fund which can only be spent on the facility. Commissioner Babb asked if there were any problems with parking. Bombero stated the gate will go in this summer. **Motion to approve. Seconded.** Commissioner Walton would like to

know what the use would be for New Haven residents, especially young people aside from field trips or the hockey program. Director Gwen Williams stated Wonderland of Ice has been very successful and very interactive at reaching out to New Haven communities. One of the biggest issues has been the unfinished concession stand. This has not allowed Youth & Recreation to do more activities at the Rink. There was an event hosted by Bauer that taught 40 sixth and seventh graders how to skate and the program was very successful. Commissioner Walton asked Williams if there was a number she was looking for when they return in the fall. Williams stated she does not have a designated number but will have a discussion with everyone to see how to expand. Commissioner Walton wants the people of New Haven to experience the beautiful rink to which Commissioner Torres agrees. Bombero stated next season there will be a full point of sale system which will better track resident vs. non-resident rates. There was terrific attendance this year however it was a little hard to track resident vs non-resident. President Belowsky asked if the resident rate will increase. Bombero stated yes, the rate will increase from \$5 to \$8. **Unanimously approved. Closed.**

- Javier Ortiz and Alder Crespo asked permission to use Criscuolo Park from July 8th – 10th to host a softball team from Puerto Rico. Ortiz would like a fee waiver for the usage of the park and lights on a Friday night and Sunday afternoon. Commissioner Walton asked if there was a plan in place with the police. Commissioner Santiago stated he will work with Bill and will close the street to prevent motorcycle and car use. **Motion to waive the fee for park usage and lights. Seconded. Unanimously approved.**
- Commissioner Walton would like to be invited to community meetings and would like to have material that is being presented to the commission given earlier so it can be reviewed prior to the start of the meeting.

IV. Old Business:

- Commissioner Walton asked for an update on the golf course. President Belowsky stated he talked to Tom and the process started 2 months late. Director Pescosolido stated the demolition has begun inside the building and the contractor is on site.
- Commissioner Babb asked for an update on the motor of the sprinkler system. Jacobs stated she spoke with the contractors on site and neither knew of the 40-year-old motor. Commissioner Babb stated he talked to the guy putting in the irrigation system. Jacobs is not sure what he could have been referring to as the irrigation system is working and in good shape. Commissioner Babb asked if the field is ready, and Jacobs stated they are waiting on another contractor to put in a new track but otherwise it is ready.

V. Director's Report Parks & Public Works:

- Status quo from last month
- Helped setup Arts & Ideas (will run the month of June)
- Supporting BOE with graduations
- Providing support for youth sports
- Hired 2 new full-time caretakers
- Reaching out to the community for seasonal applicants
- Busy with permits
- Finished paperwork for fireworks. Fireworks will be on the 4th of July at East Rock Summit.
- Replacing trash cans

Commissioner Babb asked why the grass is only cut when events are taking place. Carone stated after the fireworks take place there will be a slowdown and maintenance should get back to a regular schedule. They are currently stretched thin with so many events taking place. Commissioner Walton thought the merger of Public Works and Parks would improve the

maintenance of parks. Carone stated the two different unions needed to be respected. There are certain things that Public Works cannot help Parks with due to union issues such as cutting grass. Director Pescosolido stated the Parks Dept. is tapped out and is very busy supporting the maintenance of athletic fields amongst other projects. A problem the Parks Dept. is experiencing is the equipment is old. The mechanics at Public Works have begun assisting Parks Dept. with repairs and are looking at purchasing new equipment. Parks & Public Works will be working together on future construction projects.

Director's Report Youth & Recreation:

- Summer camps will run in Park's facilities from June 27 – August 12. Enrollment is very low.
- Two full-time Park Rangers will run 2 camps.
- Youth@Work employment will begin July 5th. As of now about 360 young people have been hired and placed.
- Presented benches built by young people.
- Waiting on approval of APR funds. Some programming done last year will be on hold. The biggest one that will be impacted is the expansion grant where different organizations were given direct money to be able to expand their summer programming.

Meeting Adjourned: 7:13 PM

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

Next Meeting: July 20, 2022

Location: Zoom