

New Haven Board of Park Commissioners

Meeting No. 1470

Zoom Conference Meeting

September 21, 2022

New Haven, CT 06513

Present: President Belowsky, Commissioners Kenya Adams, Carl Babb, Harvey Feinberg, Ernie Santiago; Alders Sal Punzo, Rosa Ferraro- Santana; Sean Duffy, Sarah Greenbalt, Eliza Shaw, Bill Iovanne, Kevin Langstaff, Jennifer Miller, Elsie Chapman, Charles Murphy, Lucy Gellman, Susan Marchese

Absent: Commissioners Hector Torres, Kevin Walton

Staff: Deputy CAO Rebecca Bombero, Director Gwen Williams, Deputy Director William Dixon, Gary Dickinson, Katherine Jacobs, Michael Piscitelli, Giovanni Zinn, Tariq Dasent

I. Minutes of Meetings #1468 & 1469: Tabled

II. Treasurer's Report: Tabled

III. New Business:

Wooster Sign Proposal – Susan Marchese: Susan Marchese and the Friends of Fort Wooster requested a sign be installed at Fort Wooster Park like the one at Fort Nathan Hale. It would be of no cost to the city and would be placed on Beacon Ave. Katherine Jacobs stated although this is the same sign that is at Fort Nathan Hale this is not the standard park sign. Two standard park signs have been ordered for Fort Wooster Park and the plan is to place one on Townsend Ave and another on Beacon Ave. There is currently a historical marker on the base at the top of the Fort. Alder Sal Punzo would like to have the signs consistent throughout the city.

Alder Punzo also received calls regarding parking at Fort Wooster Park over the weekend. His constituents are concerned about visitors parking on the grass and causing damage. Jacobs stated there will be a public meeting on Monday at 4 pm to discuss the larger issues and what direction to go in the future. **Tabled.**

Hayward Memorial – Kevin Langstaff: Kevin Langstaff would like to have a plaque and an area in East Rock Park named after his dog Hayward who recently passed away. Langstaff would like to name the area either Hayward Beach or Hayward Launch. Langstaff stated there are two trees and benches that have plaques on them on East Rock. They are about a foot to a foot in half, have a name on them, and a small paragraph. Jacobs suggested the commission vote on the concept of the naming of the memorial and she can work out the details for the plaque. **Tabled.**

Wooster Square – Bill Iovanne: Bill Iovanne, co-chair of the Wooster Square Monument Committee, and his team were tasked with finding a suitable replacement for the statue of Christopher Columbus which was removed from the foundation in June 2020. The Historic District Commission approved the new design and Cultural Affairs is also on board. Iovanne needs approval from the Parks Commission and then they will go before the Board of Alders because once the project is complete it will be gifted to the City of New Haven.

The rod iron fence will be removed from the old plinth, the plinth will be cleaned, and two new plaques will be placed on the old plinth. One plaque facing Chapel St will identify members of the committee and donors. The other plaque will be directly behind the new monument. On the old

plinth, the history of the plinth and why it is still present will be displayed. There will be 18 shrubs that surround the base of the old plinth on three sides.

The new sculpture will face inward to the park. The sculpture was done by Mark Massaro and is of an immigrant family. Inscribed on the front is the title of the piece INDICANDO LA VIA AL FUTURO (pointing the way to the future). Lights will be on the ground to illuminate the sculpture. The monument itself will be cast in bronze. There is no cost to the city as this will be privately funded. The purpose of this project is to celebrate the Italian-immigrant American experience and contributions made to the city of New Haven.

From the ground level to the tip of the little boy's finger is 8 feet - 9 feet and the plinth is 10 or 11 feet in height. Commissioner Feinberg asked if the plinth would overshadow the new monument. Iovanne stated his committee, and the Historic District went back and forth on the historical value of the stones and revised their original plan to include the plinth in the design of the entire project. Commissioner Ernie Santiago asked if Iovanne can provide the writing that will be on the plaques so commissioners can review it before approving it. Iovanne stated it is currently being written, however, once it is completed everyone will be informed so there are no surprises. **Tabled**

Invasive Plants Edgerton Park – Sean Duffy: Sean Duffy the president of the Edgerton Park Conservancy works with the city to support the preservation, restoration, and enhancement of Edgerton Park. The park is a little over 100 years and the canopy is starting to decline. This combined with the extended growing season has meant a lot of non-native opportunistic plants, and invasive species have started to take over. These species are assaulting Edgerton Park and cannot be left to go wild and still maintain the integrity of the park.

Trees have been planted to restore the canopy, however, they are becoming overwhelmed and overgrown with invasive species. The canopy provides shade which makes it less likely that some opportunistic species will be able to take over. Wildflowers were planted and were entirely overrun in the last two years as Mugwort and Japanese Knotweed have taken over. Duffy and team are fighting an uphill battle to try and establish species that maintain the integrity of the park design and help transition it into a park that is supportive of native species and hardier and more resilient in the face of climate change. Contractors and volunteer groups have cut and removed Knotweed, Mugwort, and Ivy on trees and pulled bindweed. The parks department has been mowing the lower meadow and a contractor has been cutting Bishop Weed. However, they simply cannot keep up. Duffy would like to work with All Habitat which specializes in controlling and restoring native ecosystems. Duffy asked for permission to proceed with the proposal provided by All Habitat and to integrate targeted conservation aspects of chemical control as a plan for managing the invasive species.

President Belowsky asked why the roots could not be dug up rather than pushed back to get them out of there. Duffy explained the root system is so extensive it would require pulling out the whole hillside which would damage some of the things that should be kept. The other issue is invasive species are opportunistic. They move into areas of recent disturbance, so you want to minimize the amount of disturbance you create in a landscape if you are trying to control invasive species. The beauty of the chemicals that All Habit suggested is they are highly targeted. They quickly move into the whole system and kill the root structure underground rather than having to dig it out. They are only asking for permission to use the chemicals in the park and not for financial assistance.

Commissioner Feinberg asked if it was correct that the project would take longer than 3 years to complete. Duffy stated it would be 3 years of contracting with All Habitat to remove the species or to fight them back but at the same time, they would start integrating a replanting system which would go for much longer. They would need to make sure these niches in the park are not left open for

another species to move in. Duffy stated most of the trees can be cut by their contractors, however, larger trees would require working with the Parks & Public Works Department. Commissioner Feinberg asked what the implications are for using chemicals in the park. Eliza Shaw, co-chair of the Grounds Committee stated there are no implications. The way the chemical works is so targeted that they break down for about 5 or 6 days. They do not affect water supplies, mammals, or animals. They barely affect microbes, or insects and that is very important. This is not a casting of spray across several acres. This is very targeted, and the chemicals have been developed to address those specific types of plants. Commissioner Santiago asked if the foul smell would affect residents in the park. Shaw stated no, the resident would have to get down on their knees to smell the chemicals. Duffy stated they would educate the people who visit the parks on what they will be doing and why they are doing it. **Tabled.**

Pardee Rose Garden/ Greenhouse - Gary Dickinson: The fire head system within the Pardee Rose Garden main building and the Greenhouse ranges needs to be updated. Over the years the heads have been removed or shorted. There is also a fire exit that does not lead to a working exit. Due to the lack of a fire system, Sound students are not allowed to go to Greenhouses until the system is fixed.

The new system would have to be tested and then approved by the Hamden Fire Commission. The estimated total is around \$14,000 for this project. Work would be done in three Greenhouses with one Greenhouse needing three sections redone. The current fire exit sign would be removed from the non-working door to a door that exits directly outside of the building. Commissioner Feinberg asked Dickinson if this was the only proposal that he received and if this project had to go out to bid. Dickinson stated this was the only proposal he obtained, and President Belowsky stated this did not need to go out to bid. Commissioner Feinberg asked why the quote was so expensive. Dickinson responded these are proprietary heads that are made for specific companies. Also due to supply chain issues, the price is higher. It would take about a week or two to complete once scheduled.

ARPA Parks Funding & CT DEEP Funding – Giovanni Zinn & Katherine Jacobs: There are two separate pots of American Rescue Plan Act funding. The first is funding that went directly to the city. The BOA approved 5 million dollars for parks and public spaces the bulk of which would go to parks spaces that are under the purview of the parks commission. This would be split into making some smaller improvements in every park around \$25,000 per park. There will also be city-wide projects which include asphalt parking lot and path repair, stone dust path repair, and fence and guardrail repair. The other half of the funding will be targeted toward larger projects. Zinn is still figuring out what that will be.

The second set of funds went directly to the State of Connecticut. The Legislature of the State of Connecticut has appropriated some of these funds specifically to the city of New Haven for specific parks. Edgewood, East Rock, and Lighthouse will be improved through these funds. Planning a community meeting to get more feedback on what improvements should be made in Edgewood Park

The next bucket of funding is State Bonding funds. There is \$500,000 allocated for both East Shore and Peat Meadow Park. There will be community meetings to flush out park improvement plans for each park. There is also an Urban Green & Community Gardens Grant administered by the State for improvements at Kimberly Field.

- Commissioner Feinberg presented on the budget process. Commissioner Feinberg is concerned about the capital projects funding because this is the year when departments are allowed to request capital monies for two years. Commissioner Feinberg asked what the threshold is for capital money for bonding. Bombero stated capital projects are defined as the life use and not the dollar amount. It needs a life use of five years to be capital eligible, it cannot be used for

general maintenance. Commissioner Feinberg would like to include 1 or more trucks in the capital budget since the trucks need repair. Also, Commissioner Feinberg suggested including one or more stump grinders as the city currently only has one.

- There is a donation account that all donations go into. Donations are not tax-deductible.
- Commissioner Carl Babb asked about the status of Bowen Field. Jacobs stated improvements at Bowen field are complete. Fencing has been installed in front of the dugout and the dugouts have been repainted but there are no plans to replace them. The irrigation has also been completed.
- Commissioner Santiago was asked at the management team meeting to install bollards with a chain at Scantlebury Park to prevent parking on the grass. Jacobs stated the corner of Ashmun & Webster is a maintenance entrance and cannot be blocked off.
- Commissioner Santiago asked if there was going to be any community input for Rice Field improvements. Zinn stated there will be a zoom meeting, in early October and commissioners will be invited.

IV. Old Business:

Katherine Jacobs presented the final design of the Goffe St Project Backboard.

V. Director's Report Parks & Public Works:

- Scheduling interviews for caretakers. Will have to repost the position as only 2 people are on the current civil service list. Looking at updating the job description so CDLs can be obtained within a certain time frame after hire.
- Now have an adequate number of applicants for Deputy Director for Parks & Public Works.
- Still mowing
- Our supplemental tree trimming contractors are helping work through the backlog.
- Annie is officially the Tree Warden which is separate from the Urban Forester who is Fernando.

VI. Director's Report Youth & Recreation:

- Open RFP process going on for the use of Parks building (Barnard, Coogan, and East Rock Nature Center)

Meeting Adjourned: 7:40 PM

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

Next Meeting: November 16, 2022

Location: Zoom