

New Haven Board of Park Commissioners

Meeting No. 1473

Zoom Conference Meeting

January 18, 2023

New Haven, CT 06513

Present: Commissioners Carl Babb, Harvey Feinberg, Hector Torres; Patricia Wallace, Jane Comins, Olivia Martson, Helen, Renee, Josh Randall, Paul Terman

Absent: President Belowsky, Commissioners Kenya Adams, Sal DeCola, Ernie Santiago,

Staff: Director Jeff Pescosolido, Director Gwen Williams, Deputy Director William Dixon, Katherine Jacobs, Giovanni Zinn, Tariq Dasent

I. **Minutes of Meetings #1472: Motion to approve Minutes of Meeting 1472. Motion Seconded. Unanimously approved. Closed.**

II. **Treasurer's Report: No report. Tabled.**

III. **New Business:**

Lighthouse Point Park Playground Replacement – Katherine Jacobs:

The current condition and exposure to sea salt has resulted in corrosion of the playground. There is currently a funding opportunity to do a full-scale replacement. The new playscape will be larger than the existing one and it will be moved toward the path. The Board of Alders approved five million dollars to be used in parks. Half must be allocated to smaller parks and the other half to signature projects. This is a signature project.

The plan is to place an order with the manufacturer by the end of the month and install it in summer 2023, however, with uncertainty in construction there is no guarantee. This will cost about \$600,000 which will be paid through ARPA funds. **Motion to approve plans for the Lighthouse Point Park Playground. Motion Seconded. Unanimously approved. Closed.**

Fort Wooster Meadow – Katherine Jacobs:

Katherine Jacobs and Giovanni Zinn met with Friends of Fort Wooster to discuss their vision for the park. A request to develop a meadow (transition) between the open lawn and the forest was made. The benefits of this would be providing an aesthetic value, additional habitat value, and reducing the burden on staff for maintenance. The maintenance for meadows like such is mowing once or twice per year. It will cost a total of two hundred and fifty-five dollars. Jacobs is requesting this be paid with the Party Flower Trust Fund. **Motion to approve two hundred and fifty-five dollars from the Party Flower Trust Fund to fund meadow. Motion Seconded. Unanimously approved. Closed.**

- The tree division was awarded a grant of \$10,000 from the Wells Fargo Foundation. This grant is to be used to eliminate dead trees and stumps. There is anticipation for a second grant from the State of Connecticut, but that information is not yet forthcoming.

IV. **Old Business:**

Playground Policy – Patricia Wallace

Patricia Wallace and members of Friends of Kensington Park worked diligently to answer questions raised by commissioners at the last meeting. All ten management teams support the

Park Policy Resolution presented at last month's meeting. The resolution states every neighborhood in the city would have at least one playground, each playground would be fully equipped with at least a playscape, a splash pad, and mature trees. Also, if there is a neighborhood with only one playground that playground would not be sold or given away.

In the research conducted it was found that nine neighborhoods (Dixwell, East Rock, East Shore, Edgewood, Fairhaven, The Hill, Newhallville, West Rock, and Wooster Square) have at least one fully equipped public playground. Eleven neighborhoods do not have fully equipped playgrounds (Amity, Westville, Beaver Hills, West River, Prospect Hill, Dwight, Downtown, Long Wharf, Annex, Fairhaven Heights, and Quinnipiac Meadows). Nine out of the eleven neighborhoods without a fully equipped playground have a majority of low-income residents and/or people of color.

It would cost six thousand dollars to install a single bay swing, one hundred forty-eight thousand dollars to install a splash pad, and one hundred ninety-eight thousand to install a playscape. In some playgrounds, fixes can be made to already standing structures. Monies would come from different sources such as public funds, foundations, corporations, faith communities, individual donors, and bequests. A strategic plan would be important as to understand the needs of each neighborhood. Throughout New Haven's history parks have been considered for sale several times dating back to 1945.

Commissioner Harvey Feinberg asked if he heard correctly that it would cost about 3.5 – 4 million dollars to create a playground in every neighborhood. Wallace responded they would like to be very careful not to get too far into the implementation of the policy proposal. This is not because they do not care but rather a strategic planning process would be necessary to fully engage the people of the neighborhood. With the help of Jacobs, Wallace was able to provide a minimum set of numbers but did not want to go further than that. Right now, just looking for the commission to establish a policy framework and the implementation can be spread out over time. **Tabled.**

- Bowen baseball field and the dugout are ready for use. The pitching cage was cleared out by Parks and Public Works employees. Jacobs is unaware of additional work that needs to be done. There were concerns raised about the size of the dugouts and them not being big enough. Jacobs will reach out to the athletic director to sort it out. Near the far end of Bowen Field, there is a lot of junk Commissioner Feinberg asked for this to be checked out.
- The throwing cage for Bowen Field is still a work in progress. The Board of Alders approved and now waiting on the purchasing and delivery of the cage. Once a delivery date is given then Parks and Public Works will work on the installation.

V. Director's Report Parks & Public Works:

- Due to the rain the grounds are very saturated and limit the amount of activity that can be performed. However, there is still activity taking place with employees doing litter control.
- Work is being done on the hard surfaces (parking lots and courts).
- Focusing on shop maintenance, equipment, and facilities.
- Training is also taking place with staff.
- Tree crews are very busy pruning Elms and Oaks.

- Started at the golf course doing some preliminary shrub removal. This will allow Parks & Public Works employees to start doing some basic demolition. This is under the supervision of Zinn and his staff.
 - The new Deputy Director will start on January 30th.
- 1.) Zinn and the Engineering Dept are heading the project on Elm and Yale.
 - 2.) Engineering introduced the sidewalk on Chapel to the Resource Allocation Committee (RAC).
 - 3.) The capital budget has not been discussed with Pescosolido's immediate supervisor or the Mayor and his team. However, Pescosolido does not suspect major changes from the park side.

VI. Director's Report Youth & Recreation:

- Applications closed for the Parks Ranger position, however, testing probably will not occur until late February or March.
- Junior Park Ranger program is extremely successful. There are currently 5 and the capacity is 10. Hoping to develop this into a signature program.
- Gearing up for summer 2023. Applications have been made available for youth employment. Applications for seasonal help will be posted. The last couple of years it has been difficult to recruit seasonal help. Due to this the marketing strategy has changed.
- Two Deputy positions have been posted (Deputy Director for Operations and Deputy Director for Youth)

Meeting Adjourned: 6:25 PM

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

Next Meeting: February 15, 2023

Location: Zoom