

New Haven Board of Park Commissioners

Meeting No. 1477

Commission Conference Meeting  
720 Edgewood Ave  
New Haven, CT 06515

May 17, 2023

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**Present:** Commissioners Kenya Adams, Carl Babb, Sal DeCola, Harvey Feinberg, Ernie Santiago; David Shimchick, Tracy Blanford, Frank Cochran, Patricia Wallace, Barbara Sivigny, Aaron Goode, Dennis Serfilippi

**Absent:** President Belowsky, Commissioner Hector Torres

**Staff:** Deputy Director Stephen Hladun, Director Gwen Busch, Deputy Director William Dixon, Katherine Jacobs, Felicia Shashinka

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- I. **Minutes of Meetings #1476: Motion to approve Minutes of Meeting 1476. Motion Seconded. Unanimously approved. (Commissioner Carl Babb was not present during the vote). Closed.**
- II. **Treasurer's Report: No report. Tabled.**
- III. **New Business:**

**Beer and Agave Festival – Robert Potter: No show**

- A letter of recommendation can be sent to the Board of Alders and Al Lucas stating concerns regarding position changes in the Parks Division. Two new positions were cut from the upcoming budget as there are currently open positions that have not been filled. During the next budget season, the two new positions can be reconsidered if all previous positions have been filled.
- Dennis Serfilippi of 223 Alden Ave requested the cleaning schedule for Edgewood Park. Deputy Director Stephen Hladun will email the cleaning schedule. Daily cleaning occurs at the park which includes a litter truck that picks up trash twice a day during peak season. It is a challenge to access litter in hard-to-reach waterway areas. Contact Deputy Director Hladun with requests for the park such as additional trash cans. For after-hour parking issues and parties happening at the park contact the Police Department for enforcement. Contact Executive Administrative Assistant Tariq Dasent to be added to the agenda (contact information on the Park Commission website). If your item is not on the agenda, you can discuss it during new business but there will be no vote. If your item is on the agenda, you can discuss it during the meeting.

IV. **Old Business:**

**Draft Resolution – Commissioner Harvey Feinberg**

Commissioner Sal DeCola and Deputy Director Hladun are working together to develop a plan which includes funding and improvements to address the issues raised by Patricia Wallace in her policy proposal. Commissioner Harvey Feinberg withdrew the resolution.

- David Shimchick of 65 W Park Ave reminded commissioners of the event being held on June 3<sup>rd</sup> to honor Robert Ibbotson, a major donor to East Rock Park. Ibbotson funded many projects large and small, and his generosity allowed many projects to happen.
- Commissioner Ernie Santiago addressed opening the road to the summit at East Rock Park to drivers. Constituents are approaching the Board of Alders with concerns about it not being accessible to everyone. The road is open on Sundays for those who would like to drive up, however, Commissioners DeCola and Santiago do not think this is fair to those who may want to visit throughout the week. Shimchick noted some members of the neighborhood would prefer for the road to be closed. The road closure has reduced illegal dumping. **Tabled. The commission will discuss when the full board is present.**
- Tracy Blanford of 245 Russell St requested a status update on the encroachment at Quarry Park. Engineering is working on this and will secure a surveyor to survey the entire park not just the encroachment. Blanford also invited commissioners to an event on June 3<sup>rd</sup> to celebrate Connecticut Trails Day at Quarry Park.
- Frank Cochran of 433 Edgewood Ave gave a status update on the Forest Service & Park Friends Oak projects. A nursery was requested to protect young trees from being eaten by deer. The State of Connecticut is conducting research on acorns across multiple states and has also fenced off an area of the park (separate from Cochran's project). In doing so the State has donated leftover material such as fencing and saplings to be used by Cochran and the Friend Group for the nursery they are developing. Cochran invited commissioners to two walks happening on June 3. One is taking place at Edgewood Park and the other at Beecher Park.
- Sal Perto Skating Rink - The family of Zayne Ali Thomas will fund maintenance costs through their nonprofit organization, which will alleviate the city being responsible for maintenance. Commissioner DeCola believes the renaming of the interior of the Sal Perto Skating Rink should be done in good faith as this has been done in the past throughout the city. **Motion to approve. Seconded. Unanimously approved (Commissioner Babb was not present during this vote). Closed**
- Katherine Jacobs and the Engineering Department are looking into providing additional seating for dugouts at Bowen Field. There is not an actual rule that states how many people need to be able to sit so this is making the situation complicated. Games can be played there until a change is made.

#### V. Director's Report Parks & Public Works:

Please see the attached report from Deputy Director Stephen Hladun. (Below are comments made during the report.

Item #1 – The project will be funded through the State. Commissioner Santiago requested Deputy Director Hladun reach out to Alder Antunes regarding this matter.

Item #2 – Deputy Director Hladun requested to use Sea Wall Land Funds to remove and replace the timber guardrail at the Pardee Sea Wall. There are enough funds to cover the project. More information will be provided at the June meeting.

Commissioner Santiago requested two quotes to repair the baseball fields at Munson and Clinton Ave. Deputy Director Hladun has a meeting with Engineering to discuss both fields.

Commissioner Feinberg requested an update on the Capital Funds Budget, in particular the rolling stock and what the Parks Division will be receiving. Commissioner Santiago stated this is public information. There are funds for rolling stock such as equipment however they need to be sent out for public bidding.

The State of Connecticut has proposed a program to plant more trees in certain cities throughout the state. New Haven has been chosen and may receive money for trees if approved.

**VI. Director's Report Youth & Recreation:**

- In the second phase of refurbishing buildings (Sal Perto, Goffe St Park, and West Rock Nature Center) to provide programming. West Rock Nature Center is the second largest project and will be done in two phases. Plans are going as well as they can.
- Summer camp will run from June 26 – August 12<sup>th</sup>.
- Contract for the throwing cage at Bowen Field has been signed by Director Busch and awaits a signature from UNH.
- Thanked commissioners for approving the renaming of Sal Perto Rink.
- Beach passes can be obtained at 720 Edgewood Ave as well as Lighthouse Park.
- Engineering manages Lighthouse funding and proposed plans to remodel the bathrooms at Lighthouse but were stopped by DEEP for not being FEMA compliant. Porta potties can be added to Lighthouse but will also need to be cleaned. Deputy Director William Dixon manages Lighthouse and will arrange it.
- 2 pools will be open this summer (Wilbur Cross and Career High School). Maintenance and repair are the responsibility of the Board of Education. Programming is provided through Youth & Recreation.
- Canoeing & Kayaking will be provided at Middle River.
- Director Busch asked the board to recognize that the fields in the city do not get rest and are used a lot, making maintenance difficult.

Youth & Rec Director Gwen Busch pointed out there are many challenges directors face that hinder the progress of some requests. These issues are 1.) being equitable across the board with the resources available to the department. Certain groups or neighborhoods cannot receive more than others. 2.) There are systematic issues such as staffing shortages which cannot just be fixed with a stroke of a brush due to the presence of unions. Director Busch is asking for understanding from the commissioners as all departments are doing their best.

**Meeting Adjourned**

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

Next Meeting: July 19, 2023

Location: 720 Edgewood Ave, New Haven, CT 06515