

New Haven Board of Park Commissioners

Meeting No. 1480

Commission Conference Meeting
720 Edgewood Ave
New Haven, CT 06515

September 20, 2023

Present: President Belowsky, Commissioners Kenya Adams, Carl Babb, Harvey Feinberg, Ernie Santiago, Emily Sigman, Hector Torres; Barbara Sivigny, David Agosta, Stephanie FitzGerald, Lorena Mitchell, Michael Galbicsek, Anne Weaver Lozen, Dennis Serfilippi

Absent:

Staff: Acting Director Rebecca Bombero, Deputy Director Stephen Hladun, Director Gwen Busch, Katherine Jacobs

- I. **Minutes of Meetings #1479: Motion to approve Minutes of Meeting 1479. Motion Seconded. Unanimously approved. Closed.**
- II. **Treasurer's Report: Motion to approve Treasurer's Report. Motion Seconded.** Hard copies of the report were handed out for review. **Unanimously approved. Closed.**

NEW COMMISSIONER INTRODUCTION - EMILY SIGMAN.

Edgewood Park Improvements – Katherine Jacobs

Katherine Jacobs presented proposed improvements to the existing infrastructure at Edgewood Park. \$800,000 in ARPA funds was given to the city of New Haven with the purpose of improving Edgewood Park. The list of improvements includes community input:

- The splash pad needs electrical service to move away from battery operation.
- Bridge repair
- The pavilion and basketball court need to be attached to an electrical service that was installed last year because of new regulations keeping electrical out of floodplains.
- Skate Park improvements – RFP for a skate park designer
- Coogan lot will be repaved (using different ARPA funds)
- Soccer Field – trying to honor both requests received by residents for usage of the field. Proposing a walking path and drainage improvements if possible. The walking path will be made of gravel and will require maintenance.
- Repair of 8 staircases.
- Add a free-standing playground to the already-standing structure.
- Repairing the water fountain near the playground. There are technical issues that will make the repair difficult, but Engineering is committed to fixing it. There is a possibility to get other water fountains working in the future but the community stressed the importance of the water fountain near the playground.

The plan is for ARPA funding to cover all improvements. These funds are allocated for capital improvements so they cannot be used for trash pick-up. There are many regulations when dealing with federal funds so there are some challenges. The mid-bridge construction is dependent on permits.

Timeline of project: Approval from commissioners, finalize design and procurement, begin construction next year with a completion date unknown at this time.

Motion to approve presentation by Katherine Jacobs. Motion Seconded. Unanimously approved. Closed.

Fantasy of Lights – Rebecca Bombero

Annual review of the permit of Easter Seals of Goodwill for Fantasy of Lights. Each year the commission sets the rental fee for the season. This year the staffing requirements will be increased as there has been a decline in volunteers which has caused a decline in their ability to maintain points of control. This will be in addition to the base rental fee which is set at 5% (an increase from 3% in past years) of gross revenue rather than the daily permit fees. The fee for additional employees will be charged back at the rate of time and a half. If volunteer participation increases, then staffing can be reduced. **Motion to allow Easter Seals. Motion Seconded. Unanimously approved. Closed.**

Pardee Flower: General Fund Reimbursement – Rebecca Bombero

The Parks Commission supports the Pardee Rose Gardens through staff commitment. Each year the controller runs the cost unfortunately a year was missed. Reimbursement for two years (including salaries, medical, FICA, workers comp, and 457 matches) totals \$271,508.60. Seeking approval for expenditures. Pardee Fund supports 1 full-time and part-time support (the number of part-time staff varies). There are 3 different accounts that can support the facility if other expenses arise. **Motion to approve payment. Motion Seconded. Unanimously approved. Closed.**

Renaming East Shore Park Soccer Field – Michael Galbicsek

Michael Galbicsek is requesting to rename the soccer field at East Shore Park after Douglas Rae. Rae founded New Haven Youth Soccer and focused on providing every child with the opportunity to play soccer no matter their background. There is currently no signage at the fields (one field for 10-year-olds and another field for 12 and older) located close to the Coast Guard. Commissioner Carl Babb supports the request of renaming the field as he stated Rae is a worthy individual. The signs will need to conform to the bylaws of the parks department. There are other signs in other city parks honoring individuals. **Motion to approve the renaming of the field. Motion Seconded. Unanimously approved. Closed.**

F.D. Puddicombe Trust– Rebecca Bombero

This is not a request but informational for future planning. We are an unknown recipient of a bequeath estimated at around \$400,000 from the Puddicombe Trust specifically dedicated to the City of New Haven Parks Department for planting purposes in public land. There are no other restrictions on the fund. The Board of Alders approved the acceptance of funds first due to timing and the scheduling of meetings. This is a restricted city fund for park purposes different than the Pardee Trust but will follow the same bylaws. Legal review has determined since the money was left for the City of New Haven and its Parks Department that it will sit in a city account rather than be managed by the Parks Commission. It is not limited to only the Parks Department as it includes public lands. Public land can be described as some of the community gardens which do not sit on park land. The BOA would have to approve the transfer of the account to the Parks Commission. Rebecca Bombero will meet with Corp Counsel to discuss transferring the funds into a new investment account.

Annual End of Summer Staff Appreciation – Rebecca Bombero

Seeking approval to place the catering order for the annual staff appreciation day. This year the main event will be to recognition of Claude Tate who served the city for 49 years. The event will be held at Lighthouse. **President Belowsky approved \$5,000 for the event.**

City Bench – Rebecca Bombero – Tabled

Signage Request at East Rock Park – Lorena Mitchell

Request to put up a suicide prevention sign near the overlook at East Rock Park. Unfortunately, there have been calls for service in this area. West Rock Parks is not under the purview of the Parks Department but instead a state park. **Motion to approve signage. Motion Seconded. Unanimously approved. Closed.**

III. New Business:

- Ordered \$135 dollars worth of equipment for the Golf Course. This will be paid out of the enterprise funds of the Golf Course.
- Tariq Dasent will follow up with the Secretary of State regarding the Foundation for New Haven Parks.
- Kingfisher Adventures would like to provide rentals of kayaks and canoes at West River. This can begin as soon as possible weather permitting and Kingfisher Adventure will be responsible for the advertisement.
- Collen Murphy-Dulling will be at the October meeting to discuss the Parks Score Index.
- The parks department files have been moved to 34 Middletown Ave, so they are accessible to the Director.
- On Saturday, October 21, the Friends of Edgewood Park, and the Youth & Recreation Department will be hosting Edgewood Park Day.

IV. Old Business:

- The yellow house was painted. The tree will be cut that overhangs the house.
- An electrician will inspect the clock problem across from the fire station.
- Engineering held meetings to discuss how ARPA funds will be spent on small amounts that do not require Parks Commission approval.
- The survey at Russell St has not been completed yet.
- Concerns expressed over access to the summit.

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

- Narrowing down the vacancies
- An electric tree truck will be demoed on Friday. Public Works has been successful in obtaining an electrical trash trunk grant already.
- Asking for 3 new lawnmowers, additional multi-use equipment, and several trucks. The exact number will be based on audits and availability. Employees would like new equipment to clean up the leaves in the parks.
- The US Forestry Service funded 2 grants for New Haven. One is a substantial grant to our partners at URI which will fund enhanced planting throughout the city and stump work. This will help expedite a lot of tree requests on stumps and planting and free up crews to do tree trimming. Also received a planning grant directly to the city to institute a master plan process around trees.

- The mayor will be putting out a Mayor's office RFP for a consultant to review the structure of the Parks & Public Works Department and make a decision with community input and guidance about a path forward. The consultant will be tasked with a community engagement process to figure out the best structure for the Parks & Public Works Department. It can lead to the restructuring of the two departments. There is a sense of urgency, and the total processes can take a while. The cost is based on the RFP responses. This comes from the Mayor's office and not the Parks or Public Works budget. President Belowsky stated it hurt the morale of the Parks Department to merge the departments and will improve it to separate.

VI. Director's Report: Youth & Recreation- Tabled

Public Comment:

- Dennis Serfilippi, requested additional trash cans at Edgewood Park. Belowsky offered to pay for the trash cans if necessary.
- David Agosta requested his two items be added to October's meeting.

Meeting Adjourned

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

Next Meeting: October 18, 2023

Location: 720 Edgewood Ave, New Haven, CT 06515