

New Haven Board of Park Commissioners

Meeting No. 1481

Commission Conference Meeting  
720 Edgewood Ave  
New Haven, CT 06515

October 18, 2023

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**Present:** President Belowsky, Commissioners Kenya Adams, Carl Babb, Harvey Feinberg, Emily Sigman, Hector Torres

**Absent:** Commissioner Ernie Santiago

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

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I. **Minutes of Meetings #1480: Motion to approve Minutes of Meeting 1480. Motion Seconded. Unanimously approved. Closed.**

II. **Treasurer's Report: Tabled**

**Park Score Index – Colleen Murphy- Dunning**

- The Parks Score Project was completed in 2021 with Trust for Public Land. New Haven ranked 60 out of 100 points.
- Different categories were analyzed to give a city an overall park score. These categories include acreage, access to parks (within a 10-minute walk), equitability, investment per capita, and amenities in the park (6 major amenities were measured). URI included many other amenities such as flag poles, picnic tables, concession stands, signs, lights, benches, etc. as requested by the Parks Department and community volunteers. There were over 2,000 amenities once URI did their inventory in comparison to the 71 TPL counted. Included in this data is the condition of these amenities.
- This info can be used in both policy and management. Management would improve the broken issues and keep a record of them which would improve conditions. Policy allows you to think of where to make investments.
- Information on litter was gathered and this can help guide management and volunteers on where the challenges are as well as assets.
- Many recreation centers were closed so the score was low. YARD has tackled this issue by placing a public RFP to allow organizations to use rec centers to host programming.
- New Haven parks scored high on access but scored low on investment in the parks and acreage. The average acreage is 1.5 acres, which is smaller as compared to other parks in other cities (nationally).
- There are many creative ways to keep the community engaged.
- Funding is still being secured but there are plans to improve Kimberly Park located in the Hill. Murphy-Dunning presented a mural for the basketball court.

Commissioner Harvey Feinberg asked if the budget for investment for the 23-24 fiscal improved since the Park Score has been completed. Rebecca Bombero stated a review of the budget will need to be done as salaries were not included in the current budget.

Restrooms pose a challenge as you cannot open them unless you are staffing them. Left unattended can lead to many issues so porta potties have become the interim resolution which are not included in the

Parks Score. The number of porta potties fluctuates based on the permits as athletic events slow down and splash pads close.

There are ways to improve the equitability problem such as addressing concerns at Kimberly Field. ARPA funds should also help.

There will be a consultant to gather community input on the structure of the Parks & Public Works Department. Colleen believes this is a great idea to involve the community and gather great information for recommendations.

Commissioner Emily Sigman asked how durable the mural would be on the basketball court. There is a mural currently on Goffe Street but would have to check with the artist. The artist would like to use cool paint. Cool paint is more reflective and is meant to help with urban heat islands. The current mural on Goffe Street is holding up well and has been on since the summer. If approved can ask for certain conditions such as durability to be followed. Grant documents are needed for the repair of the basketball court before a mural can be painted.

**Motion to approve Parks Commission's role in the concept for a mural at Kimberly Field and to anticipate the concept and the possibilities before any decision is made. Motion Seconded. Unanimously approved. Closed.**

### **Ground Safe Materials in Public Parks, City Stump Removal, & Access to the Summit – David Agosta**

David Agosta raised his concerns regarding issues throughout the city that violate federal law in terms of accessibility.

- 1.) Since 2010 the ADA has required that ground surfaces be firm and stable and slip resistant. In particular, Pitkin Plaza hosts movie night when it is dark and the ground surface is unstable and bricks are missing. There are several trip hazards throughout city parks and public spaces. Agosta requested the stoppage of installing bricks in public parks.
- 2.) The tree stump removal policy problem is it treats all tree stump removal as optional. Agosta stated this would make sense if hazard violations of Federal law at those tree stumps were not present. Agosta has observed that about 20% of the reserved parking spaces in New Haven are not accessible for whom they are reserved because of trees and tree stumps. Agosta requested an alteration to the tree stump removal policy that doesn't treat every tree stump as optional.
- 3.) Agosta stated per 28CFR35.150 no person can because of a physical disability be denied the right to access a program, including scenic overlook as defined by the Department of Agriculture. This federal law requires that all alternate means of access be investigated. Agosta proposed that the grant proposal for Uber shuttles be used as an alternate means to access the summit. The Parks Commission was unaware of a grant for shuttle buses. Agosta expects to be able to access the summit in the spring.

Commissioner Feinberg asked if Agosta investigated how much the city would be on the hook to make these improvements to the tree stump removal policy and accessing the summit as there is a cost associated with his requests. The commission would need to know if there are budgetary implications. Agosta stated no and that it was not his job to complete. The cost is not relevant as federal law

requires accessibility. Commissioner Feinberg believes it is as funding will need to be approved by the Board of Alders.

Bombero stated URI (the city's partner) has received funding to remove stumps. Tree stumps are removed but they are a lower priority removal than standing hazard trees. Stumps are triaged based on three reasons: 1.) replanting a new tree, 2.) facilitating Engineering sidewalk repairs, and 3.) receiving notice that they are next to an ADA parking space. Bombero has not received an ADA request in her 6-year term but will start keeping track of this now. All three are addressed in no specific order.

### **RFP for Concession /Operations – Rebecca Bombero**

Requesting permission to place an RFP for concessionaires in parks and include in the RFP the space used by City Bench. This will allow for other proposals or to renegotiate terms with City Bench. Currently taking advantage of the holdover clause and the permitting process to hold City Bench until the RFP process is complete. 2018-2019 was the last time vendors were in the parks. This would allow us to have vendors throughout city parks and at Lighthouse Beach where people are looking for refreshments. President Belowsky will serve as a member of the review panel. **No further action is needed now as the vending ordinance gives permission to the Director to establish. Will need approval once entering the contract.**

#### **I. New Business: NONE**

#### **II. Old Business:**

- The Board of Alders approved the funds from the Puddicome Trust.
- There was a delay with the Bowen Field throwing cage as there was no response to the RFP for the installation of the cage. Engineering has been working with the company to see if someone from the manufacturer can install it. In the meantime, the items will be shipped to us to keep costs low.

#### **III. Director's Report: Parks & Public Works:**

- 2 vacancies in the Parks Department
- Moving to project focus since event season is slowing down.
- Preparing for the winter
- Will review foreshadowing on budget and capital in the coming month.
- Demolition starts at Lighthouse playground within the next few weeks as installation is set for mid-November.
- A certificate of occupancy was taken out at the new maintenance building at Lighthouse.
- All splash pads will be off as they need to be winterized.

#### **IV. Director's Report: Youth & Recreation**

- Felicia Shashinka Deputy Director of Operations was introduced.
- 2 Park Rangers were hired. Martin's position has been filled. No park rangers will be living in former park ranger homes in city parks.
- In the swing of fall programming – Trunk or Treat will be on October 31<sup>st</sup> at Southern Connecticut State University.
- Continuing to work with Engineering to make improvements to community facilities for programming use.

- Youth@Work fall programming will begin November 1<sup>st</sup>.
- Interviewing for Community Engagement Coordinator which will have a dual role. They will be a point person for the friend groups and volunteers.
- Approval from Human Resources and Labor Relations to post for ARPA-funded positions – 3 project liaisons and 1 ARPA Recreation Supervisor. The intent is to have these positions in the building to have continued programming to fill in the gaps. These are temporary positions and are correlated with ARPA funding until December 31, 2026.
- Commissioners are invited to all YARD events.

**Meeting Adjourned**

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

Next Meeting: January 17, 2024

Location: 720 Edgewood Ave, New Haven, CT 06515