

New Haven Board of Park Commissioners

Meeting No. 1460

Pardee Rose Garden
150 Park Rd.
Hamden, CT 06517

September 15, 2021

Present: Commissioner Carl Babb, Commissioner Ernie Santiago, Commissioner Hector Torres, Commissioner Kevin Walton; Alder Sal DeCola; Alder Carmen Rodriguez, Alder Adam Marchand; Christina Ciociola, Mark Ciociola, Jimmy Cottage, Arrie Lopez, David Sepulveda, Marshall Leggett, Burt Saxon, William Ewen, Rich Borer, Sean McElehenny, Patricia Melton, Laura Clark

Absent: President Belowsky; Thomas Verderame

Staff: Director Jeff Pescosolido, Deputy Director William Carone, Director Gwen Williams, Tariq Dasent, Katherine Jacobs

Agenda: Motion to adopt agenda. Motion Seconded. Unanimously approved. Closed.

I. Minutes of Meeting #1459: Motion to approve Minutes of Meeting 1459. Motion Seconded. Unanimously approved. Closed.

II. Treasurer's Report: Motion to approve Treasurer's Report. Motion Seconded. Unanimously approved. Closed.

III. New Business:

Renaming Edgewood Tennis Court – William Ewen

William Ewen proposed renaming Edgewood Park tennis courts after Eddie van Beverhoudt. Van Beverhoudt was an outstanding contributor to the sport of tennis. He was the first person of color to participate on the tennis courts at the New Haven Lawn Club in the 1950s. Between 1949 and 1970 van Beverhoudt won the Greater New Haven City Open men's singles title a total of 18 times. Van Beverhoudt was elected to the New England Tennis Hall of Fame in Rhode Island. In 1991, six tennis courts at Bowen Field were named after van Beverhoudt but were later torn down. Commissioner Kevin Walton stated the commissioners would take the proposal under consideration and Deputy Director William Carone will get back to Ewen.

Mural at Trowbridge – Laura Clarke and Site Projects

The goal of Site Projects pre-pandemic was to create a series of murals along the oldest waterfront neighborhoods in New Haven (Hill South, Ninth Square, Fair Haven). Site Projects proposed painting 3 murals on existing plywood at Trowbridge Square. Marshall Leggett explained the murals will not be permanent, they can be removed, and it will not interfere with any long term plans the city might have for the building. Site Projects would like to take a holistic approach to fixing the building so it can then in turn uplift the community. This includes enhancements around the building such as pruning trees, adding shrubs and flowers, power washing the building, and adding lights. As required by city regulations, Site Project will carry a million dollars of liability coverage and always name the Park Department and City Plan for additional insured.

Site Projects talked to residents regarding what they would like to see painted and the preference is for colorful designs, uplifting messages, and themes of unity.

Clarke asked if the Parks Commission owned the building or do the properties around Trowbridge own the property. Carone said he would get back to Clarke with an answer. Commissioner Walton asked if there were any other proceedings that needed to be taken in terms of the Board of Alders. Commissioner Walton would like to make sure the community input has been taken as this always comes back as an issue. Commissioner Walton stated Carone will get back to Clarke and Site Projects.

Bench Request – Christina Ciociola, Jimmy Cottage and Mark Ciociola

Christina Ciociola, Mark Ciociola, and Jimmy Cottage are requesting a granite bench and a small reflection garden at the Seawall in memory of Tony Ciociola. Tony Ciociola was a firefighter for the city of New Haven until his retirement. Tony Ciociola passed away in June. Christina has a design for the bench and a location. The family plans on donating the bench and has the financial resources to do upkeep of the area. Commissioner Carl Babb stated the bench is welcomed however they will have to see if the bench that was presented will fit with the aesthetic of the park. Commissioner Walton stated Carone will do some research regarding the bench and get back to the family.

Fantasy of Lights – Rich Borer

Rich Borer proposed having Fantasy of Lights again this year. Fantasy of Lights has had a partnership of over 30 years with the city of New Haven. Families are charged \$10 a car and a donation is given back to the city. Building trades such as electrical, operating engineers, and iron workers help put up displays and use this venue as an internship. Fantasy of Lights will setup in October and run from the Thursday before Thanksgiving until New Year's. Commissioner Walton stated Carone will be in touch with Borer.

Criscuolo Park & Memorial Bench – Katherine Jacobs

• **CRISCUOLO PARK**

Katherine Jacobs presented an update of improvements at Criscuolo Park. In the original plan the swing for 2–5-year-olds was to be reused and a new swing for 5–12-year-old would be purchased. It was determined the swing for 2–5-year-olds was not safe and now this plan is being reevaluated. Phase 1 was completed in 2018, phase 2 was completed in 2020, phase 3 swing plans are scheduled to be completed in 2022 with American Recovery Plan (ARP) funds. The new swings will be installed next to other play structures since children like to move in between activities. Commissioner Babb questioned how close the swings were to the water. Jacobs responded the swings for the younger kids is far from the water and the swing for the older kids is on the other side of the path. There is a fence between the swings and the water. Commissioner Babb asked if insurance covers the swings, and he was informed it does. Commissioner Walton asked will anything replace the old swing set. Jacobs stated there have been request to place chess tables there. Commissioner Walton asked if permanent domino tables or other tables for games can be placed there. Commissioner Ernie Santiago asked if permanent ping pong tables can be placed there. Commissioner Santiago is concerned kids will jump on tables, fall, and hit their head; however, he does think permanent ping pong tables would be used in the park. Jacobs does not see an issue with installing ping pong tables as there have been ping pong tables installed in other parks, and they have not run into an issue. Jacobs would like to move forward with paperwork for the swings in the winter and hit the ground running with installation in the spring.

• **MEMORIAL PARK BENCH AT LONG WHARF**

Request for a memorial bench at Long Wharf near the Veterans Memorial.

IV. Old Business:

- **Throwing Cage at Bowen Field:** There was a meeting on site, and it was determined the best location for the throwing cage is in the existing location. The donation of the cage would be a great benefit to the community, it would be a lot safer, and a better environment for athletes. The updated cage would attract more competitions which would be a benefit financially. Jacobs put together a cost estimate for the installation of the donated cage and it would be \$21,000 for the city. Commissioner Walton asked if anything was being exchanged with UNH as far as usage of the field for them donating the cage. Commissioner Babb stated UNH said they would not use it during New Haven Public Schools time and the city would have the priority as far as usage. Commissioner Walton also questioned if this had to go to the Board of Alders (BOA) or the Board of Education (BOE). Commissioner Babb stated the BOE was supposed to present to the BOA. Commissioner Walton wanted to know if the commission needed to do anything. Jacobs stated the commission can vote to approve or reject the plan. Commissioner Walton stated they will act on this. Carone stated there is a deadline to get this on the BOA agenda.
- **Kensington Park:** Commissioner Babb has received letters regarding Kensington Park. Commissioner Babb wanted to know is this a done deal or do we revisit. Carone stated he has received FOIA request from Corp Counsel for some park commission minutes. Carone stated the attorney for the Parks Department will be on the agenda next month so outstanding matters can be addressed then.
- **Bowen Field:** Commissioner Babb wanted a status update on the baseball fields at Bowen. Jacobs stated a public bid was posted but there has been a lengthy delay in executing the contract so there is still no contract. However, to get things moving Jacobs was able to hire an irrigation contractor separately. They will begin swapping out irrigation control valves which are old. As soon as the contractor provides insurance, they will begin field renovations. Hopefully the field will be up and running by spring.

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

- Trying hard to fill open positions (3 new caretakers and 1 supervisor position).
- Fall sports have started.
- Looking for a Christmas tree.
- Fort Hale Park Road running from Coast Guard Academy to Townsend Ave has been approved for repave by the Resource Allocation Committee.
- Prepping site for Pop Smith batting cages at Bowen Field. Anticipated completion is this Fall.

Director's Report Youth & Recreation:

- Extremely busy over the summer. Able to compete 90% of the programming.
- Waiting on Parks Rangers list to be certified. Looking to hire 2 rangers and have them in place by November. Lost Executive Admin. and looking to have position filled by March or April 2022. There is an open position in the budget for a Volunteer Coordinator. This will be a point person to coordinate with the friends' groups. Also, looking to hire a seasonal worker to handle permits.
- Struggling with organizations looking for permits and use of the fields. There is limited availability as some fields are not open this year. Organizations do not want to share.

- Reminding organizations just because they have a fee waiver due to working with young people that does not include a waiver on other fees such as a fee for wanting lights. Also, reminding them when the BOA votes every year there is usually a fee increase.
- Starting fall programming. The first will be in Edgewood Park (Trunk or Treat) on October 31st. In November there will be a turkey giveaway and in December there will be a toy giveaway.
- Two more programs have been added. In February there will a black history month dinner in which the department will go around to every community and give out food. In April there will be an upgrade to the Easter hunt.
- Working with Jacobs to uplift fields such as installing fencing.
- Would like the commission to help with the purchase of hockey equipment for a program to help teach kids how to play hockey. Commissioner Babb asked what happened to equipment that the schools use to have. Director Williams stated she would do more research about this.
- There have been break-ins at Ralph Walker Rink and Trowbridge. The locks have been changed multiple times at Trowbridge to control who is coming in and out. Jacobs suggested Williams look into badge entry into the building similar to what downtown has rather than printing keys. Williams will reach out to Velma George in regard to the tent city that is developing behind the Rink.
- There is a major uptick in youth violence. Commissioner Walton stated we are in dire straits, and he would like to know what role Parks can play in helping alleviate some youth issues. Commissioner Walton stated there is need to open schools from 4-9 to provide prevention to kids beyond just basketball. Commissioner Walton would like to offer different selections of programming to students.

Review of Request

Katherine Jacobs stated the bench for the Seawall is not visible from the street and this is a concern due to safety reasons. When benches are not in clear sight lines that can encourage bad behaviors. Commissioner Walton stated Carone can inform the family the bench has to be in a line of sight. Commissioner Walton asked if Criscuolo Park and Long Wharf need action. Jacobs stated it would be good for them to be officially approved.

Motion to move all request favorably with stipulations discussed. Seconded. Commissioner Walton has unreadiness regarding Fantasy of Lights. Walton would like Carone to speak with President Belowsky to renegotiate the donation amount. Commissioner Babb seconded Walton's unreadiness. **Unanimously approved. Closed.**

Meeting Adjourned: 7:59 PM

Minutes Submitted by: Tariq Dasent, Executive Administrative Assistant to Park & Public Works

Next Meeting: October 20th, 2021

Location: Zoom