

New Haven Board of Park Commissioners

Meeting No. 1466

Zoom Conference Meeting

April 20, 2022

New Haven, CT 06513

Present: President Belowsky, Commissioners Carl Babb, Harvey Feinberg, Ernie Santiago, Hector Torres, Kevin Walton; Frank Cochran
Staff: Director Jeff Pescosolido, Deputy Director William Carone, Director Gwen Williams, Deputy Director William Dixon, Katherine Jacobs, Tariq Dasent

- I. **Minutes of Meeting #1465: Motion to approve Minutes of Meeting 1465. Motion Seconded. Closed.**
- II. **Treasurer's Report: No Treasurer's report. Thomas Verderame is on vacation so there should be two reports next month.**
- III. **New Business:**

Beecher Park Sign – Frank Cochran

Frank Cochran (433 Edgewood Ave, New Haven 06511) on behalf of the West River Watershed Coalition is requesting permission to place a sign at Beecher Park. The sign will face West Rock and is intended to be an outdoor exhibit of a map made by Donald Grant Mitchell in 1892. The sign will include three to five sentences about Mitchell and his importance, be 24" X 36", and it will be posted at an elevation that should make it possible for an average size adult to read. The sign will be paid for using leftover grant money from West Hills Community Management Team. The sign will be very similar to the three signs Public Works installed at West Rock Park and the open space between West Rock Park and East Ramsdell Street.

Commissioner Carl Babb asked if the sign meets the standard of approval for Parks & Rec. Cochran responded both the library and Deputy Director Carone told him he needed approval from the Park Commissioners to install. Commissioner Harvey Feinberg asked if the sign would be in the middle of the park or if it will be on the edge by the sidewalk. Cochran stated the location has not been determined but if there were a spot the Commissioners would like the sign or an area, they wanted to avoid that can be done. Commissioner Ernie Santiago clarified since other signs have been added to the parks that Cochran knows what the Commissioners are looking for. Cochran stated yes. President Belowsky asked Carone if we cut the grass at this location and if it would be ok to mow around the sign. Carone stated that we do, and Cochran added the sign wouldn't be in the way of the mowers.

Motion to approve sign at Beecher Park. Seconded. Commissioner Feinberg is in support of the sign if the sign does not interfere with seating for concerts or sticks out like an eyesore. President Belowsky asked Carone to check the concrete work and steps at the park so they can get a mason out there to improve the appearance. Commissioner Santiago suggested putting it where drivers can see the sign. **Unanimously approved. Closed.**

Goffe St Park Backboard Project – Katherine Jacobs

The city has been approached by a nonprofit organization called Project Backboard. Its mission is to provide artistic mural-type installations on basketball courts. It is an opportunity to revamp old existing basketball courts and create public art in communities that need them. A donor is interested in sponsoring a mural on the existing basketball court at DeGale Field. The

donor is not asking for money they are only looking for permission. Katherine Jacobs is still waiting for their full proposal but wanted to bring this to the Commissioners' attention and see if they had any concerns about moving forward.

Commissioner Feinberg asked where the park was located. Jacobs stated it is on Goffe St close to Hillhouse High School. Commissioner Santiago asked if this would be painted on the floor of the court. Jacobs stated yes, they would use the same material that is used on tennis courts. President Belowsky asked if this was on other basketball courts. Jacobs stated a project like this has not been done in the City of New Haven, but they've done a couple dozen around the country. Commissioner Kevin Walton mentioned there was another group that presented to the commissioners prior to the pandemic about a mural at Wilbur Cross Courts. Jacobs remembers a presentation on this but does not know what happened with that idea. Commissioner Walton wanted to know how they selected this court, and does it have to be at DeGale or can it be at another court. Also, Commissioner Walton wanted to discuss if this would increase usage of the courts as he drove by 5 parks in Fair Haven & East Shore this weekend and did not see kids outside. Director Gwen Williams suggested a marketing campaign that would include a slogan and media involvement to get kids back in the parks. Commissioner Walton agreed and said we need to get kids back in the parks.

Jacobs stated the donor has a connection to the neighborhood and that was why this specific location was selected. Jacobs also believes Goffe St Park is a park that needs resources and attention. Commissioner Walton stated anybody in any neighborhood would agree that their parks need attention. Commissioner Babb asked if you have a donor who is willing to do it at Goffe St. Park why would we deny them that right. Commissioner Feinberg asked if the mural is placed in DeGale would people in other neighborhoods complain. Jacobs does not believe so. Jacobs thinks it is important to continue to do improvement in all neighborhoods and if other neighborhoods are interested in doing a similar project and they reach out then she can work with them. Commissioner Feinberg asked if the donor would be willing to go to another basketball court in another neighborhood. Jacobs hopes so. Commissioner Santiago asked what design would be on the court. Jacobs stated they do not have a design yet, but their intention is to work with the NXTHVN Fellowship program. It is a program that does art projects with high school students from New Haven.

Jacobs is seeking approval tonight from the commissioners for the concept of this plan so once a design is made Jacobs will bring the design back for final approval. It would be helpful to provide initial approval, so the process of accepting the donation with the Board of Alders can begin. Commissioner Feinberg asked if running on the court would cause damage to the mural. Jacobs stated they are going to apply the design with a material that is thicker and more durable than regular paint. It is designed to be used in court settings and should last about 10 years. Commissioner Santiago asked if the paint will be safe for the kids to play on when it is raining. Jacobs stated it is a grippy textured surface, so it prevents slipping. Commissioner Walton hopes there is an opportunity for community input for the mural. **Motion to accept the donation pending the design. Seconded. Unanimously approved. Closed**

- 1.) Commissioner Hector Torres stated if we are going to make the parks look good then we must make sure they are in playing condition. Commissioner Santiago suggested a touch-up every week or every two weeks to every park. If a permit has been issued for a park, then the Parks Dept. can stay there a little longer for maintenance. Commissioner Babb stated we have the equipment and the staff so the parks should be presentable because that is a reflection on the commissioners. Carone offered to go on a ride-along with the commissioners to address their issues.

- 2.) Commissioner Santiago invited everyone to the softball game on April 30th and asked the commissioners to send him their shirt sizes.
- 3.) The sidewalk from Chapel to Yale Ave will be recommended to the Resource Allocation Committee.
- 4.) Movie night will be back this summer in the parks.
- 5.) Carone will check the status of the tree posted for removal at 120 Genesee St.
- 6.) Carone will investigate the electricity situation in the bathroom trailers at the golf course.

IV. Old Business:

- Commissioner Babb asked for a status update at Bowen Field. Jacobs stated there are people working there now and it will be completed this year. Commissioner Feinberg asked if there was any follow-up to Commissioner Babb's concerns about the locker rooms at Bowen Field. Director Williams investigated the issue and if the commissioners wanted anything for the locker rooms, they would have to go through BOE.
- Commissioner Feinberg asked if the project at the tennis courts at Edgewood Park was complete. Jacobs stated the bidding is complete.
- Greg for the Historical Marker at the Farmington Canal Trail is seeking an update on his request. Carone presented different signs that were approved by the commission for other locations. **Motion to approve Historical Marker. Seconded.** Commissioner Torres would like to fix the wording in the bylaws for signs at the parks. **Unanimously approved. Closed.**

Director's Report Parks & Public Works:

- Very busy processing permits for the parks.
- Caretaker test was administered today. There are 5 caretaker vacancies and 1 foreman vacancy.
- Busy with youth sports and BOE athletics. Athletic fields are becoming very popular so there has been a bit of a transition from staff doing so-called park maintenance to supporting athletic fields.
- Scheduled power wash to remove graffiti in parks.
- Parks & Public Works will support, and staff Earth Day clean-ups with Alders.
- Awarded Tree City USA. Will try to plan an Arbor Day with Yale.
- Cherry Blossom Festival is this Sunday.
- Rock to Rock is next week starting at East Rock Park.
- Still some winter clean-up due to the weather.
- Doing track maintenance.
- Pothole patching and sweeping in parking lots.
- Meeting with the Engineering Dept to make improvements to our parks.
- Trying to be proactive. Created a maintenance schedule so all parks can be on a rotation.

Director's Report Youth & Recreation:

- Under the American Rescue Plan (ARP) and working with Giovanni Zin 2-3 million dollars have been allotted to do renovations of park buildings all over the city. The

purpose is to start youth centers in all our buildings. This should bring young people to the park.

- Hired 2 park rangers to fill vacancies. They will begin on the first Monday in May.
- There were 2 break-ins at East Rock Nature Center. Quite a bit of equipment was lost during the break-in totaling close to \$30,000. Two young people were caught in the act on the second break-in. Accepting donations to replace items.
- There will be summer programming at Ralph Walker Skating Rink.
- Closed an RFP for the Sports and Pro-Social Activity Grant. Awarding \$40,000 in grants and many of them are to youth-serving sports and organizations.
- Trying to find creative ways to stop the tagging of buildings.

Meeting Adjourned: 6:50 PM

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

Next Meeting: May 18, 2022

Location: Zoom