

New Haven Board of Park Commissioners

Meeting No. 1471

Zoom Conference Meeting

October 19, 2022

New Haven, CT 06513

Present: President Belowsky, Commissioners Carl Babb, Harvey Feinberg, Ernie Santiago Hector Torres; Alder Sal Punzo; Richard Borer, Colleen Murphy, Laura Cahn, Adam Wambolt, Aaron Goode, Susan Marchese, Janice Parker, Paul Terman, Patricia Wallace, Jane Comins, Josh Randall, Ismael Rey, Renee Vaughn

Absent: Commissioners Kenya Adams, Kevin Walton

Staff: Deputy CAO Rebecca Bombero, Director Jeff Pescosolido, Director Gwen Williams, Deputy Director William Dixon, Katherine Jacobs, Anastasia Mixsell, Tariq Dasent

- I. **Minutes of Meetings #1468, 1469, 1470: Motion to approve meeting minutes 1468, 1469, and 1470. Motion Seconded. Meeting minutes of 1469 & 1470 unanimously approved. Meeting minutes of 1468 approved. (President Belowsky, Commissioners Ernie Santiago, & Hector Torres approved; Commissioner Harvey Feinberg abstained). Closed.**
- II. **Treasurer's Report: Motion to approve Treasurer's report. Motion Seconded. Unanimously approved. Closed.**
- III. **New Business:**

Fantasy of Lights – Rich Borer: Fantasy of Lights will run from November 17th – December 31st. Funds received from the event go into the donation account.

Tree Inventory – Anastasia Mixsell & Colleen Murphy: A full inventory of city trees was completed in 2000 the list was then given to URI in 2008 to maintain. Last year applied for grant funds for a new software system and funding to allow staff to conduct a full inventory of city trees. The grant was awarded through the State Department of Energy and Environmental Protection. The grant paid for the software, data transition from the old system to the new, and inventory of low canopy neighborhoods. The new system has all the historical data from the old system. However, not all tree stumps have been captured in the new system as stumps were not explicitly tracked in the old system. The new system includes the condition, species, location, size, and an image of the tree. Images of the tree can be pulled from Google or uploaded from the field. Dead-standing trees and stumps can be mapped with this software as well. The hope is this system will allow the city to move to more proactive management rather than just complaint-driven allowing the most serious hazards to get priority. The data gathered shows it is well beyond the capacity of existing city staff to clear the backlog. There are federal dollars earmarked for urban forestry through the Inflation Reduction Act so there may be an opportunity to get more funding.

Wooster Memorial Park – Katherine Jacobs: Dalio Philanthropies approached the city and would like to fund outdoor fitness equipment in honor of Devon Dalio who passed away. The fitness equipment would be on the rear left side of Wooster Memorial Park and will be at no cost to the city. The city will maintain the equipment however the family will provide an annual maintenance grant to provide funding for any replacements that are needed. The equipment will be for public use not just for members of that neighborhood. **Motion to approve fitness equipment in Wooster Memorial Park. Motion Seconded.** Commissioner Santiago asked

if this would open the door for anybody to donate and bring stuff to the parks. President Belowsky stated if someone wanted to donate he thinks that would be a great idea. **Unanimously approved. Closed.**

- Employees from the Parks Division addressed the Commission with their concerns regarding the department.
- The International WeLoveU Foundation would like to do cleanups in city parks. In the future, they would like to present to the commissioners.

IV. Old Business:

Wooster Sign Proposal: Tabled.

Wooster Square: Commissioner Babb motioned to approve Monument at Wooster Square. Seconded. Unanimously approved. Closed.

Invasive Plants Edgerton Park: Commissioner Feinberg motioned to approve the plan from Edgerton Park Conservancy. Seconded. Commissioner Babb asked if the city would be liable for any injuries caused by the chemicals sprayed in the park. Corporation Counsel may be able to clarify liability questions. Commissioner Santiago stated at the last meeting commissioners were informed the chemicals would not harm people or pets. The chemicals would only attack the plants. Commissioner Feinberg voted to approve. Commissioners Babb and Santiago voted no. Commissioner Torres abstained. **The motion did not pass.** Commissioners requested Sean Duffy attend the next meeting to answer follow-up questions.

Playground Policy – Patricia Wallace: A policy was brought to commissioners in July 2021 requesting every neighborhood in the city have at least one fully equipped public playground with a playscape, splash pad, and trees. Also, if there was only one public playground in the neighborhood, then it would not be sold or given away. There were two concerns raised by members of the commission. The first was the implications of such a policy for the city budget. Patricia Wallace stated this does not commit the city to any budgetary amounts. It is not a budgetary matter it is a matter of principle that the city believes the kids need a good playground in their neighborhood. The second concern being was this a backdoor way to get the commission tangled in the Kensington conflict. Wallace stated it is not. This is a forward-looking proposal about the future commitment by the city to a public playground in every neighborhood.

Commissioner Santiago stated this policy would commit the city because more parks mean more money in the budget for the parks department. Also, if there is no land available to place a park in every neighborhood then the city would be putting itself behind the ball because it will have to create a park where there is no land. Wallace suggested returning next month with a practical response to Commissioner Santiago's concerns. **Tabled.**

V. Director's Report Parks & Public Works:

- Very busy at Parks & Public Works
- Fall clean up in progress (parks maintenance, leaf removal, mulching)
- Busy supporting athletic events throughout the city
- 19 locations of additional work and activities (construction)
- Assisting with Wilbur Cross Complex
- Preparing for the winter season
- Possible fencing at the skating rink

- Winterizing the splash pads
- Preparing the Christmas Tree for the Green (early November)
- Planning to do tree maintenance in the parks in the winter
- Issues at Marginal Drive with illegal dumping – looking to block off certain entrances

VI. Director's Report Youth & Recreation:

- The outdoor adventure coordinator will officially retire in January, however, his last day in the building will be the first week of November
- Reimplementing the junior ranger program
- The tree lighting will be broadcast on WTNH (Channel 8)
- Closed the second round of RFPs for the use of park buildings. Almost totally complete with the first three buildings (Barnard Nature Center, East Rock Nature Center, and Coogan Pavilion). Scheduling has been completed and community organizations will be in to use the buildings. Youth & Rec will also provide programming
- Anticipating DeGale, Trowbridge, and Sal Perto buildings will be completed by summer
- Trunk or Treat will be on October 31st from 5 pm – 7 pm
- Turkey giveaway in November at John Martinez school in Fair Haven
- Friends of Rudolph in collaboration with Southern Connecticut State University in December. This will be in person on the campus of Southern
- Bauer Hockey will be back to provide programming for the children at Troup Middle School and East Rock

Meeting Adjourned: 7:33 PM

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

Next Meeting: November 16, 2022

Location: Zoom