

New Haven Board of Park Commissioners

Meeting No. 1479

Commission Conference Meeting  
720 Edgewood Ave  
New Haven, CT 06515

July 19, 2023

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**Present:** President Belowsky, Commissioners Kenya Adams, Sal DeCola, Harvey Feinberg, Ernie Santiago, Hector Torres; Barbara Sivigny, Frank Cochran, Mia Cortes Castro, David Agosta, Dennis Serfilippi

**Absent:** Commissioner Carl Babb

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

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- I. **Minutes of Meetings #1478: Motion to approve Minutes of Meeting 1478. Motion Seconded. Unanimously approved. (Commissioner Kenya Adams was not present during the vote). Closed.**
- II. **Treasurer's Report: No report. Tabled.**

**City Bench Contract – Rebecca Bombero**

Request to approve contract negotiations with City Bench. City Bench has a public-private partnership with the city. City Bench takes trees in the city and transforms them into wood products such as furniture. As an agreement with them to use the barn at 180 Park Road they do educational programming and provide wood products such as benches. The contract will be up at the end of the year and looking to renew it for another 5 -7 years.

There is no cost to the city as the barn was an underutilized site, the city gets products back and does not have to pay for the disposal of large trees. The city does not charge them for water, but City Bench pays for all their other utilities. As a renewal option, a bid requirement can be added but other bids are not required at this time. **Motion to approve the negotiation for the renewal. Motion Seconded. Unanimously approved (Commissioner Adams was not present during the vote.)**

**WPCA & Fucci Permission – Rebecca Bombero**

Permission for use of space requested by Fucci (contractor) for the Water Pollution Control Authority (WPCA). There is a large-scale super separation project that will begin in East Rock. They need an area to stage equipment to allow for the project to occur with minimal interruptions in the neighborhood. Proposal to enter a one-year contract for the use of space at Blake Field. President Belowsky requested Fucci pay \$25,000 for two years of use. Bombero will request two 1-year contracts for \$12,500 each year. **Motion to approve the request as two 1-year contracts at \$12,500 each year. Motion Seconded. Unanimously approved (Commissioner Adams was not present during the vote.)**

**Washington Ave Playground Replacement – Katherine Jacobs**

Ernest McClain Park, also known as Washington Ave Park, located in the Hill has an existing playground that does not meet current safety standards. Elements that are not safe have been removed and fixes have been made to get through the next six months. A public RFP was put out and a submission was received that Engineering is interested in proceeding with. The plan uses the same footprint as the existing playground but replaces it with upgraded structures.

There are two compound structures, a swing set, and a couple of other smaller structures with different spaces for different-aged children. Funding will come from the already allocated American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) so there is no request for funds from the Parks Commission and it is not bond funded.

The old splash pad either needs to be replaced or fixed as it has not worked in 10 years. To reduce the cost of replacing the splash pad Katherine Jacobs is hoping the existing infrastructure can be used but it is up in the air. As it pertains to the playground there are no plans to use the old footprint of the splash pad in the new plans.

Jacobs is requesting approval for the investment. Following approval, Engineering will proceed with contracting which can take a month or two, followed by installation next Spring. This is not a heavily programmed park, but it is heavily used by the neighborhood. **Motion to approve modifications for Washington Ave Park. Motion Seconded. Unanimously approved. Closed.**

### **III. New Business:**

- The yellow house needs to be painted and the overgrowth needs to be addressed. The driveway of the home is being utilized by the neighbor. President Belowsky was approached by the neighbor to rent the driveway for parking. President Belowsky suggested \$50 a month and the money would be deposited into the donation account. Rebecca Bombero will figure out how to bind insurance.

### **IV. Old Business:**

- The dugout at Bowen Field is on the list for improvements.
- The foreperson has been maintaining Hannah's Dream and some equipment is on order.
- Finalizing procurement for the Pardee Seawall.
- Alling Memorial Golf Course current operator has exercised one of the renewal options. Presenting to the BOA a one-year renewal option for New England Golf.
- Improvements are in the process for litter concerns raised at Edgewood Park.
- David Agosta wrote a letter to the commission expressing his concern and possible solution to the summit being closed Monday – Saturday to vehicle traffic. Agosta stated the city is required to offer alternate means of access to the summit as there has been previously and bad driver behavior and lack of traffic enforcement is not a cause to change access. Agosta's solution is to utilize a possible city grant for an "Uber bus" to transport individuals to the top of the summit. Commissioner Ernie Santiago supports the summit being open every day. Director Gwen Williams and Bombero stated there are challenges such as staff shortages, changed traffic patterns, and enforcement of traffic rules that have delayed opening the summit every day. Commissioner Ernie Santiago stated walkers can use the trail to ensure safety. Bombero stated all trails met at the same road to lead to the summit. Commissioner Kenya Adams questioned why there wasn't a hurdle to close the road. Bombero stated it was easier to close it because a plan existed already for winter months. There was no issue because it reduced staff needs and did not add to any user conflicts or safety concerns.
- Agosta also stated he would like to prioritize trees/stumps at locations at Handicap Parking Spaces.

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

Please see the attached report from Deputy Director Stephen Hladun. (Below are comments made during the report.)

- Claude Tate has officially retired as the longest serving employee in the department (49 years of service). With the help of the commission would like to throw a retirement celebration. A requisition has been sent to HR for his replacement.
- There will be interviews for the position of Parks & Public Works Technician which replaced the Welder position.
- Three new positions for the 2024 FY. Two of these positions have been filled. Working on a title update for the other position which needs additional approvals before it can be posted. The Foreperson position vacated by Tate is an internal move (promotional opportunity).
- There has been an increase in the seasonal line item which allowed an increase to the base rate up to \$18 an hour to help with recruitment. Employment is 40 hours a week for 120 days. It is posted on the website for anyone to apply.
- Enough trucks and trailers to meet the current staff demands. A new tree truck was purchased in 2019, a new stump machine, and a masonry dump were purchased for the tree division. Also, in the process of securing 3 new hook trucks for the department with interchangeable bodies to secure roll-offs.
- Engineering is spearheading the renovation projects which include the 5 million dollars in allocated ARPA funds. Per the BOA direction, 2.5 million should go to signature projects with the other 2.5 going to smaller projects so every park in the city of New Haven gets some benefit. In addition to that, there are state-allocated ARPA funds. Engineering is working on progressing both state and city funds.
- The budget enabling documents changed the eligibility of low sip funds which are allocated to municipalities for various projects. They extended the definition to include trees, however, we use it for pavement management. There will be competitive grant awards for tree work, Annie has received many of those.
- You can jump the line and get a stump removed if you adopt a new tree through URI, we prioritize the stump location to improve the city's canopy. All other stumps are scheduled geographically based on the age of the stump. URI is only permitted to remove structurally unsound, dead disease, or dying trees. Per state statute, we cannot charge them the additional replacement or stump cost. The public also has the right to comment on the removal of a tree.
- Irrigation is up and running at Bowen Field.
- The irrigation system at Edgewood Mall has been off for several years. Will look at this system.

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

- Family Fun Day every Wednesday from 2:30 – 5:30 (six-week series).
- Summer programming has kicked off with 300 young people hired under Youth@Work and an additional 112 employed on the recreation side. So far everything is going well.
- Running 10 camps that are not at full capacity (some had to merge due to low enrollment). Camps run from 7:30 am to 5:30 pm, this includes pre and aftercare. Kids receive lunch either through the city or parents are informed to pack a lunch.
- The Deputy Director of Administration position has been filled and the candidate will start Monday. An offer has been made for the position of Outdoor Adventure Coordinator. The position of Park Ranger had to be reposted.
- Construction planning is moving forward with the recreation youth centers. Work will begin at Atwater. Looking into public rentals for community use so residents can host events on the weekends.

**Public Comment:**

- Dennis Serfilippi of 223 Alden Ave is in support of opening the road to the summit to everyone seven days a week. Serfilippi is confused about the conflicting messages about budgeting in the city.

**Meeting Adjourned: 7:00 PM**

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

Next Meeting: September 20, 2023

Location: 720 Edgewood Ave, New Haven, CT 06515