

New Haven Board of Park Commissioners

Meeting No. 1483

Commission Conference Meeting  
720 Edgewood Ave  
New Haven, CT 06515

January 17, 2024

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

**Absent:**

**Staff:** Director Michael Siciliano, Deputy CAO Rebecca Bombero, Deputy Director Stephen Hladun, Felicia Shashinka, Katherine Jacobs, Tariq Dasent

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- I. **Minutes of Meetings #1481 and 1482: Motion to approve Minutes of Meeting 1481. Motion Seconded. Unanimously approved. Meeting minutes 1482 were not completed. Meeting 1482 tabled. Closed.**
- II. **Treasurer's Report: Motion to approve September's Treasurer's Report. Motion Seconded. Unanimously approved. Closed.**

**Oak Project – Frank Cochran of 433 Edgewood Ave**

A year ago the oak project was started with the basic idea residents of the city had the responsibility as individual stewards to restore the canopy. Permission was granted to start a nursery in Edgewood Park. As luck would have it the U.S. Forest Service and URI obtained a grant to do the same thing. The Forest Service project acquired large numbers of acorns from 6 different cities throughout the east half of the U.S. and shipped them all to a giant facility to grow in pots in a year and a half. They asked for a few places in New Haven to plant, tend, and monitor them to see how well oaks grown in other parts of the country would do. Cochran is happy to report with all the storms the oak nurseries are doing very well. Cochran would like to continue next year and encourages everyone to participate in this program to plant oak throughout the city. They are planted on the hillside between West Park Ave and the park road in Edgewood Park. The rest (70 more) are in pots right now and will be in the ground wherever people would like them.

Cochran also suggested 10-12 fruit trees be planted in the median strip located in Edgewood Mall. There were fruit trees planted long ago and some have since died. Funds from two trusts can be used to beautify Edgewood Mall and plant fruit trees. Cochran believes involving the youth would be a great way to bridge the gap between generations. Commissioner Emily Sigman requested fruit trees be planted at the Farmington Canal bike path near easy watering spots as well. Rebecca Bombero stated the infrastructure for watering is more limited at the Farmington Canal but will review it.

**Introduction of Michael Siciliano**

Michael Siciliano, Director of Parks & Public Works introduced himself to the commissioners. Siciliano grew up in Hamden and worked for the town of Hamden for 26 years. Started as a maintenance worker, became the superintendent of streets in 2005, and in 2011 became the Assistant Director of Public Works and Parks. He retired in December of 2023. Siciliano has only been on the job for a week and has not had time to plan things for future events. Siciliano's main goal is to learn how the divisions operate and function before he starts planning. Siciliano

oversaw parks in Hamden and is familiar with maintenance and scheduling for parks. Siciliano expects employees to do the job they were hired to do and to do it successfully.

#### **I. New Business:**

- 1.) The Parks & Public Works Department will be split. URI recommended dividing the parks administration into 2 or 3 districts with district managers. These district managers would be new hires as these positions do not currently exist. There is a recommendation for a strategic plan. Bombero hopes to start the RFP process for the strategic plan outside of the budget cycle.

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

- 1.) Fairmont Park Improvements – **Motion to approve improvements to Fairmont Park. Seconded.** The estimate for improvements is \$300,000 paid for with ARPA funds. The play area will be completely new as nothing currently exists there. The project will be under construction next year as they are still finishing the design. **Unanimously approved.**
- 2.) Ann St Park Rule Sign – Residents in the neighborhood would like children under 10 to be accompanied by an adult. They feel this is needed to keep the area safe for children. The neighbors will enforce the rules, but Katherine Jacobs is unaware of the repercussions the language of this sign could cause. Commissioner Honda Smith foresees this becoming very problematic if neighbors are enforcing this rule. President Belowsky stated that rule should be eliminated from the sign. The commission disagrees with their request.
- 3.) Katherine Jacobs is not aware of how much APRA funds are still available. Bombero is also unaware as various projects are in various stages of procurement. A report would have to be run to see the balance. Bombero and Jacobs will provide that information at a later time.
- 4.) Bombero will follow up with the bond to be paid by WPCA for the easement.

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

- Secured off the lot purchases of vehicles – new supervisor and crew cab for the parks maintenance staff, new masonry dump with a chipper style body for the tree crew, and expecting hook trucks to be delivered either late this month or early next month (no date yet). Continuing to look for additional vehicles to spend American Recovery funds.
- The bid Stephen did for wide-arm mowers has closed and will be purchasing 2 with ARPA funds.
- Vacancies in the parks division, positions have already been posted.
- Hope to host a seasonal job fair to attract possible candidates and get the ball rolling in preparation of the busy season.
- The URI report about the future of the Parks & Public Works Department is due out this week.
- Still working on putting fiscal notes to some of the ideas for the budget. Since there has been no definitive answers everything is fluid and decisions will be made in the coming weeks. There are challenges in giving out specifics as the organizations are still united. Next month Bombero will provide specifics per Commissioner Harvey Feinberg's request.
- The goal is to have the RFP out for the Golf Course no later than late February to allow a reasonable period of advertisement to allow people to submit thoughtful and detailed proposals. Following the posting there will be a selection process and approval by the Board of Alders. President Belowsky believes it would be a better option to split the restaurant and the golf course. Bombero stated the last time the RFP was posted there were options to do one or the other or both. There are benefits to cooperation between the golf course and restaurant operator as it relates to limited parking but there are benefits to unique expertise. Both options will be considered.

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

- Offering ranger programs throughout the city – posted on the website.
- Community recreations are running.
- Preparing for summer camps and events.
- Youth@Work applications are out and posted online!
- New Community Engagement Coordinator who is working with youth, school, community people, and friends groups to provide volunteers.
- Movie series (6 movies) throughout the city and the Q House will show 4 movies.
- Fun bus will be out this summer.
- 6 Summer of fun days (Wednesdays)
- Successful Friends of Rudolph event.
- Planning a Black History Month event followed by an Easter egg hunt in March.
- Breakfast and lunch are provided in the summer for children in camps. The Board of Education also provides lunch at parks around the city.

**Meeting Adjourned 6:39 P.M.**

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

Next Meeting: February 21, 2024

Location: 720 Edgewood Ave, New Haven, CT 06515