

New Haven Board of Park Commissioners

Meeting No. 1485

Commission Conference Meeting  
720 Edgewood Ave  
New Haven, CT 06515

March 20, 2024

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

**Absent:** Commissioner Harvey Feinberg

**Staff:** Director Mike Siciliano, Director Gwen Williams, Deputy Director Stephen Hladun, Deputy Director Felicia Shashinka, Tariq Dasent, Katherine Jacobs

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I. **Minutes of Meetings #1484: Motion to approve Minutes of Meeting 1484. Motion Seconded. Unanimously approved. Closed. (Commissioner Kenya Adams was not present for the vote.)**

II. **Treasurer's Report: No report.**

1.) **East Rock Summit – Letter from David Agosta**

David Agosta was unable to make it to the meeting but the commissioners received his earlier emails regarding his concerns about East Rock Summit and other ADA violations. President David Belowsky stated areas with concerns need to be addressed and improved. Residents can report any city concerns through SeeClickFix and the appropriate department will address them.

2.) **Quarry Park Encroachment – Tracy Blanford**

Tracy Blanford of Friends of Quarry Park wanted an update on her April 2023 survey request to identify the boundary line at Quarry Park. This identification will help establish trails in the park. Blanford provided pictures of the current state of conditions. Commissioner Carl Babb suggested Livable City Initiative (LCI) be contacted to address the debris on the abutting property owner's lot. Blanford stated she is only concerned about the possible encroachment on park land. President Belowsky suggested a fence be installed after the survey is completed to reinforce the boundary. Commissioner Honda Smith suggested permits should be pulled from the Building Department to see if and why the abutting property owners have approval to do work in that area and then complete a survey. Commissioners Emily Sigman and Carl Babb believe the survey should be completed no matter what since the approval was already granted. Deputy Director Stephen Hladun will follow up with Giovanni Zinn from the Engineering Department as Zinn is taking the lead on this request.

III. **Director's Report:**

**Parks & Public Works:**

- Wide Area Mowers have arrived and are ready for grass cutting. In the process of acquiring field grooming equipment.
- 4 employees are certified stage operators.
- 2 caretakers have started, and another candidate is completing the pre-employment process.

- The tree division is finishing Oak & Elm trimming. They will begin to prep for the tree planting and stump grinding season.
- The equipment to complete the hybrid transformation of the meeting room at 720 Edgewood has been ordered.
- Currently working on Earth/Arborist Day events. Updates to follow.
- Juliano and Lighthouse Playgrounds have been installed with the help of Engineering.
- Monday, March 25 there will be a tree planting event at Kimberly Park at 9:15 to kick start the pledge to plant 1,000 trees in the city.
- Director Mike Siciliano and Deputy Director Stephen Hladun visited Common Ground and are very impressed with the work being done out there. Common Ground has extended the invitation to all commissioners.
- A box truck for leaves has been deployed to address the leaves in parks. A tow-behind leaf blower has also been added to help address leaf issues in larger spaces. Looking at other upgrades in addition to backpack blowers that will collect the leaves.
- To complete a clean-up at the park you can coordinate with the department for pick-up and supplies.
- There are many issues with the productivity of park employees and the appearance of city parks which Director Mike Siciliano and Deputy Director Stephen Hladun will address and implement improvements. There is also an issue with the demand for the parks and the realistic supply of employees and equipment. The parks department is understaffed. There are approximately 120 parks and only 30 -40 full-time caretakers at any given time.

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

- Youth employment is in full swing. The deadline to apply is March 28<sup>th</sup>. Currently received 400 applications and the goal is to offer employment to 500 -600 youth for summer and year-round employment (pending city and state funding). The age limit for employment is 14 years old in the 9<sup>th</sup> grade up to 21 years at the time of application submission.
- The recreation side will be running 15-16 camps throughout the city from June 24 to August 9. Camps hire 16 years and older, teachers, paraprofessionals, lifeguards, etc. to run the camps.
- As of today, no pools will be open this summer. There is a state statute that requires all pools to have a certified pool operator (unsure if each pool needs an operator or if one operator can run all pools). Currently, such a position does not exist within the Board of Education, and BOE does not believe one will be created and filled by summer. Youth & Recreation only permits the use of the pool while the BOE oversees the pools. Deputy Director Felicia Shashinka asked the commission to advocate for the pools to be open by reaching out to the BOE. Yale and Albertus Magnus run their programming for their pools.
- Beach stickers are being created for the summer and staff are being gathered to operate Lighthouse Park. It will open on Memorial Day weekend. If the weather permits Lighthouse will open the weekend before Memorial Day.
- Closed out nonprofit expansion grants. These grants will be for two years since they are under ARPA funding. The maximum an awardee can receive is \$45,000 each cycle (max \$90,000). The purpose of this grant is to expand any programs at no fee or minimal cost to the participants of the program. Anticipating there will be 7 to 8 awardees. A 2-year sports and pro-social activities grant is open until March 26, 2024. The maximum an awardee can receive is \$10,000 each cycle (max \$20,000). Anticipating there will be 10 awardees. Being very intentional about the awardees to ensure the quality of the programs.

- Continuing with the Youth Connect program. This is a program that specifically looks at the most at-risk youth in the city and works with them in the summer.
- There will be programming at Ralph Walker Rink during the summer months through Youth & Recreation. Working with Albertus Magnus student body and administration to develop community service hours to provide free skate programming. The Pride which the BOE runs as an alternative to gym takes place at the rink. The PAL has a program with the New York Rangers as well at the rink. Deputy Director William Dixon in partnership with Bauer is working with three schools (East Rock, Wexler-Grant, and Troup) to provide hockey instruction which includes outfitting approximately 100 students with all-new hockey gear.
- Some skates were purchased to replace older skates at the rink, but due to the high cost of equipment, not all skates could be replaced at once. A replacement schedule will be developed to phase out the worst skates first. President Belowsky suggested Bauer replace all the dated skates at the hockey rink.

#### IV. Old Business

- The golf course opened last week. However, construction is not complete.

#### V. New Business – **NONE**

#### **Meeting Adjourned 7:02 P.M.**

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

Next Meeting: April 17, 2024

Location: 720 Edgewood Ave, New Haven, CT 06515