

New Haven Board of Park Commissioners

Meeting No. 1456

Pardee Rose Garden  
150 Park Rd.  
Hamden, CT 06517

April 21, 2021

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Present: President Belowsky, Commissioners Carl Babb, Ronnell Higgins, Georgia Miller, Ernie Santiago, Hector Torres, Kevin Walton; Alder Sal DeCola; James Davis, John Hudak, John Triana, Cody Savoy, Shafiq Abdussabur

Absent: Thomas Verderame

Staff: Deputy Director William Carone, Director Jeff Pescosolido, Director Gwen Busch, Deputy Director William Dixon, Giovanni Zinn, Katherine Jacobs, Tariq Dasent

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- I. **Minutes of Meeting #1455: Motion to approve Minutes of Meetings 1455, Motion Seconded, unanimously approved. Closed.**
- II. **Treasurer's Report: No report. Thomas Verderame is on vacation.**
- III. **Old Business: NONE**
- IV. **New Business:**

**Regional Water Authority- James Davis, John Hudak, John Triana, Cody Savoy**  
Regional Water Authority will be making improvements to the Lake Whitney Dam. These improvements will bring the dam to current standards and regulations. RWA is requesting access to the eastern portion of the spillway off Farnam Drive. They will widen the existing trail to allow construction equipment to pass through so they can install new valve works. John stated right now the trail is a walking path that is over native soil. The RWA will build it up and make it a gravel road so the heavy equipment will not damage the ground itself. While widening the trail, RWA will minimize any negative impacts. Commissioner Walton asked if there would be any damages to the park during the improvement process. Walton was informed there would be no lasting damages and the RWA would be responsible for any damages they caused. Some trees will have to be removed to widen the trail for equipment to go through. While the RWA will be responsible for any damages they will not replace any trees that are removed. Commissioner Babb asked what kind of trees will be coming down as he did not want a tree removed that will cause lasting problems in the area. John Triana stated there is not an exact number slated to come down, however, they will minimize how many trees they cut down. President Belowsky asked why the trees cannot be replanted after they are removed, and he was informed that replacing a tree after it was removed would make access to the easement difficult. Instead, smaller trees outside of the easement can be planted. After construction is complete the RWA will not need heavy equipment to pass through only smaller trucks. The project is anticipated to last 2.5 years. Commissioner Babb recommended the park be returned to its original state because he does not want to lose any trees and turn it in to an open field. Commissioner Walton asked if the project can be done without access to the park. Walton was informed it would be safer to access the park from the east side and there is a way to do the project without accessing the park, but it will be at a significant cost to the project. Commissioner Walton asked who was footing the bill and was informed RWA would be paying for it. Deputy Director Carone stated this is the beginning stages of the project and there still needs to be much community outreach. Also, it will need to go to the Board of Alders for a permit for the easement. President Belowsky stated there

will need to be a bond to cover the land and the operation as this is big project. Belowsky would also like to schedule a walkthrough of the area with other commissioners, RWA, Giovanni Zinn, and Bill. This topic will be reviewed again.

#### **Free Library – Shafiq Abdussabur**

Shafiq Abdussabur requested placing a little free library at Winthrop Ave & Glen Road. Little libraries are small boxes that books are placed in. The community can borrow, keep, or replace the books. The residents in the area will be stewards and do general upkeep of the library. Shafiq would like to use the area to plant flowers and designate it a children's reading corner. Shafiq does not need funds or equipment from the Parks Commission he is only looking for their approval. Eventually he would like to add a bench. President Belowsky informed Shafiq the bench would need to conform with park benches in the City. The area is not in use right now and it will not displace anyone.

**Motion to approve. Motion Seconded. Unanimously Approved. Closed.**

Commissioner Santiago mentioned to the Commissioners the issues at Criscuolo Park. Santiago was informed quads and direct bikes are causing a safety hazard at the park. There is a request to close the bottom part of the park so they could stop the illegal off roading vehicles.

#### **V. Capital Project Update- Katherine Jacobs & Giovanni Zinn**

Katherine Jacobs and Giovanni Zinn presented Capital Project Updates. The framework used to set priority:

- Listen to output by the community and community leaders.
- Look through an equity lens to devote resources to historically underserved communities.
- Empower the community to amplify grassroot initiatives and partner with other organizations to implement projects with dedicated funds.
- Look at scale of potential projects to prioritize those low in cost but will provide a benefit to users.

These improvements include a span of projects:

- 1 Memorial
- 9 Athletic Facilities
- 6 Play Space Projects
- 7 Buildings
- 4 Preservation Projects
- 2 Bridges
- 2 Docks

Commissioner Walton raised the issue that the Commissioners were not informed of the groundbreaking ceremony of the new splash pad at Goffe Street Park. Commissioner Walton is not happy with not being informed prior to such events as he has raised this issue in the past. Giovanni Zinn suggested refreshing the Park Commission on projects on a quarterly basis as this may be best to keep everyone aware of what is happening.

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

Deputy Director William Carone informed the Commissioners the Bush Memorial Clock has been installed. There are plans to do landscaping around the clock. There are currently 2 caretaker positions open and a vacant superintendent position. Seasonal numbers are currently

low so this may affect grass cutting. Parks Department will assist with graduation for the Board of Education. Also, Parks is working with URI on the Stump Grind Program. This program helps provide paid work experience to individuals reentering the work force. Currently, grinding stumps so trees can be replaced. There are currently 300 new trees to replant half will be done in the spring and the other half in the fall. Lastly, the Ralph Walker Ice Rink Advisory met to revisit the RFP. The RFP will go out to bid, the advisory board will make recommendations for an operator, then the recommendation will go the Parks Commission. Carone will keep Commissioners updated.

**Director's Report Youth & Recreation:** Director Gwen Busch informed the Commissioners summer camps not BOE base related will be extended to the 3rd week in August. Starting conversations of free sports clinics in the summer for sports not typically pushed such as lacrosse and tennis. This will help bring a different lens of sports to inner city kids. Also, Youth & Recreation will collaborate with the BOE in July to provide recreation to 12 schools. Summer of Fun will have academics in the morning and recreation in the afternoon. Application for summer youth programming is underway at 720 Edgewood Ave. Currently, Youth & Rec is approving summer permits. There will need to be a covid plan submitted with all summer permits to be approved. Lastly, staffing is stretched at Youth & Recreation and Director Busch is asking for everyone's patience as they do their best to get things done. Commissioner Walton wanted to know if summer applications were still being accepted. Busch said by the end of April she will have a full plan on how to open more applications.

Meeting Adjourned: 7:34 PM

Minutes Submitted By: Tariq Dasent, Executive Administrative Assistant to Park & Public Works

Next Meeting: May 19th, 2021

Location: Zoom