

New Haven Board of Park Commissioners

Meeting No. 1452

Pardee Rose Garden
150 Park Rd.
Hamden, CT 06517

October 21, 2020

Present: President Belowsky, Commissioners Carl Babb, Georgia Miller, Hector Torres, Kevin Walton

Absent: Commissioner Ronnell Higgins, Ernie Santiago

Staff: Deputy Director William Carone

I. Minutes of Meeting #1451: Motion to approve Minutes of Meetings 1451, Motion Seconded, unanimously approved. Closed.

II. Treasurer's Report: Missing treasurer's report from Meeting # 1451 due to lack of secretarial help

III. Park Improvements/Upgrades Request: Katherine Jacobs, Landscape Architect for Parks Department & City Engineering Department, distributed a packet to the commissioners that went into detail about proposed park improvements for five different park locations (Fairmont Park, Edgewood Dog Park, Scantlebury Park, Pardee Rose Garden and DeGale Park).

Fairmont Park: Ms. Jacobs and the commissioners reviewed over the proposed plan for Fairmont Park. The plan included installing a two-tier retaining wall that will serve dual function to control a pre-existing erosion problem and provide a seeding area for the field, installing a new dug out because the current one is too far into the field for them to play, installing new lights that will enable players to get an extra hour to play, and installing a batting cage. Ms. Jacobs mentioned that they intend to address the chronic drainage issues and would like to renovate the field to give it quality play. They are also planning to install a water fountain outside the building and upgrading the kitchen within the building to meet health code requirements for concession. This project will be funded by a state grant. Commissioner Walton questioned once the field is renovated will the department be held responsible for maintaining the park and the field. Ms. Jacobs responded yes. Deputy Director Carone added that the maintenance department will do field work if they have a schedule. If there's a schedule, the field work will take place on weekdays' morning, the Friday before a scheduled weekend game or sometimes on the weekends.

Commissioner Walton wanted to go on record and state how the Park Commissioners should not be finding out about issues in the park by the newspaper. Giovanni Zinn, City's Engineer, responded that the project was discussed a couple of years ago in front of the commission and time has lapse since then. However, he will make sure in the future that the commission is brief first before hosting any public meetings.

Commissioner Babb inquired about the status of the Bowen baseball field project. Commissioner Babb went on to express how the field is being maintained, however, it is an eyesore and could be beneficial to the local high schools for use. Deputy Director Carone explained Fairmont Park is a grant opportunity which results in it being bumped up. They are trying to get funds for Bowen baseball field which will be a small in-house project. Giovanni Zinn stated that they are working on the design for the field and will give an update at the next meeting.

Birdhouse at Edgewood Dog Park: Ms. Jacobs and the Commissioners went on to talk about the proposed request to have bird houses placed in the Edgewood dog park. Ms. Jacobs spoke with visitors of the dog park whom shared their complaints about the mosquitoes in the area. Ms. Jacobs consulted with Outdoor Adventure Coordinator, Martin Torresquintero, and Park Ranger, Elizabeth Kaplan, about the issue who suggested installing bird houses because the birds would be able to eat the mosquitoes.

Ms. Jacobs went on to explain the setup of the bird houses. The bird houses will be mounted to a post. It will be installed outside of the mowing area which wouldn't cause any issues for the maintenance crews. The bird houses are going to be spaced out and away from any overhanging branches to avoid predators. Ms. Jacobs is in contact with the Lion's Club who are interested in funding the project. Martin Torresquintero added that he has been in contact with Audubon Society who are familiar with this issue because they have setup bird houses in the West Rock Nature Center, West River Memorial Park, and other park locations to resolve it as well. He stated it's a great way to do natural pest control. Ms. Jacobs hope to have the posts set in the ground sometime this fall before the ground freezes.

Rules of Pickleball Courts at Scantlebury Park: The next topic discussed amongst the commissioners and Ms. Jacobs was the draft of a park sign of the rules for the new pickleball courts at Scantlebury Park. Commissioner Walton suggested that she makes it clear that the courts are available for free use but not private lessons.

Repair stonewall at Pardee Rose Garden: The commissioners and Ms. Jacobs went into a lengthy discussion about the proposal to have stonewall repaired by Mr. Capasso at Pardee Rose Garden. The stonewall is located at the end of the street along the grass. The goal is to have funding pulled from the Pardee Trust fund. There are two stairways: left steps that will cost \$19,000 and right steps that will cost \$21,000. The commissioners went through proposed contract and had questions about the charges for overtime that was showing on it. Ms. Jacobs explained that they are including their wage rates for paperwork purposes. She further explained that there will be a fixed rate for the contract and the city will not be charged for the hours they worked.

Site Improvements at DeGale Park: Ms. Jacobs discussed with the commissioners the requested site improvements made by the neighbors for DeGale Park. The improvements include: an installation of a splashpad, fenced in area around the playground, and creating a grill area within proximity of the basketball courts and stage. There were some concerns about having picnic tables setup in the park because it was thought to attract suspicious activities; however, by having it in this specific location it will be within eyesight for police. There will also be security cameras and lights placed near the horseshoe pit because the neighbors held concerns about the crime activities that was taking place in that area. Commissioner Belowksy questioned if there were any other security cameras within the park. Ms. Jacobs responded that there were not, but they are thinking about placing one on the building as well. If approved, it will be funded by a state grant.

Motion to approve all the requested park improvements. Motion Seconded, unanimously approved. Closed.

IV. Park Bench Request for Pardee Rose Garden: Gary Dickinson, Horticulturist for Parks Department, proposed to the commissioners a request to have three new benches installed in the Pardee Rose Garden. Mr. Dickinson informed the commission that he and staff will build the benches themselves but need the required materials (i.e. slabs of wood) in order to do it which would be \$1750. Mr. Dickinson hopes to dedicate one of the benches in memory of Matthew Naab, a former horticulturist. Mr. Dickinson assured the commissioners that the benches will be like the ones that are already within the park. He would like to get a plaque for the bench that will be honoring Matthew Naab. Commissioner Walton questioned about the timeline for the project. Mr. Dickinson replied that it will take about 8-10 weeks to get

material and he hopes to start soon after as long as weather permits. If not, then it will be a spring project.

Motion to approve the park benches in Pardee Rose Garden. Motion Seconded, unanimously approved. Closed.

V. Old Business:

- **Commissioner Bush's Memorial Clock** – Deputy Director Dixon asked if there were any updates about the clock. Deputy Director Carone informed her that they are waiting on the electrician to return or they could hire a contractor. Commissioner Belowsky suggested they search for a contractor.
- **Ailing Memorial Golf Course:** Commissioner Belowsky believes that the golf course is bringing in a lot of revenue. He believes that the department should re-think about constructing just one building. Deputy Director Dixon stated that he spoke with Larry who told him that they made more money this year than they did in the past five years.

VI. Director's Report:

Recreation Updates: Deputy Director Bill Dixon delivered updates about the Recreation department.

- Gwendolyn Busch-Williams is the new Director of Youth and Recreation. Ms. Busch-Williams and her staff (Youth Services) has been working great with the Parks and Recreation Department. They understand how our department works and it's a great match. The Youth Services staff will remain at 165 Church Street and the Recreation staff will remain at 720 Edgewood Ave on the first floor.
- **Staffing:** New Park Ranger Daniel Aaron Robles will be starting on October 30, 2020. He has been working with the department for the past 7 years as a part-time employee. He was scheduled to start on October 19, 2020 but must quarantine for 14 days due to significant other testing positive with COVID-19.
- Deputy Director Dixon is working on having buzzer and cameras installed on the front door of 720. It's safety measures for the front office staff that should have been in place but needed now due to COVID-19.
- Trunk or Treat event – Halloween event scheduled to take place on October 31, 2020 at Coogan Pavilion from 5p -7pm. The staff will decorate the park for the public.
- commissioners if they want to start the interview process at the first of the year. Commissioner Walton suggested they should start the process now.

Maintenance Update: Deputy Director Carone delivered updates about the Maintenance department.

- **Staffing:** Deputy Director Carone informed the commissioners that one of his employees tested positive for COVID-19. He was not in contact with the employee, however, 4 of his employees were in contact. Currently, there are 5 employees out (including the employee tested positive) due to this situation. The staff members that are on quarantine did not lose any time and are still getting paid.
- **Ralph Walker Skating Rink:** Deputy Director Carone and Deputy Director Dixon are currently coming up with COVID-19 plan for the skating rink that can be submitted to the Health Department. They just finished making ice which came out great.

Commissioner Babb questioned about the status of the parking situation at the rink. Deputy Director Carone asked him if they decided to place a gate up for the parking lot at the previous meeting? Katherine Jacobs responded that she tried to

move it forward with the request, but Giovanni Zinn told her that they are going to wait until after construction before putting up a gate. Deputy Director Dixon added that the goal is to have the entire rink area fenced off from front to back.

Deputy Director Dixon went on to give the commissioners an update of what's been going on with the rink. Currently, Albertus Magnus is practicing in the rink. However, they had a COVID-19 problem on their campus, and they shut down all programs but will be back in on Friday. They have a COVID-19 plan that the department is aware of. They are using all the locker rooms in the rink. Albertus Magnus last day of practice is November 19, 2020. Deputy Director Dixon is trying to put together a public skating schedule for weekends only. They are trying to come up with how they will do public skating and how many people will they allow? He stated that he still cannot rent out the rink to other schools. Commissioner Babb questioned if there are standard fees for all schools. Deputy Director Dixon answered yes, it's \$500 for 2 hours and he stated this fee is an effect for 2 years.

- Christmas Tree: The tree will come in on November 2, 2020 and will be coming from Cheshire, CT.

Meeting Adjourned: 6 p.m.

Next Meeting: January 20th, 2021

Location: ZOOM