



PARKS & RECREATION ADVISORY COMMISSION

CITY OF HARTFORD

Tuesday, May 31, 2022 6:00 p.m.

Parks and Recreation Advisory Meeting - Webex Meeting

Attendees

Commissioners

Brian Gallagher, Donna Swarr, Kathy Krackowsky, Chris Hayes, Nyasha McCauley, David Morin, Miriam Roane, Charmaine Craig, Hyacinth Yennie, Colin Billings, Jose Camacho

City staff and guests

Chavon Hamilton-Burgess, Jean King, Daria Ayers, Petrel Maylor, Mary Falvey, Jessica Mercier, Mark Dowd, Julia Jack, ASL Interpreter, Joao John dos Santos, Troy Stewart, Michael Looney, Janine McMahon, Jack Hale

Minutes

Chris Hayes opened the meeting and called for a motion to approve April's minutes. Kathy Krackowsky motioned, Hyacinth Yennie seconded. David Morin abstained. Motion carried.

Chair Report - Chris Hayes

Chris Hayes reiterated the new format introduced at the last meeting for in depth information to be shared in reports ahead of the meeting and that city staff will be highlighting key pieces and best of the best at the meetings. Commissioners are asked to send questions and concerns for department heads ahead of the meeting so they can be adequately addressed at the monthly PRAC meeting. Chris motioned to move the Marcus Garvey park presentation before Good News and Announcements. Hyacinth Yennie seconded. Motion carried.

Marcus Garvey Park - Chavon- Hamilton Burgess

Chavon Hamilton-Burgess introduced herself as the Founder/executive director of Hartford Health Initiative where they focus on health disparities, health outcomes, and that would include outside green spaces. Hartford Health Initiative undertook the early development of the March Garvey Park. It's not only a project of her organization but she is a resident in the neighborhood. This project started in 2016 highlighting Marcus Garvey as an influential black leader in history; they got involved through the city's Love your Block project. Residents choose a spot to beautify and enhance. As it was being maintained it was determined the space could

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use some color, flowers, topsoil mulch, so in partnership with 20 resident volunteers, Keney Park Sustainability group and City of Hartford they continued the work.

They have been awarded another grant this year through Love your Block which will support benches and lighting. They have formally requested a park sign that is uniform with other park signs. They are now examining sustainability and exploring forming a Friends of Marcus Garvey park group to keep things going.

Chris Hayes stated support for creating a friends group. And noted there's nothing this body needs to approve but offered help to shepherd Chavon, others through the process.

Donna Swarr added that a friends group is a great way to keep up momentum. It can look like anything but the most important thing will be to set up dates and form a plan so you know what you're working off of.

Charmaine Craig added more background stating how the project started with the MDC on Granby Street giving that space to the community. She added more historical context about Marcus Garvey as the father of black movement, and the area should represent that. Really thankful to Chavon for this effort.

Mark Dowd added that it has been a pleasure working with Chavon and thanked her for helping to make our parks look even better.

Good News/Announcements

Kathy Krackowsky shared that the roses in Elizabeth Park are blooming, they are replanting tulip gardens, mulching, and the visitor center is open daily. The park is turning 125 this year and there will be a week-long celebration, July 13, 14, 15, 16.

Donna Swarr shared the Colt Park Foundation obtained nonprofit status, and received four grant awards most on trees, tree pruning, art installation, and unity grant for festivities.

Nyeshia McCauley shared that the carousel is open and being operated by the Bushnell Park Foundation, summer concert series are beginning and the Pump House Gallery should be open soon for events.

David Morin shared that the Coleman Bros Carnival has come and gone, no damage. Friends of Pope Park are beginning to plan for National Night Out on Tuesday August 2. They are

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requesting support from PRAC to plan. Chris Hayes replied he can help. The Riverfront has hosted it so there's a wealth of experience. David clarified and stated he needs help with contacts within the Hartford fire and police departments. Donna Swarr replied she can help with that. Hyacinth Yennie stated David can call her for help as well.

City Engineering - Mark Dowd

- Pope T-Ball field wrapping up looks fantastic, sodded infield, seeded outfield, fence added to a few more sections, just about complete won't be open this year, give the season time to fill in and mature, first thing next spring ready to go.
- Kicking off for Futsal down at Colt, meeting with contractors will be getting started first of August, fencing off area and work in earnest first week of August
- Elizabeth park parking lot moving along, looking favorable for paving in June done in July or early August
- Forrester Park - funded through Hartford Parks trust fund FY 2023,
- Batterson park program admin selected, won't see big changes immediately, but moving forward
- Bankside grove in Pope Park, firm selected now gathering info and starting design next month
- Julia Jack added Bushnell Park - west side estimated to start in July

Hyacinth Yennie inquired about updates in Goodwin park. Mark Dowd replied they are looking into designs for Maple Street entrance, Hubbard entrance, and rehab of the club house, but no details are available yet.

Hyacinth inquired about the Park Ranger and the idea of helping to curb dumping, littering. She also asked about repairs being made to the water fountain at the club house. Mark replied they will look into that. Hyacinth inquired about the installation of the gate to prevent cars from coming through. Mark replied he spoke to Frank and it's not 100% but seemed to agree that will be an area to get that taken care of, will be able to install.

David Morin thanked Mark for the work with Liberty Landscaping, but asked what is the construction schedule for the batting cages west side of the existing little league field. Mark Dowd replied that he will reach out to Kevin and get back to David. Julia Jack responded there is no delay with Liberty Landscaping; they are waiting for the ground to dry.

Hyacinth Yennie inquired about the individual who is living in Goodwin park and what can be done to move him out. Mark Dowd replied they are working with Officer Barrett, and can reach out again.

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Jose Camacho inquired about replacing trees in Heaven Skate Park. Trees have been removed recently and there's no longer shade. Mark Dowd replied he does not have the dates but new trees will be planted. Dead trees were removed. He added the DOT will be working in the Skate park and the park will have to be closed, June 7, rain date June 8.

Hyacinth Yennie stated paving the walkway on the side of Maple Avenue won't work. It should be gravel not concrete due to the tree roots. Mark Dowd replied as design gets closer they will remember that.

David Morin inquired about following up on Pope Park warranty or replacement for trees planted by Knox, south side appear to be dead. Mark replied he did have a conversation with Patrick Doyle but does not remember his answer right now. This was a welcome reminder.

Parks Report - Mark Dowd

- Middle of the month new employees starting - maintainers, senior Gardner
- Golf courses, Keney Park hit their budgeted numbers, Goodwin will come close, both look good
- Fields have been busy, all the fields, events in all parks starting up, concerts, walks,
- Some splash pads will be delayed due to parts, Keney inside pool area, Colt park, - opting to turn on and shutting off at 8, not all, system may work but a few that need to run continuously
- Pope, Keney, Goodwin outdoor pools open July 2
- Michael Looney clarified they are working on getting the splash pads all squared away by June 18, turned on and off by lifeguards, good percentage have auto operation, Keney and Colt need total replacement for the system to function on auto until then its manual while waiting for contractor to finish up the work

Hyacinth Yennie inquired about life guards being hired for the season. Troy Stewart replied they are in the process of hiring 7 lifeguards, in a good place. Hyacinth asked Mark if Vincent could help weed in the area across from the golf course, can't just weed whack, it needs a different approach. Mark replied affirmatively. He'll talk to Vincent.

Brian Gallagher inquired about the sprinkler systems operation at the new soccer field. It doesn't appear to be working correctly. Mark replied he will have to check with Tony.

Hyacinth inquired about the status of the study for Goodwin park. Mark replied it's in progress but no timetable right now.

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Recreation - Daria Ayers

- Block party series weather impacted - discussing make up dates
- Finished lifeguard training class
- Butch Lewis fishing derby held, was great,
- Summer camp information up on MyRec and all other programs up, sign ups also at center locations

Hyacinth Yennie inquired if the city is working with the schools all year round - getting high school students trained to be lifeguards. Daria asked John to speak to that. John Santos replied the District got rid of the swimming component, swim teams decimated, feeder programs not occurring like they used to, can't pull from high schools because the kids are not there.

Troy Stewart stated they are thinking creatively about this and trying to get kids through the LIT program, offering incentives for 14- 15 year olds. Hoping they can get them to think about the opportunity and career as a lifeguard through the centers.

Donna Swarr offered there's an app schools are using, maybe reaching out to the Board of Ed to coordinate a message to be sent out to families.

John Santos stated the eleven kids have all been recruited from Hartford schools, hired two, could be more.

Brian Gallagher inquired if they are considering bringing back the swim team program in the summer.

John replied if Brian is able to run the program at your pool? Difficult to run programs, need people.

Tree Planting - Jack Hale

Jack Hale presented the Spring 2022 tree planting plan to the PRAC group.

Jack mentioned the City Forester is out on disability and he is pitching in with folks from Knox. Intend to move on the goal of 200 trees planted this spring. They are actively Identifying places to plant shade trees along the perimeter of the roads to shade the sidewalks.

David Morin mentioned the need to include in the discussions the need for adequate spacing between sidewalk and street so trees can't be taken out by cars.

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Jack Hale replied there is a new standard, getting away from wedging trees in skinny aprons.

Kathy Kraczkowsky mentioned Elizabeth park is having 69 trees planted, built in 2-year maintenance and warranty into agreement, finishing up 36, 10 new trees a year, most important park is the care and maintenance, less trees better care.

Donna Swarr offered there's plenty of space for trees to grow by Van Block border of Colt park, a number of them taken down - story walk going in.

Permanent Structures - Kathy Kraczkowsky

Kathy Kraczkowsky raised a discussion about outside groups donating or gifting benches, picnic tables, bird houses, and other permanent structures for the parks and inquired if there are standards for receiving these items and what is the liability from the city? She inquired who's responsible for upkeep.

Michael Looney replied this is a good point and this issue is coming up more and more. There are no specific set of standards to the best of his knowledge.

Chris Hayes inquired if he and Michael can work together on a resolution or process. Mike replied affirmatively and suggested Julia Jack and Mark Dowd join in as well. Donna Swarr added that five years ago an effort was started, collected some info from parks, didn't get very far but first what's needed is a discussion on the process for receiving gifts, nice description, who would be reviewing it, not overly formal.

Michael Looney responded that all donations must be formally accepted by the City Council. Additional approvals might be needed by planning and zoning.

Mary Falvey added the preservation commission is struggling with this. Standards are needed. Need to understand what's allowable. David Morin added what is the process for replacing benches.

Legislative Updates -

Donna Swarr stated Chris should contact the Mayor's office to shepherd the process for Hyacinth Yennie and Janine McMahon to get on the council agenda. Chris Hayes replied affirmatively and will also connect with Charmaine Craig.

Chris Hayes stated he will reach out to commissioners by email to poll for in person, Zoom or hybrid meeting preferences.

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Chris Hayes asked for a motion to adjourn.
Donna Swarr moved. Kathy Krackowsky seconded.

Adjourned 7:36pm

Respectfully submitted,

Nyeshia McCauley

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