



PARKS & RECREATION ADVISORY COMMISSION

CITY OF HARTFORD

Minutes

Tuesday, July 27, 2021, 6pm

Park and Recreation Advisory Meeting - Zoom Meeting

Attendees:

Commissioners: Brian Gallagher, Donna Swarr, Miriam Roane, Craig Mergins, Dave Rozza, Jose Camacho, Charmaine Craig, Colin Billing, Chris Hayes, Nyesha McCauley, Janier Caban-Hernandez

City Staff: Michael Looney, John Santos, Julia Jack, Rhoj Barrett, Jenelle Howard, Edward Doughtie, Petrel Maylor, Daria Ayers, Kim Oliver, Mark Dowd

Guests: Hyacinth Yennie, Kathleen Krackowsky, Mary Cockram, Mary Falvey, Patrick Doyle,

Welcome Commissioners and Guests

All commissioners and guests introduced themselves.

Minutes

The minutes for the May 25, 2021 meeting were not approved at the June meeting due to outstanding corrections. The item was carried to the July meeting on the condition that the commissioners who requested corrections email them to Donna Swarr and Brian Gallagher. Donna Swarr inquired if commissioners with objections to the May minutes could bring them forward. Hearing none, Donna Swarr made a motion to accept the May minutes, Craig Mergins seconded. Chris Hayes abstained. Motion carried. Ms. Swarr made a motion to approve the June minutes. Mr. Mergins seconded; Chris Hayes abstained. Motion carried.

Department Reports:

City Engineer Report– Mark Dowd

Mark Dowd gave the city engineer report for Frank Dellaripa who was absent. Mr Dowd stated the sidewalk and lighting improvements in Bushnell Park are moving along. Lights will be installed next week. Forester Park design funding put in place. Design work will be starting. Goodwin Park irrigation project will be going out to bid in August. The T-ball field at Pope Park has a few remaining details to be worked out. The fencing is going out to bid. Colt Park soccer fence is coming down, goals are going up, bleachers installed as of last week.

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Questions/Concerns: Brian Gallagher asked if this soccer field is in the MyRec systems. Mr. Dowd stated no, but the plan is that it will be by September 1. Mr. Gallagher asked if the repairs have been made at Quirk. Mr. Dowd stated the repairs are being made now, they were not as extensive as thought. Mr. Gallagher raised a concern about needing more lighting at Colt or more lights in general at fields. The concern being it gets dark by 4pm in the fall, new teams being added and competition for space to practice and night games. Mr. Dowd stated he is making note of the concern to get it on the path to resolve. Further discussion between Mr. Gallagher, Ms. Swarr and Charmaine Craig on the use of Dillion Stadium. Hyacinth Yennie relayed there have been improvements at HPHS but she has inquired with the school board about additional funding for the track lighting and is hopeful it will happen. Mr. Gallagher asked if the community will be able to use it and stated that Ms. Yennie and he could discuss further.

Parks Report - Mark Dowd

Mark Dowd gave a general report on the parks. The jazz festival in Bushnell Park was really nice. Neighborhood block parties are going on. Marcus Garvey Park has received improvements through Love your Block. National Night Out is coming up on August 2, preparing Cronin and KDA. The golf course's numbers might be soft due to the recent rains.

Question/Concerns: Brian Gallagher raised a concern regarding Keney Park. The entrance at Woodland has a very high volume of cars, traffic, and activity. This is impacting access to the pool; lifeguards can't get out the gate at times. Mr. Dowd stated he has heard about this but did not realize it was that extensive of an issue. He can open up more parking starting tomorrow and hopefully that will help. Hyacinth Yennie inquired about the tent city in Goodwin. Mr. Dowd stated Officer Barrett has worked to relocate the unhoused visitors. Ms. Yennie stated they may leave momentarily but they return. Mr. Dowd stated he will keep an eye out. Donna Swarr inquired about the apple orchard stakes. Mr. Dowd stated he will work to get them. Ms. Swarr inquired about the lawn bowling. Michael Looney stated he is in communication with Treasurer Cloud (was that Corporation Counsel?) and is awaiting response. Charmaine Craig thanked Mark Dowd for his assistance with Marcus Garvey Park. It was a wonderful community project redoing the space. It is active again, clean, and peaceful. Colin Billings mentioned the trash dumpsters at Hyland daycare are overflowing. Mr. Dowd replied he'll mention it to the team leader.

Recreation Report - Jenelle Howard

Jenelle Howard gave the recreation report for Troy Stewart who was absent. Ms. Howard stated the camp program is operating Monday-Friday, 40 kids registered and 25 LIT

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CITY OF HARTFORD

registered. The evening program is running at Hartford High, Weaver, Parker, and Arroyo Thursday (4-8pm), Friday (4-8pm), Saturday (12-4pm), with 220-230 youth in attendance for all three days. They are serving dinner/snack at Willie Ware, Monday-Wednesday 4-8pm to 20-25 kids daily. The lunch program starts Monday 8/2 and runs for two weeks. Playground hours will change to adapt to serving lunch, 10-3pm. Zumba Tuesday 5-6pm and Saturday 9-10am at Goodwin old tennis court, on hold for now. Aquatics- all outdoor pools open daily. Schedules are based on staff availability and pool usage.

Questions/concerns: Hyacinth Yennie raised a concern that there appears to be a lack of lifeguards at Goodwin. John Santos stated there is a CT and nationwide shortage of lifeguards. Safety is the priority, and all pools will stay open in a safe manner. He has more ideas about building the lifeguard program. Ms. Swarr raised having lifeguard classes in the winter when kids are available. Kim Oliver stated the shortage is real as well as other factors impacting the program. They have been working with the mayor and corporation counsel to resolve the HR issues and union negotiations. Further discussion was had about streamlining the process for hiring. Ms. Yennie inquired if there are drop-in programs or just organized sports. Ms. Oliver replied it's not just drop-in, there are many partners that run organized programs and also drop-in for teens. Ms. Swarr inquired if all the programming is listed in MyRec. Ms. Oliver thanked Ms. Swarr for an earlier email regarding this and it is noted that not all programming is reflected in the system. Troy Stewart is working with the team on this. She will follow up with PRAC after they work through this.

History of Hartford Cemeteries – Mary Falvey

Mary Falvey made a presentation on the history of Hartford cemeteries and their importance to the city of Hartford.

- Ancient Burying Ground
- Old North
- Zion Hill Mount Pleasant
- Soldiers Field Northwood Cemetery
- Burial sites at NW Sigourney Park and McCook Hospital Campus

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CITY OF HARTFORD

Ms. Falvey recommended that the city support Friends of groups for cemeteries. Ms. Swarr recommends Mr. Dowd give a review of the presentation with his team. The cemeteries are visited by a wide range of people and stressed the importance of keeping them in as good order as possible.

City's Love Your Block Program - Donna Swarr

Donna Swarr relayed there's discussion happening regarding a Love your Block volunteer day to take place in October. Stay tuned for more info.

HPL Story Walk Permanent Installation in Colt Park

Donna Swarr shared with the group the permanent story walk installation in Colt Park is being proposed by the Hartford Public Library and the Hartford Athletic Green and Blue Foundation. She is seeking support from PRAC for this project. Ms. Swarr made a motion to send a letter of support from PRAC to zoning and the City Council. Brian Gallagher seconded. All in favor. Motion carried.

New Business

Chris Hayes shared that on August 9, 2021, a public announcement is coming forth regarding renaming the Hartford to Windsor Riverwalk to the Joe Marfuggi Riverwalk.

Legislative updates

Donna Swarr announced that Dave Rozza is leaving PRAC and there is a new representative for Heaven Skate Park, Jose Camacho. She wanted to acknowledge Mr. Rozza's stamina and thanked him for his service. Carl Williams has resigned which leaves the total number of commissioners down to 13. Ms. Swarr encouraged commissioners and guests to help recruit people who are excited about our parks.

General announcements

Ms. Swarr shared that Nat Gale will join next month's meeting to discuss golf recommendations to increase Hartford residents' use.

Donna Swarr requested Michael Looney give an overview of the ranger pilot program at the next meeting. She also mentioned the Colt Park Foundation survey is underway and invites everyone to put in what you would like to see prioritized.

Colin Billings inquired about Forester's basketball and splash pool improvements. Michael Looney responded that the ball is just getting rolling.

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Brian Gallagher polled the group on going back to in-person meetings. Further discussion took place with consensus being wait and see what happens. Donna Swarr made a motion to wait until September to decide if meetings will be in person or remain online. Miriam Roane seconded. Motion carried.

Patrick Doyle stated he was in conversation with Janice Castle about an October citywide clean-up. Knox is anticipating group projects coming online. Thinking about partners and work we can get done. Knox is here to support the good work PRAC is doing.

Meeting Adjourned at 7:36 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Nyesha McCauley

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