



## **PARKS & RECREATION ADVISORY COMMISSION**

### **CITY OF HARTFORD**

**Tuesday, May 30, 2023 6:00 p.m.**

Parks and Recreation Advisory Meeting - Hybrid Meeting, Webex & 50 Jennings Rd., 2nd flr., KC'S Conference Room, Hartford, CT 06120

#### **Attendees**

##### **Commissioners**

Brian Gallagher, Donna Swarr, Chris Hayes, Craig Mergins, Kathy Krackowsky, Janine McMahon, Miriam Roane, Nyesha McCauley, Charmaine Craig, Colin Billings

##### **City staff and guests**

Petrel Maylor, Mark Dowd, Julia Jack, Kristina Baldwin, Ohemeng Kyeremateng, Micheal Looney, Jose Camacho, Allison Connors, Councilwoman Marilyn Rossetti

Chair Chris Hayes called the meeting to order. Brian Gallagher moved to approve the minutes of the Tuesday April 25, 2023 meeting. Motion approved. Donna Swarr abstained.

#### **Good News and Announcements - Chris Hayes**

Commissioners and attendees shared news and updates, happenings in the parks.

#### **Chair Report - Chris Hayes**

Chair Chris Hayes reported Troy Stewart is retiring and on behalf of PRAC thanked Troy for all his efforts on behalf of PRAC and his years of service. Mr. Hayes called for a motion to amend the agenda. Brian Gallagher moved to undertake the presentation from Kristina Baldwin to the June meeting. Motion carried.

#### **Department reports**

##### **Julia Jack shared updates from city engineering.**

- Bushnell Park west side complete, working through punch list
- Pulaski wall construction beginning
- Pope Park west June 8 kick off

##### **Parks and Recreation Advisory Commissioners**

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- Goodwin Park swimming pools needs immediate safety repairs, working to get in time for opening in July
- Elizabeth Park basketball court will start when crew is finished up with Bushnell Park, park master plan meeting June 7
- Goodwin Park meeting with MARG NRZ on June 8 to discuss entrance with design team
- Forester Park, will have July kick off meeting with Nunes construction
- Keney Park entrance had drainage issues, delayed a bit but moving forward, paving is next by end of June
- Spray pads are being repaired - starting at Pope Park north, Hyland, Wille Ware, Sigourney Square there's a 4-6 week lead time for equipment

Brian Gallagher asked how long the Elizabeth Park basketball court will be out of commission and will the public be made aware of the construction. Julia Jack replied it will be about a month and they will take steps to inform the public. Donna Swarr inquired about the status of the Futsal court. Julia Jack replied she was aware the contractor was waiting for concrete to cure. Kathy Krackowsky inquired about the Elizabeth Park master plan and the plans for sunrise overlook. She suggested it should be a plaza and closed to cars.

#### **Mark Dowd reported on the Parks.**

- Trinity Street in Bushnell Park has been milled and paved and the repainting of the BLM mural started today and will continue for the next week or so
- Cronin playscape will start next week and should take no more than a month
- Athletic fields are busy, lining and dragging for flag football in five fields
- Keney and Goodwin golf revenue strong, courses are in great shape
- Tree removal, tree pruning at Elizabeth happening
- Softball fields and soccer fields rolled last week or week before
- Cleaning playscapes continues
- Events have started in the parks, there's something happening every weekend

Donna Swarr inquired about additional port-a-potties. Park visitors have asked if they can bring their own due to enormous lines. Donna also inquired about taking a tour of the concession stand. She informed the group that they have invited HPD to walk in the park on Sunday as a deterrent to reckless vehicular driving in the park.

#### **Ohemeng Kyeremateng reported on Recreation.**

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- Block party held at Arroyo earlier this month was successful roughly 100 people in attendance Centers are up and running
- Girls volleyball at Arroyo growing, basketball is consistent, summer programming camp and LIT registration open
- Aquatic staff cleaning pools now

Craig Mergins inquired about the status of lifeguards for this season. Ohemeng Kyeremateng replied they are short but confident they will be adequately staffed to open. 45-50 lifeguards are returning and interviewing now. Kristina Baldwin added the job posting went up earlier and the process for hiring is open and rolling as opposed to having an end date. Craig followed by asking if that is part of simplifying the HR hiring process. Ms. Baldwin replied she was not a part of those previous discussions but this is the way they are doing it now. Brian inquired about the ages for volleyball and Ohemeng replied it is currently high school aged but open to all. The session is held Monday night at Arroyo, 5pm to 6:30pm and will be at Parker soon. Donna Swarr inquired if summer programming will return to the parks. Ohemeng stated he will follow up on that.

### **Hartford Marathon Route in Elizabeth Park - Kathy Krackowsky**

Commissioner Kathy Krackowsky reported this agenda item is really about events in the Rose Garden area. She expressed concern over the potential damage to the Rose Garden when visitors host events in that area. There have been great investments in the Rose Garden and the garden has gained national fame. She suggested closing that area to events as visitors can host events in alternate park locations. Ms Krackowsky stated she is doing research on best practices in other botanical gardens and will bring that back to the group.

Councilwoman Rossetti stated it's a public park and appreciates the efforts of the Friends group but would be against pausing events in the Rose Garden. Director Michael Looney shared that are his thoughts as well. The discussion continued back and forth. Chair Chris Hayes closed the discussion and affirmed the discussion will be taken up later with more research.

### **Changing of the City Ordinance - Chris Hayes**

Donna Swarr reported the City Council Public Works, Parks, Recreation, & Environment committee met on the agenda item to create the Department of Parks and Recreation. The item passed favorably out of committee and sent back to City Council, the City Council postponed action on it. Discussion by PRAC meeting attendees followed. A commissioner suggested reconstituting the PRAC recreation committee so these items could be discussed further.

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Chair Chris Hayes closed the discussion and stated this item will be brought back in the June meeting and supported the idea of getting that committee formed again.

#### **Council Update - Councilwoman Marilyn Rossetti**

Councilwoman Rossetti reported the Parks & Recreation ordinance was never about individuals but about having a robust recreation and parks department and the need to focus back on this. She thanked Troy Stewart for his years of service.

#### **New business**

No legislative updates.

#### **Other - Chris Hayes**

Chair Chris Hayes reported there are an equal number of people in the Webex meeting and in person at the PRAC meeting and stated it has been suggested this is not the best use of resources. He proposed taking the meetings back to fully virtual and opened the floor for comments. Commissioners discussed multiple options. Commissioners agreed to the June meeting being held virtually. Chair Chris Hayes stated he will put these items on the agenda in two sections, one to discuss meeting times and another to discuss a park celebration meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 7:17 p.m.

Nyesha McCauley, Secretary

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