

PARKS & RECREATION ADVISORY COMMISSION

CITY OF HARTFORD



Monthly Meeting Minutes Parks and Recreation Advisory Commission Tuesday, November 26, 2019 City Hall – Green Room 550 Main Street, Hartford, CT 06103

Attendees:

Commissioners: Craig Mergins, Colin Billings, Janier Caban-Hernandez, Jonathan Cabral, Jeffrey Devereux, Brian Gallagher, Chris Hayes, Dave Rozza, Desmond Sinclair, Donna Swarr

Excused absences: Charmaine Craig, Troy Stewart

City Staff & Officials: Frank Dellaripa, Mark Dowd, Councilman Gale

Public: Mary Cockram, Heidi

Minutes of the October 29, 2019 meeting were approved 6 in favor, 1 abstention

Plan of Conservation – Play – Brian Gallagher, Craig Mergins

The most current version of the City of Hartford – Plan 2035 presentation was shared with attendees. Craig Mergins attended a commission review session. Brian Gallagher is on the Play committee. He commented that he is only one on the committee that represents recreation, whereas the remainder represent arts organizations. Anyone involved in recreation or would like to refer someone to participate is to contact Brian. Parks was not included as a topic as the Park Guide will be used as the content for that area. We asked that the individual park's master plans be included, and these documents are to be emailed to Brian as well. There was a discussion about the lack of recreation in our city. Desmond Sinclair brought up the Child Recreation ordinance as something that needs to be reviewed. The 2035 plan is the City's Plan of Conservation which is required by state statute and must be provided every 10 years.

Park Trust Fund Priorities Update & Capitol Improvement Recommendations – Donna Swarr

The Friends representatives met on November 8th to discuss the reimbursed \$1.2M funding to the Park Trust Fund. Treasurer Cloud requested that we propose projects for these monies. The following projects were recommended:

- Forster Park – BB Court 50K (car was burnt out on top of it, no longer usable)
- Heaven Skate Park - Mini ramp 40K
- Heaven Skate Park – Shade Structure & Repair Station 50-75k (no new investments since it was built in 2014)
- Bankside Trail – Pope Park 150K (Would begin trail 1.5ft, with matching from Pope Park Designated Fund)
- Goodwin Park – Establish designated parking space by the ballfield (Cars are parking on the grass and now it's a muddy, dirt parking)
- Goodwin Park - Install meadow with fencing (FOGP established was "mistakenly" bulldozed over, we would like to have a fence installed (mimicking the other fencing in the park, in front of the Meadow as a visible barrier to prevent future "mistakes.")
- Colt & Keney Park – Refinish handball courts (DPW used the wrong paint ~4 years ago, slippery, need to

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sandblast and put down correct surface coating)

- Keney Park - Aerator or other needed mechanism
- Remainder to go towards trees in the parks

Jeffrey Stewart, Donna Swarr, Mary Cochran, Joane Barre and Colin Billings met with Treasurer Cloud and J. Sean Antoine on 11/26 before the PRAC meeting and stated that we wanted all of the existing projects to be completed. There was an issue that he had not been informed that some of the projects had gone over their allocations, therefore he was unaware that all of the \$1.2M was not available. He was also unaware that some projects had been descoped as a result of bids coming in higher than expected. Bushnell Park's Pond had been removed from the list of 2015/2016 budgeted projects, we wanted it to be a priority in the next round of projects. Mary Zeman was asked via email to provide the information directly to him. The pools are in very poor condition. We stated that they are a valuable amenity for our residents and they, too are a priority.

Frank Dellaripa stated that the Park Trust Fund projects were at least 10% over due design costs which evidently were not included in 2015/2016 prior to his arrival. Donna Swarr asked why the Treasurer had not been made aware of the additional costs of the projects. Frank stated that he had all the updated numbers. For unknown reasons, the finance department was not aware until after PRAC's October meeting about the overages, and only last week had alerted Adam Cloud.

Clean and Beautification Committee – Donna Swarr

Partnering with Mike McGarry on a spring cleanup and beautification city-wide. Craig Mergins asked that anti-litter signage in our parks be part of the effort. It was a recommendation that Blomberg consultants raised as a successful method in 2017.

Recreation Committee – Brian Gallagher

A meeting was held on November 12 to discuss the loss of recreational space in our city. Metzner, gym usage by BOE, and as warming shelters as well as overnight accommodations. Use of school gyms for recreation has been thwarted by a new custodial policy requiring an additional custodian when a gym is requested, with a minimum of 3 hours of overtime being paid. This is a significant financial barrier to use of public school gyms. A letter was sent to the City Council and Mayor's office to share our concerns and desire for them to find alternative locations for non-public recreation usage of our facilities. Affected facilities include Metzner, Arroyo and Willie Ware. Councilman Gale shared with us that a school on Vine street was going to be used as the overnight shelter. We are relieved to hear this information.

New Business

Legislative Updates

The city received a Historic Preservation Enhancement Grant of \$5K for the Charter Oak Monument. The monies will be sued for consultation services from a qualified consultant to prepare an amendment to the State and National Register of Historic Places nomination form for the Charter Oak Place District to expressly include reference to the Charter Oak Monument.

Bushnell Park Foundation Board is asking the City to include in their license agreement that it receive a portion of

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the Special Events fees. It was suggested that PRAC might want to consider this as a standard clause in all Friends or Park organizations. PRAC voted unanimously to send a letter to the Mayor's office and City Council requesting that a portion of special event fees be shared with such organizations. 10-0 in support.

Department Reports:

a. City Architect- Frank Dellaripa

In response to concerns regarding the Bushnell Park Pond, Frank stated that all of the pond wells and pumps are in very poor condition.

Colt Park:

- The wooden fence around the youth soccer field has not been installed as yet.
- A meeting was held regarding the soccer field and east entrance. The amount of 500K will cover only the field and drainage.
- The wrought iron fence bid came in at \$100K

b. Parks-Mark Dowd – included as an addendum, change in leaf management in the parks.

c. Recreation – absent

Happenings in Our Parks & Public Comments

Appreciation was given to the Elizabeth Conservancy's donation of 2.3K towards the holiday, poinsettia tree in the City Atrium.

Dillon Stadium will host Turkey Day this year! The Dillon Community Use Fund provided the needed monies.

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