

New Haven Board of Park Commissioners

Meeting No. 1347
July 15, 2009

Department of Parks, Recreation & Trees
Maintenance Division
180 Park Road
Hamden, CT 06517

Present: President Belowsky, Commissioners Castro, DePino, Miller, Torres, Tucker & Walton
Absent: Commissioner Bush
Staff: Robert D. Levine, Director of Parks, Recreation & Trees

I. Minutes of Meeting 1345 & 1346: Commissioner Torres motioned to approve the minutes of Meeting 1345, seconded by Commissioner DePino. The motion passed unanimously. Commissioner Miller motioned to approve the Minutes of 1346, seconded by Commissioner Walton and it passed unanimously.

II. Treasurer's Reports Meetings 1345 & 1346: Commissioners motioned to approve the treasurer's Reports from meetings 1345 & 1346 and it passed unanimously.

V. Other Business: Greenhouse Tour: Doreen Larson Oboyski addressed the Commission. Doreen is the Community Gardens and Greenspace Coordinator for the Department of Parks, Recreation and Trees. Doreen stated that she works on community gardens, green spaces, tree planting, the Mayor's Flower Planting Initiative and a variety of other projects. Doreen stated that this past year there was no funding for the Flower Planting Program. The Department purchased seed and utilized volunteers to plant seeds. Additionally, the Butterfly Society purchased seeds to grow for the butterfly garden at Lighthouse Point Park. As a result, thousands of flowers have been planted city-wide.

Director Levine stated that typically the city might spend about \$10,000 on plugs and small plants.

The Commission took a tour of the recently renovated Greenhouses.

The Commission reconvened the meeting and discussed the Sound School's Agricultural program. The School works in the greenhouses, rose gardens and other sites within the city with their Agricultural students.

III. Director's Report:

- The Maintenance Division has brought on all their seasonal help for the summer. We have caught up on our mowing and the parks are really looking good right now.
- Our summer camp program is well underway. We have hired around 250 young people and adults to staff our programs. We have 19 summer camp sites across the city this year. All the camps are basically full. Typically if there are 35 kids in a camp 30 +/- campers show up each day. We've had some excitement at times with a camper getting out of hand here and there. Generally speaking everything is going really, really well. Bill Dixon did a really good job recruiting the camp directors to oversee each site this season. Director Levine was very impressed with the Camp Directors he has had the opportunity to meet. The Midnight Basketball Program is starting up. We have the Sports Camp on the Green next week. Chad Dawson, the boxer, is coming in for a "celebrity" meet and greet with the kids.
- Lighthouse is very crowded on some weekends and we're working with the New Haven Police on getting the right amount of coverage. Generally speaking the parks are very, very busy and we're happy with the way things are going.

- Some things have changed due to staffing levels. We no longer run softball leagues. We do issue the permits for the fields for the games. Commissioner Walton asked if there was a financial impact on parks without us running the leagues. Director Levine stated that this year we had about 42 teams in the softball leagues. Last year there were around 70 or 80 teams. Last year we took in \$28,000 in revenue from the softball leagues, this year we took in close to \$20,000. So there's a reduction in the revenue that came in from the softball permits. However, there is no staff doing the work, so we're really up comparing costs verses expenditures.
- The Ranger Program is going great. This year's summer camp has been the best in regards to coordinating and scheduling the programs for our summer camps. After the Recreation Supervisors were laid-off we thought things would drop through the cracks in terms of summer camp. Bill Dixon and Martin Torresquintero did a great job on this years camp program.
- The roofing project at the Lighthouse bathhouse is underway. The wall at Morris Creek is being repaired. The East Rock Soldier's and Sailor's Monument restoration is going well. The repairs to Edgerton Park's perimeter wall are also underway.
- Commissioner Torres asked about the Edgewood Park Community Garden. Director Levine stated that they've found a location on private property so they are not looking at Edgewood Park right now.
- Commissioner Tucker asked about additional blue lights on the Canal Trail. Director Levine answered that there was a meeting held in the last week or so and an agreement was being put together. He believes Yale will oversee the blue lights on the entire trail through New Haven. All the blue lights would be reported to the Yale Police. Blue lights are emergency devices where you press the button and it connects you to a 911 operator. Commissioner Tucker asked about a small piece of property where work is being done at the beginning of the trail, he believes its Shelton and Hazel Streets. Commissioner Tucker will send staff an e-mail describing the site and the related issue.
- Commissioner Torres asked about the Boulevard Fields. If someone wants to use them they can just go on them. Director Levine stated that all city fields are for use by permit only for organized sports. However, the only fields that we can really control people from going on are the Boulevard fields. The way they are set up we can keep the parking lot locked to discourage unauthorized use.
- Commissioner Castro stated that she received a couple of calls over the weekend regarding a dangerous situation on the playground at Criscuolo Park. Director Levine will report this to the maintenance division. He asked everyone to call the department right away if they hear of a hazard or broken equipment at a playground.
- Director Levine mentioned an issue at Lewis Street Park. There has been some press regarding a closed tube slide in that park being used by couples improperly. The police are involved and the neighbors are involved in policing the site. A new splashpad is in the process of being installed at Lewis Street Park.
- President Belowsky stated that he had read an article about the tennis courts in the newspaper. It stated that the USTA provided extra funding for the tennis courts. Director Levine stated that the USTA would provide \$25,000 to \$35,000 for the courts. The Board of Aldermen has added \$155,000 to the budget for crack sealing and repairs to East Shore and Edgewood tennis courts. We are out to bid right now for that project. We believe the costs will exceed the amount we have allocated. The initial cost estimate came in around \$225,000.
- Commissioner DePino asked about the East Shore erosion control project. Director Levine stated that the project is behind schedule. We had a storm that caused another area of significant erosion to occur and the DEP had informed us that if this happened we would be permitted to install another section of "hard" treatment. So there's one section that was scheduled to be a "soft" treatment, which is plantings, sand and landscaping. However, since this section is now very steep, we are hoping the DEP will approve a "rip-rap" application for that area.

- IV.** A) Litter Campaign: President Belowsky wondered if we could paint a "Don't Litter" notice on the back of the Park trucks. Reminders like this may help people realize that we are constantly removing litter. Director Levine suggest a vinyl bumper sticker that the

maintenance division could affix rather than paint to reduce costs. Commissioner Torres said he's seen tons of garbage over by where they play cricket. Director Levine will make sure maintenance picks it up. He stated that the cricket players are generally speaking a very responsible group. He asked if the Commission wanted him to look into the pricing for vinyl signs for the trucks that would say "Don't Litter." White lettering would be good. Commissioner Castro asked if we could do it in a way that is more positive. Also, thought we should ask the constituents and tax payers what they would like to see. Director Levine suggested "Please, Don't Litter." President Belowsky said he would table the matter giving Commissioner Castro time to come up with a slogan that might be more effective.

Item Tabled.

B) 324 Townsend Avenue: President Belowsky stated that he has gone by the house and it is obviously vacant. There is nothing on the windows, he was thinking that to avoid vandalism we could just paint curtains on the windows. Right now there is a sash with glass in and behind the sash is a piece of plywood painted dark green. The window David is referring to was vandalized and we put a piece of plywood up as a temporary fix. They will be fixing the window. If you want to paint or do a decorative border we can look for someone to do this task. President Belowsky asked about progress of a memorial for the late Commissioner Margaret Pastore. Director Levine stated that the design project has been assigned to Landscape Architect, David Moser. David just hasn't been able to get to the project. Commissioner DePino asked if David could meet with the group that's done all the work down at the seawall after he has developed a general concept.

- V. **Other Business Cont:** Commissioner DePino received a call from her District Police Manager who was working at Lighthouse Point Park several weeks ago. At the time there was only one officer at the park. The Manager was appalled at the amount of drinking in the park and that things were getting out of hand. He strongly urges the Park Commission to eliminate drinking at the park. People aren't just having a beer or two. By four or five o'clock people are highly intoxicated. Director Levine stated that he received an e-mail from Lt. Hoffmann. Following procedure, the Commission would need to make a recommendation and then the Department would do a submission to the Board of Aldermen. It is an Ordinance that permits beer and wine at Lighthouse Point Park, so the BOA need to be involved. At Lighthouse, beer and wine are permitted without a special permit. Commissioner DePino stated that when the parking lot closes due to capacity, people park within the neighborhood and walk in with their beer and coolers. Fourth of July weekend the gates end up closing at 10:00 a.m. and people start parking as far away as Krauser's. People will walk with gas grills, coolers and everything necessary for a family day at the beach. We had 8 - 10 gas grills left behind this summer. The biggest problem would be enforcing the no drinking policy. Commissioner DePino said we have no park security and she just heard the City doesn't have enough money for police on weekends. They are going to be cutting the Police presence at the park to cover only 3:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. on weekends. Commissioner Castro said people will still continue to drink. Director Levine said there is also the debate that you end up punishing responsible patrons because of the abusers. Commissioner DePino stated that the crowds on holidays really impact the neighborhood. People park all over, throw trash on residents' lawns, urinate in public, change out of wet bathing suits in the open, etc. There are some no parking signs in the area. Director Levine stated that poor behavior needs to be policed and it is reasonable to assume that enforcement will be required. The rules, regulations and parking rules need to be enforced. Commissioner Torres stated that if we change the rule to no alcohol it will cut way down on public intoxication. The patrons would not drink as openly and probably drink less.

Director Levine stated that if the Board decides they want to prohibit drinking at Lighthouse Point Park altogether we would make a submission to the Board of Aldermen. In reality, due to paperwork and BOA schedules, nothing would happen until after this summer season. Director Levine asked the Board if they wanted to think about it and discuss the issue at the next meeting. Then, if the Commission decides to ban drinking, the Department would put in a Submission to the Board of Aldermen and we'd be all set for next season. President Belowsky agreed.

Commissioner Walton asked about the time-line for the tennis court refurbishment. Director Levine stated that the goal is to have both sets of tennis courts finished by late fall. The high school tennis teams begin practice in the spring. In order to complete the color coating, sustained temperatures of 50 degrees are needed. The courts are out to bid right now and we're hoping to have projects completed by late October. That's a tight turn around for a big project like this. We have contracts to execute and other paperwork and approvals that take a lot of time. Commissioner Walton asked if the renovations include the lights at Edgewood. Director Levine stated that it did not; however, we have investigated what it would take to improve the lighting at that site. Rehab of the Edgewood lights would require a new electrical service and Dave Moser has this on his list of projects for the future.

Meeting adjourned: **6:45 p.m.**

Next Meeting: **October 21, 2009**