

New Haven Board of Park Commissioners

Meeting No. 1348
October 21, 2009

Department of Parks, Recreation & Trees
720 Edgewood Avenue
New Haven, CT 06515

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

- I. **Minutes of Meeting 1347:** Commissioner Torres motioned to approve the minutes of Meeting 1347, seconded by Commissioner Tucker and the motion passed unanimously.
- II. **Treasurer's Report:** President Belowsky asked for motion to approve Treasurer's Report for July 2009, motion to approve, seconded and the motion passed unanimously. Commissioner Tucker stated that we also have Treasurer's reports from August. Commissioner Bush motioned to approve the Treasurer's Report from August, seconded by Commissioner DePino, the motion passed unanimously.
- IV. **Rev. Goin Playground:** Sam Burrell and Margo Taylor addressed the Commission. Mr. Burrell stated that years ago there was an outstanding minister name Rev. Edwin Goin. Rev. Goin was the minister of his church when he was a child. The community and the Park Commission established a playground named in his honor on the corner of Goffe and Orchard. Subsequently a housing development was developed and the playground was demolished in the process. In 1970, a committee was formed and with the Park Commission's permission established another playground at the corner of County and Goffe. A few years later a dedication ceremony re-dedicating the playground in honor of Rev. Goin was held. (New Haven Register newspaper photo dated 6/21/70 was displayed). A few years after that the playground was redesigned. Ms. Margo Taylor leads the history committee at the church and they request that the Park Commission to grant permission to reestablish the Rev. Edwin Goin Playground. Mr. Burrell recommended the playground area which runs along County Street. There is a pavilion, swings and a jungle gym in this area. Director Levine stated that the playground is not currently dedicated to anyone. The basketball court is dedicated to Super John Williamson. Director Levine supported the selection of this site for the reestablishment of the Rev. Goin play area. It is believed that the original plaque has been stolen. Director Levine asked if anyone knows what was written on the original plaque. Any new memorial would be better placed in stone or granite. Mr. Burrell was wondering if there were any funds that could be utilized towards this memorial. **Vice President Bush motioned to give permission for a memorial stone in honor of Rev. Edwin Goin to be placed at the playground on County St.** President Belowsky asked for discussion. Commissioner Tucker asked where the stone would come from. President Belowsky asked if the Commission would be willing to split the cost with the group. Director Levine will also check the past minutes regarding the wording on the plaque. President Belowsky thought a stone monument would cost \$250 or so.

Ms. Taylor stated that she was unaware, until about five years ago, that slavery existed in New Haven and CT. Ex-slaves worshipped at the Center Church on the Green which is the oldest in New Haven. One of their members was Simone Jocelyn, an abolitionist. Mr. Jocelyn and 23 ex-slaves founded the Temple St. Church in 1820. That church was a forerunner to the Dixwell Ave. Congregation. The Jocelyn family was well known in New Haven. Mr. Jocelyn has been recognized with Jocelyn Square Park being named after him. Ms. Taylor is concerned that nobody really knows, by the name, that it is dedicated to Simone Jocelyn. She was wondering if it was possible to up-date the signage to say his full name, life span and what he did in the city. Director

Levine stated that we do have an initiative to develop interpretive signage throughout the park system. Director Levine asked if Mr. Taylor had a photograph of Mr. Jocelyn and maybe an old photo of the church. We have someone on staff that could work with her on that project. Mrs. Taylor would be happy to work with our staff.

III. Lighthouse Liquor Consumption: Lt. Jeff Hoffman addressed the Commission. Lt. Hoffman stated that the City is divided into ten policing districts and he is in charge of the East Shore District which includes Lighthouse Point Park. Currently there is a clause in the rules for Lighthouse Point Park which allows the consumption of beer and wine within the park. Lt. Hoffman has been in charge of the East Shore for two years now and has noticed that the drinking has gotten a bit out of hand. He believes that it is detrimental to the safety of the public. There is an ordinance for all public spaces, including parks, that prohibits drinking in public (Ord. 18-39). This gives us some control over quality of life. It is a \$99.00 fine and it's issued on a State Infraction form and the offender mails it in. If the person doesn't pay or plead not guilty and mail it in, an arrest warrant is issued for their arrest.

Lighthouse Point Park has a number of rules that aren't followed such as no amplified music. People aren't supposed to bring DJ equipment to the park. However, during the summer and especially on weekends there are one or more large parties with equipment blasting. The police office or park personnel will ask the offender to turn the music down and then they'll turn it right back up after we walk away. Additionally, at the pier, there is a rule of no jumping or swimming off the pier. This rule is already hard to enforce without alcohol being involved. Lt. Hoffman believes it impacts safe swimming at the park.

Additionally, Lighthouse has a boat launch area. New Haven doesn't have a police boat we have no enforcement on the Harbor. The Coast Guard is in charge of the entire Long Island Sound water body. People get a false sense of security because of the Coast Guard Station in East Shore. People that use the boat launch can be drinking in the park and then get on a jet ski making for safety issues on the water. Lt. Hoffman is not talking about the Carousel banquet facility where people have weddings. Every time there is a large event or wedding the party is required to pay for extra duty officers. The outdoor pavilions become part of the problem when people have large parties in those sites and use alcohol. As an example, one hot summer day prior to the Fourth of July, Lt. Hoffman was at the park where a wedding was taking place at the Carousel and both outdoor pavilions had large parties with private D.J.'s. People were walking all over the park drinking bottled beer and wandering all over. The pavilion parties didn't want to turn their music down for the wedding ceremony which was on the beach. After they left there was evidence of drug use left behind. It was very unmanageable. The rule that allows beer and wine is hard to enforce also. It's hard for a police officer to go up to a group of intoxicated people and tell them to put away the hard liquor, but keep drinking your beer and wine. Commissioner Tucker asked how hard it will be to enforce if the ordinance is changed. Lt. Hoffman stated that if we set the tone early in the season and get some signage up. Officers would ticket anyone drinking in the open. As officers we must use discretion, we're not going to start searching coolers as people enter the park. If there's a small quiet group gathered, we're not going to go around sniffing their cups. It's the large, out-of-hand parties he is concerned with and the public safety and liability issues.

Lt. Hoffman stated that Fourth of July at the park is a huge event. It's probably the biggest, busiest event in a city park. Every year we shut the gate at a certain time. This past year it was 10:00 a.m. and the park was at full capacity. People then start parking all over the neighborhood all the way to Townsend Ave. It's a full 16 hour day of crowd and traffic control. There is only one way in and out of the park for emergency vehicles and the crowds of people. When people start trying to get out of the parking areas and bottle necks are created that's when tempers start to flare and it makes it worse with alcohol in the equation. At least if drinking were banned, we'd have some leverage early in the day to calm some of the parties early in the day. Currently, we have no control until

people are getting behind the wheel and leaving. Commissioner DePino, who is also the Alderperson in that Ward, stated that she received numerous complaints from constituents about the crowds, speeding cars, parking problems and even people changing out of their bathing suits on the sidewalks. It's gotten really out of control with people dumping garbage on front lawns in the neighborhood on their way out of the area. Lt. Hoffman stated that if you go there on any given Monday or Tuesday, it's beautiful.

Besides the Fourth of July Lt. Hoffman can think of two other days they've closed down the park over the summer. That would be on a really hot summer weekend day. People can still park and walk in from all points. Commissioner Walton asked if we knew the number of people using alcohol and will banning alcohol curtail the problems. Lt. Hoffman stated that he's not sure of the number of people in the park, they close the gate when all the parking spots are taken. As far as the reckless behaviors and quality of life issues for surrounding residents, he believes that banning alcohol will definitely cut down on those problems. President Belowsky asked if the residential zone could have permitted parking only and tow the cars that don't belong. Lt. Hoffman stated that some streets are permitted and some are not. The residents were very happy with the management this past 4th of July. The management team for East Shore is in the process of requesting residential permit parking in this area.

Commissioner Torres stated that he doesn't approve of any drinking in parks. He said people change when they are drinking. Commission Walton was concerned about the enforcement down at Criscuolo Park. He doesn't want it to seem like we're targeting one part of the City. He lives in Fair Haven and that is problematic. Anytime there's a game going on there is open air drinking. Lt. Hoffman stated that there is another Lieutenant in Fair Haven and if the public brings it to his attention he will address. Currently it is against the rules at every other park. Over the years we have given out citations for drinking. It is still a wide spread problem. Commissioner Walton asked Lt. Hoffmann what the expected goals and outcome would be if we banned drinking at Lighthouse. Lt. Hoffman stated that it would improve the quality of life down there for people living near the park and people visiting the park. There will be less reckless and tumultuous behavior by people visiting the park. It will be a safer and quieter environment for families and other beach goers. It's geared towards families with the beach, the carousel, the splash pad and the boat launch.

Commissioner Miller asked about the amplified music in the park. Director Levine stated that there is no amplified music allowed in the park. Every permit issued says no amplified music. It's just like everything else, it's an enforcement issue. If the police don't enforce it then it can get pretty bad. Lt. Hoffman doesn't believe they can issue a ticket for that offense. Director Levine stated that our park manager will stop people at the gate if he sees sound equipment in the vehicle. It's better than it has been but is still a problem. Commissioner Torres stated that there is a lot of fighting at the park on the 4th of July. Lt. Hoffman acknowledged that there were reports of fights that day. It's just so crowded and hard to get through that by the time we got to the fight scene, they were over and nobody wanted to file charges. Commissioner Torres said that whatever we can do to help he is in support. Lt. Hoffman stated that it is his understanding that if the Park Commission chooses to ban drinking then it would need to be approved by the Board of Aldermen. President Belowsky stated that that was true. Commissioner Bush asked about a check point at the gate with police presence. Lt. Hoffman stated that they have had seatbelt check points at the park; however, he knows they don't have the budget for a 12 check point every weekend day. Commissioner Walton asked about how we would deal with the amplified music. Lt. Hoffman stated that we do have the leeway to enforce a public disturbance law after two warnings. However people are less likely to listen if they are drinking.

Commissioner Walton asked Lt. Hoffman his professional assessment, would banning alcohol at Lighthouse Point Park increase the quality of life for residents. Lt. Hoffman stated that it would. The Board thanked Lt. Hoffman for his attendance at the meeting.

IX. Other Business: a) Commissioner Tucker asked about the Blanche Spinner Grant money.

Director Levine stated that there is an annual distribution from the Community Foundation that is used for the fishing derby. Additionally, Commissioner Tucker asked about the Zared Enterprises expense of \$3,768.00 was that what the contract was for Regina Winters. Director Levine will make an inquiry into that expense. Commissioner Tucker did not want to approve the money until he sees the paperwork. He was initially anxious about the contract because it seemed very wide open. The funding was for the information to make a grant application. Illisa Kelman will be pursuing other funding sources for the Nature Center.

b) Commissioner Tucker addressed the Commission regarding the endowments handled by Halsey Associates. Commissioner Tucker thought we could be better served by a clearer report. He finds the current report to be filled with too much information we don't understand like realized net gain, ending tax cost, etc. He was talking to Halsey and they came up with two other formats for us to review. Basically one format is vertical one is horizontal. Commissioner Tucker likes the vertical report. This format shows expenses, income, gain and loss. The horizontal shows things like adjusted value, income plus market changes, etc. The categories on the vertical one seem to be clearer. You start with an amount, you get income or a contribution, or you spend some of the fund and it's very clear. President Belowsky and the Commission were in agreement with what Commissioner Tucker suggested. President Belowsky thinks it will be a better report for this Commission and future Commissions. Commissioner Tucker did not understand the realized gain/loss the net unit's charges and unrealized gain/loss. Commissioner Tucker pointed out that he was talking to the Halsey people about his concern about the principle of spending down below that point. The Halsey staff wanted to look at simplifying the format and realized that there was an error in the last year of the form. There was some mathematical error in the form and they corrected that. The Commission thanked Commissioner Tucker for his work.

VII. Director's Report: a) Director Levine stated that we have put out an RFP for the management of the Alling Memorial Golf Course. The current contract with New England Golf will be expiring on December 31. We had two respondents to the RFP; one was New England Golf and the other was Billy Casper Golf, Inc. Both management companies were interviewed and presented their proposals to the interview committee. New England Golf would be giving the City \$250K to \$300K more a year than Billy Casper was offering. Additionally, there is a very high amount of satisfaction with New England Golf. In the end the committee selected New England Golf for a five year contract with two, two year renewals. New England Golf generated about \$930k last year and that was the highest year ever. If we stay on course this year it will be about \$950k. All the money generated is either used for the management of the golf course, based on the contract, or it stays in the enterprise fund which is used exclusively for paying off course expenses. All the money from the golf course stays at the golf course. The fees at the course go up in small increments each year. We are still the least expensive course in the area. Director Levine will provide a list of the fees at the next meeting. President Belowsky stated that Billy Casper Golf is a different experience. They have more of a customer service attitude. Commissioner Walton stated that he had folks come from out of town and they were amazed at the course and the fees. Director Levine stated that he always gets positive feed-back on the course. The course closes down officially Dec. 1 depending upon the weather and opens in March.

b) Director Levine handed out a sketch prepared by David Moser of the proposed Margaret Pastore sitting area. The top page shows the location and the second page shows the site. Director Levine had suggested to David Moser that he put in two big white oaks, one on either side. Basically a blue stone pad with a nice memorial bench. Director Levine stated that we like to keep things very simple from a maintenance standpoint. He also stated there was around \$1,100

donated in Margaret's name after she passed. These funds were placed in the Donation Account for this purpose. Director Levine stated that we have benches in stock and money to buy the trees. Commissioner DePino suggested a stone bench. Director Levine said that our benches are basically bullet proof and if it did, at some point, need to be replaced we would have them in stock. Director Levine stated that we would not be doing anything until the spring. He anticipated that the biggest expense would be the blue stone pad. Commissioner DePino would be bringing the plan to the interested parties in her Ward for their input.

c) Director Levine stated that we did not have a staff picnic this past summer. We would like to plan for a holiday party and make a request to the Commission for funding. He stated that the average cost over the past five years has been \$4,870. Director Levine requested \$4,500 to \$5,000 for the event. Last year it was at Sage and Bill had looked into other venues and there were no better options in regards to location, parking and price. **Commissioner Bush made a motion to use \$5,000 from the Donation Account for the annual employee holiday appreciation luncheon. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Walton and it passed unanimously.** Director Levine stated that last year a Commissioner was interested in what the gift would be this year. Usually Bill Dixon makes the selection with Christy's input; however if you folks want to be involved with the selection just let me know. Commissioner Miller stated that she believed the only issue was the cost last year. President Belowsky stated that he did have a contact that does this type of thing and he will check into the matter. Commissioner Bush thought the jacket was very nice last year.

d) Director Levine stated that on April 24, 2010 we will be holding a grand re-opening of the Sailors' and Soldiers' Monument. This will be the first time that it will be open since the Great Depression. According to legend, people were going up there to hang themselves at that time. Director Levine stated that we have put about a million dollars into the monument. We have pointed the interior the exterior, cleaned the stone, & restored the Angel of Peace from the top. Additionally, there will be a new spiral staircase leading to the top of the monument, there's a new fence around the perimeter, a pathway up to the monument, the patio has been designed and the front staircase has been widened to where you can hold events at the site. The door was a quarter inch steel and now it is a beautiful Ipe wood door that is very dense and vandal resistant with a steel "protective" door that will go in front of that wooden door to protect the door when the monument is closed. April 24 is the date of an annual bike ride called "Rock to Rock" which entailed a bike ride between East and West Rock, tree plantings along the route, a meal at Common Ground School. This year on the day of Rock to Rock we would like them to reverse the route and come from West Rock to East Rock Park for a major celebration. We need money for this event to get off the ground. Director Levine requested the Commission to provide "seed" money in the amount of \$25,000 for this event. We do not currently have a budget put together yet and we will be looking for sponsors as well. We will be having horse drawn wagons pulling people to the top, bringing in military bands and having some food provided (for sale) at the top, commemorative pins and other fund raising tokens of the event. All our staff and the Friends groups will be involved. We will be calling on the Shubert, Market New Haven, Cultural Affairs, school music departments and others. We had a two-hour kick off meeting and staff is very excited about this event. Of course the Mayor will be invited to speak and the Park Commission will be invited. We need a number to work with and towards. The Donation Account would be the fund we would tap. Director Levine stated that the amount he's requesting is half the amount of what the State of CT gave for the 10 year easement on that piece of property over by the I-95 corridor. The Donation Account currently has \$150,000 in funds. We will also be looking for sponsors and donations for the event. We will try and get Yale to donate some funds. Director Levine is not asking for a check, but the best case scenario we won't need it and worst case we will need the entire amount. We may come out somewhere in the middle. We just need to know we have something to work with at this point. Director Levine stated that the Commission is not obligated and should not feel pressured to allocate the funds. **Commissioner Miller made a motion to allocate up to \$25,000**

to the re-dedication and opening of the Soldiers' and Sailors' Monument Celebration. Seconded by Commissioner DePino and the motion passed unanimously.

e) Attorney Jim Whitney is working on the 501c3 and would like to know what name the Commission would like to call the entity. Director Levine thought it could be the New Haven Parks Foundation or the Foundation for New Haven Parks. He does need a name for the 501c3. The Commission agreed to call it the "Foundation for New Haven Parks."

f) Regarding the tennis court resurfacing, Director Levine stated that at the 11th hour the Board of Aldermen added \$155,000 to the Parks Capital Budget. We bid out the project for the courts at East Shore Park and Edgewood Park. The bid is out to "mill and pave" which is where they bring out a big machine and break up the pavement, remove the debris and re-grade and repave at East Shore Park. At Edgewood we'll be trying a new crack repair system that is guaranteed for three years (but probably good for 5) called the Right Way Crack Sealing Program. This is where they put down fabric, seal it and re-color coat. They also did the basketball court at Edgewood. Those courts look brand new now. At Criscuolo we also did the Right Way system at the basketball courts. Next year we hope to do the Middletown Ave. Park courts and maybe something in McClain Park. Additionally we did a little park called Hill Top in the West Rock neighborhood. The cost for the tennis courts at East Shore and Edgewood were \$241,000 and then add on the \$3k for the basketball courts and some fence repair. The courts were also stripped for "shorter" courts for younger children to learn tennis. The USTA kicked in \$49,000 of the \$250,000 or so. The Criscuolo was done with Parks funding. President Belowsky stated that we need to stay on top of the courts now that they're in good condition. Vice President Bush stated that he was impressed by the conditions of the parks this summer. Commissioner Miller asked if the litter had decreased since the new no litter signs have been put up. Director Levine stated that he hadn't really noticed any change yet.

III. Lighthouse Liquor Consumption (Continued): Commissioner Miller asked if we should vote on the liquor consumption. Some Commissioners wanted to table the matter until November to give them a chance to think more about the matter. Commissioner Miller asked if requiring a permit would be helpful. The other Commissioners didn't think that would be appropriate. They wanted a yes or no vote on the matter. Director Levine stated that it sounded to him like Lt. Hoffman wasn't so concerned with the average person having a beer at the park. It's the large unruly groups of people causing problems. Commissioner Miller thought it would be a good idea for the Commission to recommend to the Board of Aldermen that the City consider banning liquor at the park and have Lt. Hoffman present to the B.O.A. Director Levine stated that a big concern is people who drink heavily and then get in their car and drive out of the park onto public roads. Commissioner Walton was swayed by the concerns of the neighborhood. The Commissioners asked if young people enter the park after hours. Director Levine stated that the kids will go into all the parks at night and party. Even when we had park security there was a problem with after-hours drinking and partying in the parks. Commissioner Walton stated that he'd like to see consistent enforcement throughout the park system. Director Levine stated that Commissioner Walton drew a perfect comparison for Lt. Hoffman to Criscuolo Park. At Criscuolo there is constant drinking and no enforcement. Lt. Hoffman is focused on Lighthouse because it's an issue for the neighborhood. Commissioner Walton stated that the residents are concerned in Criscuolo also. Commissioner DePino stated that when Lt. Hoffman was performing extra duty at the Carousel he saw that the one officer at the park would not be able to control the crowd. Director Levine stated that Lt. Hoffman had recommended two officers on duty all through the weekend and we can only afford one officer for four hours per day. Commissioner DePino stated that the East Shore is the largest police district in the entire city spanning from the North Haven line to Lighthouse Park and we have the least amount of police officers. Commissioner Bush stated that he didn't think a ban on drinking would stop the problem altogether. He thought that maybe a check-point would at the entrance would help deter people. How will we enforce a no drinking

policy? He was more in favor of permitting the drinking but having check-points. President Belowsky stated that this is the time to start looking into the decision and put it in front of the BOA. Director Levine stated that if the Commission decides to pursue the no drinking policy the Parks Department would need to do a submission to the BOA. The BOA would assign it to a Committee and then Lt. Hoffman would come and speak to the BOA as well as others.

Commissioner Miller motioned to request the Board of Aldermen pass an ordinance banning drinking at Lighthouse Point Park, seconded by Commissioner DePino. Commissioner Walton asked for more time to think and discuss this at the next meeting. Commissioner Miller asked that everyone think about the decision and make sure everyone is present at the November meeting. President Belowsky stated that Commissioner Tucker said that he would vote to ban alcohol and that was his position before leaving the meeting. **President Belowsky Tabled the Motion until the November 18, 2009 meeting.**

President Belowsky asked how many park employees we have currently. Director Levine stated that right now there are 54 full-time employees. However, there is a rumor that two Recreation Supervisors that were laid-off would be coming back on the job. Additionally, we are in the process of hiring Caretakers (we have six vacancies in that job title).

Meeting adjourned: **7:30 p.m.**

Next Meeting: **November 18, 2009**