

## New Haven Board of Park Commissioners

Meeting No. 1349  
November 18, 2009

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

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

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- I. **Minutes of Meeting 1348:** Commissioner Tucker noted a change to Item IV.: where it says “Rev. Goin was the minister of his church when he was a child” and it should read “...when Mr. Burrell was a child.” Also, Commissioner Tucker believes we had decided to go ahead and pay the bill to Regina Winters and it was paid. He didn’t want to appear to be trying to hold that payment. Commissioner Tucker spoke with Illisa Kelman and she was quite pleased with the work Ms. Winters produced. **Commissioner DePino motioned to approve the minutes of Meeting 1348, seconded by Commissioner Miller and the motion passed unanimously.**
- II. **Treasurer’s Report:** Commissioner Tucker asked if the funding grant for the Migration Festival matched the expenses. Director Levine stated that it should have come out even. Dan Barvir received a \$5,000 grant from the CT Audubon for the event. **Commissioner Tucker motioned to approve the Treasurer’s Report, seconded by Commissioner DePino and it passed unanimously.**
- IV. **Common Ground Lease:** President Belowsky stated that he and Bob talked to the people at Common Ground. Currently, they have a 10-year lease requiring them to pay \$10,000 per year for the use of the site based on the value of the land. The lease is expiring this December, 2009. We had two appraisals of the property completed and the current assessed value of the land has doubled. Using the same formula to calculate the lease payment, we ended up with \$20,000 per year. The Common Ground management cannot meet that big of an increase. We came up with a plan to incrementally increase the lease payment each year. Therefore, in year one we would ask for \$12,000; in year two \$14,000; in year three \$15,000- in year four \$18,000 and then in year five the \$20,000 per year would begin. We would like to give them a 20 year lease. After year five they would pay \$20,000 per year. President Belowsky is presenting this to the Board for their consideration and approval. Commissioner Tucker asked if we could phase it in over 10 years instead of five.

Director Levine stated that the general rule from the appraiser was that you appraise the property and then for a 10 year period you charge a lease that will equal the value of the property at the end of the 10 years. So in year 11 to 20 they would be staying at the same payment based on the value of the property today, this is a benefit to them already. President Belowsky stated that there is a new Executive Director of the school and they will come back to us regarding this issue. We don’t know if they will agree or not; we did have a discussion with them about the lease, cost and time-frame. They are doing a good job at the Common Ground High School.

Commissioner Walton asked if they are planning to stay at the site for the next 20 years. President Belowsky stated that they will stay there as long as they get the Charter School money from the State. They were just awarded a grant from the State to make more

improvements to the property. This process takes a few years according to the school. President Belowsky told the school that they must seek approval from the Park Commission for any additional improves to the property. Commissioner Tucker's understanding of the Common Ground School was that it was very much driven by the strength, personality and dedication of previous school directors. Commissioner Tucker was a bit nervous about a 20 year lease if they will survive that length of time. Director Levine stated that the way the lease is written there are default clauses in the lease. The Commission discussed the benefits of the school and a possible 20 year lease. It was agreed that although the Commission would not be collecting \$20,000 per year until year 5, we are enabling the school to continue to function.

President Belowsky stated that prior to the school being on the site we weren't using the land at all. The lease money goes into the Donation Account. Commissioner Walton stated that he is all for supporting programs like this; however, at some point down the road we'll need to determine how much they need to expand. Are we willing to allow this site to become a larger agricultural campus? President Belowsky stated that there really is no room to expand further unless they were granted permission to cut down trees. Everything they do must first be approved by the Commission. President Belowsky mentioned how the late Commissioner Pastore was against building schools on park land and the loss of park land. Commissioner Tucker mentioned that both Hill House and Wilbur Cross were built on park land.

The Commission discussed the pros and cons of the length of the lease in detail. The lease period could be 10, 15 or 20 years depending on how much the Commission is willing to forgo on the schools behalf. Director Levine stated if the Commission was leaning towards a 15 year lease, we could have the land re-appraised around the 12<sup>th</sup> year of the lease. Doing this would give them a few years to prepare for the higher cost going forward. **Commissioner Tucker made a motion that the new Common Ground Lease would be phased in as follows: Year one \$12,000; Year 2 \$14,000; Year 3 \$16,000; Year 4 \$18,000; and Years 5 through 15 would be \$20,000. A re-appraisal would be done in the 12<sup>th</sup> year of the lease to prepare the school for an anticipated increase in the lease cost. Commissioner Tucker amended the motion to include an option to change phase in period to 10 years if the school is having trouble with payments. Motion was seconded by Commissioner Miller and it passed unanimously.** Director Levine will have the lease prepared and call the Director of the School to a meeting.

- V. **Director's Report:** a) **Alling Memorial:** Director Levine passed out the fee schedule for Alling Memorial Golf Course. We are currently in year one of the new fee schedule. The fee schedule reflects fees approved by the Board of Aldermen through 2014. Commissioner Tucker asked what was considered a "senior" at the course. Director Levine stated that Sr. rates kick in at 62. The new contract with New England Golf was negotiated based on these prices being in effect. We have been successful in using these small incremental increases in greens fees. The course is very well maintained by the management company. Revenue has increased 3-5% over the last year. The course has been steadily improving the gross revenues. All the money goes towards the golf course. The fees for the course must first be approved by the Golf Course Advisory Board then the Board of Aldermen. The Knickerbockers' and the Men's Club each have a vote on the Golf Board. We will put together a new fee schedule in 2013 to be passed prior to the 2014 expiration of the current fee schedule. b) **Recreation Supervisors:** Director Levine stated that two Recreation Supervisors laid-off back in February, have been brought back to work through a negotiation between their Union and the City Labor Relations Office. They began work at the Parks Department this past Monday. c) **Caretaker Testing:** Director Levine stated that we are performing Caretaker testing. The position of Caretaker was posted and we received over 200 applications for the positions.

These applicants were screened and we ended up with 130 then down to 60 who actually qualified to take the test. We should be getting a certified Caretaker list available to us to hire from shortly. Currently we have been approved to fill six of our vacant Caretaker positions. After processing, they should be on the payroll by February. Getting six new Caretakers will be really great for the Department. c) **General Information:** Director Levine stated that all things considered things are going pretty well in the Department. The Maintenance Division is busy shutting down and winterizing the parks for the cold weather months. The Recreation Division is being run with the recently rehired Recreation Supervisors and five or six part-time employees and of course the Ranger Programs are all in place. Commissioner Tucker asked about our role in the Farmington Canal Line. Director Levine stated that the Parks Maintenance Division is tasked with maintaining the portion of the Canal in New Haven. We believe it will take about 40 man-hours per week in season and 12-15 hours per week off-season to maintain the trail at a comfortable level. Finally, Director Levine asked Commissioner DePino if she had presented the Margaret Pastore sitting area plans to the interested parties. Commissioner DePino did present the plan to the community group and to John Cox a Master Gardener that will be maintaining the site. Director Levine asked that John Cox give us his feedback. Commissioner Walton asked for a listing of what school building we are using for Park & Rec. programs. Director Levine mentioned some schools but stated he would get the exact listing for the next meeting. Director Levine believes the Board of Ed is trying to minimize use of the school facilities when custodians are not on regular hours.

**III. Lighthouse Liquor Consumption:** President Belowsky stated that this item had been tabled, after some discussion, at the last Park Commission meeting to give people time to think about the matter. As you remember Lt. Jeff Hoffman addressed the Commission at that meeting. Commissioner Miller stated that she had made a motion at the previous meeting to present a drinking ban to the Board of Aldermen for their approval. The Board ended up tabling the matter until this meeting. Commissioner DePino questioned whether we are in violation of City Ordinance which says there shall be no consumption of liquor on any public land. Additionally, the permit application for pavilions at Lighthouse states that, "The applicant shall agree that no intoxicating liquor shall be sold, distributed or made available in connection with the use of this permit." Director Levine stated that intoxicating liquor is different than beer and wine, it means hard liquor. That is the way the Ordinance has been interpreted.

Commissioner DePino questions the liability of the City and the Park Commission if somebody drives out of there, has an accident and hurts somebody after the testimony of Lt. Hoffman who's in charge of the entire East Shore and is telling us we have a problem. Commissioner Tucker stated that he had missed the meeting and couldn't tell from the minutes what Kevin and Hector's concerns were about instituting a ban. Commissioner Walton stated that his questions were about enforcement across the board at all parks. Even if we ban drinking in the park we could still be sued. It's really about the enforcement of what goes on in the park now and outside the park in that residential area. Commissioner DePino stated that yes, people are going to drink and we're not going to catch them. However, it gives us a tool to give the police officer on duty. If an officer sees people drinking beer or wine they can enforce the ordinance. Commissioner Miller asked if the police will ask for more patrols. They do need more patrols and by the end of the summer they had to cut the number of hours because of funding. Lt. Hoffman was saying that if you continue allowing drinking we should have increased patrol, so either way we need more police hours at Lighthouse.

Director Levine stated that we had drinking and other issues at the Boulevard soccer fields this past year. We went before one of the committees at the B.O.A. and the members of the committee stated that enforcement was the issue. At the end of the day we ended up with an

employee at the soccer field enforcing the rules and being paid by the soccer league. No drinking, no vending, no parking on the grass, etc. Director Levine agrees with Commissioner Walton that enforcement is the main concern. There is really no reason the change the ordinance if we can't enforce the change. Commissioner Miller asked if Park employees could enforce a ban on drinking. Director Levine stated that this was not possible. They could make suggestions to park users but they are not trained and inclined to police. In the minutes, Lt. Hoffman stated that it's even difficult for the police to enforce the rules. He also said the more people drink the less they follow the rules. Changing the ordinance would give them another tool only if it is enforced. Commissioner Walton stated that he just isn't convinced that it will change anything. He is actually more concerned about the damage to residential property when people are leaving the park. Commissioner DePino stated that they are working on getting residential parking status in that area prior to summer.

Director Levine stated that enforcement of people not changing their clothes in public or dumping their coolers and garbage on residential lawns should be enforced right now. It is truly an enforcement issue. Commissioner Miller asked if the B.O.A. could allocate funds for enforcement. Suppose we present the problem to them and indicate we need extra enforcement at the park. Instead of banning alcohol entirely, could we get extra funding for full-time enforcement? Is there anyway to come up with funding within other city agencies not just Parks or Police. Director Levine stated that the reality is we could include money in the budget and Arlene could address the difficulties that the budget always presents. Commissioner DePino asked if we vote the issue down could it still go to the B.O.A. Commissioner Walton would really like to see the East Shore Management Team work on the quality of life issues. President Belowsky stated that now that it's not summer it's on the back burner.

**Commissioner DePino made a motion to ban drinking at Lighthouse Point Park, with the exception of events held in the Carousel that are staffed by an off-duty police officer; seconded by Commissioner Miller.** President Belowsky stated that he is having a bit of difficulty with this decision. Commissioner Walton has spoken to 15-20 people and the majority of the feedback was that it would not make a big difference. However, the people I've spoken to are people that would use the park properly. His informal polling may be a bit skewed. President Belowsky stated that his daughter was married at the Carousel building and it was during the day where he did see people drinking. He could see where it could get out of hand. Commissioner DePino stated that she is in favor of a ban after seeing Lt. Hoffman come before the Commission and express his concerns. He came to the meeting after work hours of his own free will so he clearly sees an issue brewing. Commissioner Miller stated that she would lean towards supporting the motion. Although she doesn't believe a ban will come out the B.O.A.; she believes something will come of it that addresses the issue. There will be public hearing and maybe we will get more enforcement. **The motion passed with three in favor and two opposed.**

We will present this motion to the B.O.A. and then they will have to explore the matter.

- VI. Other Business:** 1) Commissioner Tucker wanted to congratulate Arlene DePino on her re-election. The Democratic representative, Migdalia Castro, has not been attending most Park Commission meetings. The President of the Board of Aldermen appoints the two Park Board Representatives. Director Levine stated that the attendance sheets from the Park Commission are sent yearly to the Mayor's Office. There was a discussion after 2008 regarding Migdalia Castro's lack of attendance for the second year in a row. The Alderwoman promised to attend more regularly and that didn't happen. Commissioner Walton stated that it's important to attend and vote on the matters that come before the Board and that we need members who

attend.

2) President Belowsky asked about the “Don’t Litter” signage on Park vehicles. Director Levine recommended something like a vinyl bumper sticker. **Commissioner Tucker motioned that we place some message to the effect of “do not litter” in a well designed graphic on the Park vehicles. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Miller and it passed unanimously.** Director Levine asked if the Board wanted the wording “Don’t Litter,” “Please Don’t Litter,” or the word “Litter” with a circle and a line through it. We can talk to a graphic designer and see what we can do. Commissioner Miller asked about a city-wide green campaign. Director Levine stated that we do have many neighborhood clean-ups throughout the year in many of the parks. The majority of them are held in the spring and summer. However, there are many held around the time the kids go back to school. The Director reported that at on specific cleanup we had about 300 Southern students in the park system on one day; additionally, events like the Comcast Day of Caring contribute large numbers of volunteer hours.

Meeting adjourned: **6:30 p.m.**

Next Meeting: **February 17, 2010, 5:30 p.m.**  
**No December or January Meeting**