

New Haven Board of Park Commissioners

Meeting No. 1356
September 15, 2010

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

Present: President Belowsky, Vice President Bush, Commissioners Castro, Miller,
O’Sullivan-Best, Torres, Tucker & Walton
Absent:
Staff: Robert D. Levine, Director of Parks, Recreation & Trees

Called to Order 5:35 p.m.

IV. Common Ground High School: Melissa Spears, Executive Director, addressed the Commission. Ms. Spears asked about the lease agreement that was being prepared by the City. Director Levine stated that it is in the process and will be available shortly. The school has been working on a master planning process for the school and site. They have gone through a process of collecting input from the community, staff, students and as many people as they could. Regina Winters, architect, addressed the Commission. Ms. Winters spoke about the site, uses, existing buildings, access, parking lots, etc. A lengthy discussion and questions from the Commissioners took place. The school was awarded a 1.5 million dollar grant for a building to house science classroom space. They also received two separate grants for construction of the “harvest pavilion.” One is a CDBG grant and the other from the CT Dept. of Agriculture. This structure will be used to process the vegetables that are harvested from the gardens as well as a place to sell vegetables. Food grown on site is used in the cafeteria to feed the students.

Ms. Spears asked if she had provided the Commission enough information on the proposed projects. President Belowsky stated that the Commission will discuss and let Ms. Spears know if they require further information.

V. T-Mobile—Cell Tower Proposal: Ray Vergati, Vice President of HPC Development introduced himself to the Commission. Mr. Vergati handles real estate for T-Mobile. There is currently a gap in cell phone coverage in parts of New Haven. T-Mobile has explored several locations within New Haven and have come prepared to offer the City a proposal for use of Fairmont Park at 90 Clifton Street. A proposal of general business terms was sent to the City. The next step that T-Mobile would like is a verbal or written agreement that the proposal is acceptable and that the Commission would like to move forward. Once they have an agreement they will come out to the park and pick a spot and design it on paper. T-Mobile would own the tower; however, it would be co-obtainable. This means another carrier would be able to put their antennas on the pole. Mr. Vergati didn’t want to get into the actual design because they have not been to the site with the team and Park Commission. President Belowsky stated that we would want T-Mobile to reach out to residents in the area. Commissioner O’Sullivan-Best asked if anyone had contacted the Alderperson from the Ward. Ms. Julie Kohler the T-Mobile attorney stated that she had only one complaint about the roof of the health center housing a cell tower.

Director Levine stated that the Commission is the first stop for the inquiry into the placement of a cell tower at Fairmont Park. Then, depending on the Commission's feelings, you would move on to the Alderperson and neighbors. Commissioner Tucker asked about revenue benefits for the City. Mr. Vergati stated that the proposal presented to the City included a monthly rent of \$2,000 with an annual escalation of 3% and a revenue share of 10%. The revenue share would occur if additional carriers get on the pole the city would receive an additional 10% of what that carrier pays T-Mobile. Typically carriers charge other carriers \$2,000 per month for space on their cell towers. That would translate into another \$200 per month per additional carrier for the Park Commission.

President Belowsky asked about the size of the cell tower. Mr. Vergati stated that he could not get into specifics since we haven't visited the site; generally, what we look to do on the ground space is request a 60' x 60' area. The T-Mobile footprint is 10' x 20'; however, we need to leave room for additional carriers' equipment. The actual pole height cannot be determined until we inspect the site. Initial heights are around 120' to 130', could be slightly higher or lower. There are a number of ways to screen the equipment area. Regarding the pole designs, we have standard towers with platforms. We also one called a "split-stick" or a "brown stick" where everything is inside concealed. The diameter is 40" to 50" for the towers.

Commissioner Tucker asked about the length of time T-Mobile would lease the land. Mr. Vergati stated that the proposal he submitted included an initial 5-year term with four 5-year auto renewals. Director Levine asked about any site maintenance or damage repairs. Mr. Vergati stated that all expenses fall on T-Mobile from the engineering, zoning, construction and future maintenance of the site. If the Commission approves the proposal; we will schedule a site visit with the Commission. We would bring the construction manager, architectural engineering firm, radio frequency engineer as well as members of the Park Commission, the Alderperson and any representatives from the district. We will basically design the site, talk about it and then we would furnish an exhibit for your approval. If the Park Commission doesn't approve the plan; it would be certainly understandable and we do have a lease with the health center. Additionally, we typically reserve space on the tower for emergency communications for the City involved at no cost. Mr. Vergati thanked the Commission for their time and consideration.

Director Levine stated that the original offer from T-Mobile was \$2,000 per month and 10% on revenue from other carriers. President Belowsky suggested \$2,300 per month and 25% on revenue. Director Levine stated that every summer we get 20 phones for 8-10 weeks for our summer camp and programs. He wanted to request 20 phones from T-Mobile which would save us a few thousand a year. The real issue is that they will be putting the tower in the area either way; in the park or on the private nursing home. Commissioner O'Sullivan-Best stated that if it is in the park we have control over the esthetics and benefit of the revenue. Director Levine said there is a slick stick he had mentioned that could double as a flag pole. Commissioner Tucker thought it was wrong to have the tower in a park and have the revenue go to the City and not to Parks. Director Levine stated that it is not earmarked as of yet. What the CAO mentioned that maybe for the first lease period the money be designated for use in Fairmont Park where there are two little league fields and a building. He also mentioned Parks in the general vicinity. After that it could be designated for general Park Commission designated uses. Commissioner Torres said that if the City sees Parks getting this "extra" money won't they just deduct that amount from your General Fund budget?

Director Levine stated that if the lease is held by the Park Commission and it's outside the General Fund, then control over the money falls to the Park Commission. Director Levine suggested that the first five years of revenue go directly to the neighborhood affected and after that the funds be used for youth activities or park maintenance. We really need money for youth activities. Director Levine brought up the possibility of advanced technology and there may be no need for the tower in 10 years. The Commissioners wanted to be sure the lease specified that T-Mobile remove the tower and restore the site to original condition when they no longer lease the site. The safety of cell towers was discussed at some length. **Commissioner Torres motioned to approve the lease of land in Fairmont Park to T-Mobile with the following conditions: T-Mobile must do community outreach via the Alderperson and area residents; there must also be a negotiation on the general business terms regarding the monthly lease rate, percentages of revenue and use of cell phones for summer programs; T-Mobile removes the tower when it is no longer used and that the revenue from the lease will be used by the Park Commission as they see fit for park improvements and programs. Seconded by Commissioner Miller and it passed with seven Commissioners yea and one Commissioner nay.**

IV. (Cont.) Common Ground High School: The Commission discussed Melissa Spears proposal for improvements to the facilities at Common Ground High School. Commissioner Castro expressed support for the school and its contributions to the environment, city and students. Commissioner Walton and others were concerned about the footprint of the structures in the park and how it has expanded over the years. **Commissioner Tucker made a motion supporting Common Ground's Master Plan. Specific items in the plan must be brought before the Commission with detailed information on each item for final approval.** Commissioner O'Sullivan-Best stated that the actual CDBG Grant they were awarded is for the parking area improvements. That is the actual priority, they want a more natural type parking lot than asphalt and in order to do it they are required to have a designated spot for the vehicles and school buses. They didn't actually have an answer for how they were going to have the permanent markings for these in the plan. They need to come back soon with more specific plans prior to going out to bid. **Seconded by Commissioner Castro and it passed unanimously.**

I. Minutes of Meeting 1355: Commissioner Castro motioned to pass the Minutes of Meeting 1355, seconded by Commissioner Miller. The motion passed unanimously.

II. Treasurer's Report: Commissioner Torres motioned to approve the August 2010 Treasurer's Report, seconded by Commissioner Miller. The motion passed unanimously.

III. Director's Report: 1) Director Levine stated that eight or nine months ago he had requested up to \$25,000 from the Donation Account for seed money to use for the Soldiers' & Sailors' Monument events. We had four events; two lectures, a Soirée at the Summit and the 4th of July event. The total spent for all the events was \$11,750 and we took in \$9,800. So in general numbers those four events ended up costing \$1,923.57. The \$9,800 is all back in the Donation Account.

2) Director Levine stated that the final piece of the Soldiers' & Sailors' Monument is the four lower statues and the plaques. The original estimate to repair/replace this part of the Monument was \$142k. We put the project out to bid and it came back at \$89,950.00 which is significantly less. The English Fund (maintenance at the summit) receives an annual

distribution which has accumulated to \$52,500.97. In addition, there is a fund called the Simeon Baldwin Fund, this fund was created under the Will of Simeon Baldwin to purchase land in East & West Rock Parks. The Commission went to court and was granted permission to use the funds for maintenance of those parks as well. Years ago West Rock Park was given to the State of CT and the funds have only been used at East Rock Park for decades. The current balance in this trust fund is \$373,406. Director Levine is requesting that we take +/- 10% of those funds, or \$37,950.00 and to the English Fund money and come up with the \$89,950.00 for the final restoration. **Commissioner Miller motioned to grant the Parks Department the use of \$52,500 from the English Fund Distribution and \$37,950.00 from the Simeon Baldwin Trust for a total of \$89,950.00 to restore the bronze statues and large bronze plaques at the base of the Soldiers' and Sailors' Monument. Seconded by Commissioner Castro and it passed unanimously.**

3a) Director Levine stated that two land issues have come up in the last two weeks. The first one involves, 8/10 of an acre adjacent to the Greater New Haven Water Pollution Control Plant which they (the WPCA) believes was bought when the land was turned over several years ago. However, it was never purchased. They have come to us and requested to purchase the land. Director Levine thinks that leasing them the land would be much better than selling the piece. The park land would probably never be used for park purposes. The perfect thing would be to do a 10 year lease similar to what we did for Common Ground. **3b)** The second land issue is that the Friends meeting house on East Grand Ave. has asked for a land swap of less than ½ an acre to expand a daycare center. Director stated that what they told him was they wanted to move the day care center further back on the property which would put it onto park property, in order to do that they wanted to swap a piece of their land that isn't of any use. Recpmmed instead is a land lease. Director Levine stated that he was just giving the Commission a heads-up on the matters.

4) Director Levine stated that the Department has recently completed the building of a ropes course at the West Rock Nature Center. Ropes courses are typically used for team building exercises. In years past the Commission has funded a departmental picnic at the end of summer at a cost of about \$1,600 per year. We haven't held the picnic for two or three years now. What we want to do is have a team-building session with the staff at the ropes course at the end of summer. We would like to use \$750.00 from the Donation Acct. to cover the cost of food for the staff at this day long event. **Commissioner Tucker motioned to grant the department \$750.00 for food and drinks at a team-building session at the West Rock Nature Center. Motion seconded by Commissioner Castro and it passed unanimously.**

Other Business:

1) Commissioner Torres asked how the golf course was doing this year. Director Levine stated that the revenues are down about 4%; however, other courses in Ct are down 15-20%. The golf course manager would like to be able to run some specials at the course. For example, after a certain hour, two golfers can play 9 holes for 10% off. We could run these things as promotions to bring more people to the course during low use hours. The past two years the course had brought in record amounts of revenue. 2008 was the best year ever and 2009 was better than that; and, now we're down 4%, but holding our own.

- 2) Commissioner Torres asked about the Carousel building at Lighthouse. Director Levine stated that the Carousel is booked and making money consistently.
- 3) Commissioner Tucker reported on Scantlebury Park plot. He stated that the land over by the Yale Health Center where the grounds were not restored to original. He met again with the same group at the site, they finally dug up all the ground and put 5" of soil. It's all seeded and finally complete. The Commissioners thanked Michael for his efforts.
- 4) Commissioner Miller stated that she hadn't forgotten the by-laws. She had made corrections and forgot to pass along to Lynn at Parks. She'll have them for next month.
- 5) President Belowsky asked about the Lighthouse liquor ban. Director Levine stated that the Board of Aldermen banned liquor at Lighthouse Point Park. You may still have beer, wine and liquor at events at the Carousel. And you may get special permission from the Director at any site. He doubts there will be a significant change in behaviors at the park without enforcement.
- 6) Commissioner Castro stated that Criscuolo Park is one of the busiest parks in this area of town. We have been having a situation where there is no water. She stated that years ago a car struck the building where the water source was housed. Director Levine will look into having something done by spring 2011; we'll be shutting the water down shortly now. Director Levine stated he would need to use General Funds and our plumber to get it done for spring.
- 7) Commissioner O'Sullivan-Best stated there are Peace Commission events throughout the city in September.

Meeting Adjourned: 7:00 p.m.

Next Meeting: October 20, 2010