

New Haven Board of Park Commissioners

Meeting No. 1360
February 16, 2011

Mayor's Conference Room
165 Church Street
New Haven, CT 06510

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

Park Commissioners had a portrait taken with Mayor John DeStefano, Jr.

Meeting called to order 5:35 p.m.

V. East Rock Bridge—Joe Moslehi, Engineering: Mr. Moslehi addressed the Commission. He stated that the deck supporting the traffic is in very poor condition, not wide enough to carry the traffic. Additionally, some of the geometric features on the bridge are not good. Contractor, George Jacob stated that the bridge was built in 1890's so they don't have information on the foundation. Mr. Jacob stated that they did two test pits on the abutments to gather information about the bridge. The site is very difficult to access with the equipment. Mr. Jacob stated that they will be restoring the area to original or better condition. Director Levine had been contacted by Commissioner C. Michael Tucker and Ranger Dan Barvir regarding damage to the area. Commissioner Tucker stated that the contractor had no right to go into the park without permission. Director Levine stated that a city agency (Engineering) had commissioned Duberry to go into the park. Director Levine has let that agency know that if there is a project on or adjacent to park land they must let the Park Commission know what is going on and get permission to enter. Director Levine said that in the future we will be notified and have someone on site when a contractor is entering a park. Engineering must come to the Commission and let them know about the project. Mr. Moslehi said that Engineering will inform us and provide copies of any plans.

Mr. Jacob stated that they really want this to be a special area when they are done and they have a landscape architect working with them. The area is a very challenging area to work. It is difficult to walk in the area and get equipment into the site. Commissioner Tucker said that his understanding was that in order to get federal funding the bridge has to be brought to current code and standards. The bridge needs to be wider. President Belowsky asked if the bridge had lights. Mr. Jacob stated that it did not but they will be included in the project. He said there were really beautiful railings on the bridge originally; now they are tacky and out of place. Mr. Jacob said they will install nice railings and bring the bridge back to a condition that will be really special.

Director Levine stated that the main issue was that the Engineering Department didn't contact the Parks Dept. and had no permission to enter park.

VI. Old Business: A) Quarry Park Land Swap: President Belowsky stated that members of the Religious Society of Friends, "Quakers," had presented at our last meeting and asked to do a land swap to make it easier to expand the day care they own. The Quakers wanted to add more parking and a playground area. Commissioner O'Sullivan-Best stated that Sandy Astarita, a former Park Commissioner and Alderperson sent a letter opposing the land swap. Additionally, Park Ranger Dan

Barvir sent correspondence stating that the land swap would not benefit the park. The Quakers would still be able to expand the day care without park land. Commissioner Castro said that after listening to the Quakers' proposal, she really understood that there is a need for the daycare. The parking is important for them to have more spots. It makes sense and is something that should be considered. She would be in support of the land swap.

Commissioner Walton stated that he missed the presentation at the last meeting; but, he wondered if this is an appropriate use of park land. Commissioner O'Sullivan-Best stated that there had a been problem with Amtrak misusing park land in this area. Additionally, we did not receive any letter of support from the Friends of Quarry Park for this proposal.

Director Levine stated that he is completely opposed to the land swap. He stated that the purpose of park land is not to facilitate parking for day cares. We've gotten two letters of opposition. Our charge is to Preserve, Protect and Enhance park land. If we supported every group that came up with a good idea for park land, in 100 years we would have a lot less park land. We are not charged with supporting private entities and their business activities. Commissioner Tucker said that Ranger Barvir's letter pointed out the fact that the land swap would give us a piece of land more dangers like cliffs dropping off. Commissioner Tucker said we have swapped land before within the City for the City's benefit.

Commissioner Walton motioned to vote on the quarry land swap proposal, seconded by Commissioner O'Sullivan-Best. The Commission discussed the Motion including the State Statue requiring the land be of equal value. The Commissioners voted not to go through with a land swap with the Quakers, six opposing and one in favor. Commissioner Castro was in favor.

B) Tennis Programs: Director Levine stated that at the last meeting, Anne Worcester gave a presentation regarding the New Haven Tennis Programs. Ms. Worcester requested a "bridge grant" for this season's tennis program. The cost of the programs will be \$50,000. They are requesting a \$12,500 float to cover them if they don't make their grant and fee collections to reach the goal. This would enable them to go forward with a full tennis program for this coming year. Ms. Worcester was the key note speaker at a USTA conference and New Haven's program has been nationally acclaimed. Director Levine stated that the USTA's program booklet featured the East Shore courts on the cover.

Commissioner Castro motioned that the Commission commit up to \$12,500 for the New Haven Youth Tennis Program, Seconded by Commissioner Miller. Commissioner Walton wanted to know why the field house isn't used for the indoor lessons; stating, it would be a perfect place to run a tennis program. Director Levine said we haven't had much luck getting time in that facility. It is used by city as a revenue generator with tournaments, track and cheerleading competitions and there's big costs involved with custodians and security. Additionally, tennis would want use of the facility during the winter when the field house is used heavily for basketball and indoor track. Director Levine will send a letter requesting use of the facility on behalf of the Commission and ask Anne Worcester as well. **The Motion passed unanimously.** Director Levine will ask David Moser to incorporate this into the seating area. I will ask David to come present to the Commission and then the East Shore Management Team and eventually to Margaret's son.

C) Start Bank: The officers from Start Bank the new community bank in New Haven approached the Commission regarding accounts. President Belowsky and Commissioner Tucker met with Start Bank officials to discuss moving the Park Commission checking accounts into their bank. Currently the checking accounts hold approximately 300k. The Commission had previously agreed to move

some funds to Start Bank. They will not charge fees. Commissioner Tucker stated that President Belowsky was great at the meeting getting free checks for the Commission and asked the bank to support community events.

D) Pastore Memorial Clock: President Belowsky stated that the cost for the clock was \$12,000. There is a less expensive clock that can be placed on bricks to rise up. The clock would be closer to the road so it would be visible. Commissioner Tucker asked where the funds would come from. President Belowsky said the funds would come from the Donation Account. Director Levine stated that some funds were donated specifically to Margaret's memorial, he thought \$1,500 +/- . Additionally there should be a maintenance contract for the clock. President Belowsky stated that there is a maintenance contract available for \$400 per year. **Commissioner Tucker Motioned to purchase the memorial clock in honor of Margaret Pastore, seconded by Commissioner Miller.** Director Levine stated that he thought it should be passed through Arlene DePino and the Management Team. Commissioners chose the specific clock design. Adding chimes would be \$3,000. Commissioner Miller asked if we normally spent this much on memorials. Commissioners Torres and others stated that Margaret was very special and spent most of her adult life on the Commission. **The motion passed unanimously.**

VII. Other Business: **A) Field Use Committee:** Director Levine stated that some years ago there was a problem with accommodating soccer groups with field time particularly on Sundays. Around August/September we were approached by a new adult soccer league. In order to make field use completely fair, we would like to form a committee. The committee would consist of two Commissioners, two New Haven Youth Soccer, 1 New Haven Board of Education, one Ecuadorian League and one New Haven Men's league totally seven votes. Director Levine would chair, but not vote. The Department prioritizes soccer by: Board of Education, then youth leagues then adult leagues. Director Levine would like Commissioners Miller and Torres to be on the Committee. He would not have an aldermen due to the political issues involved. Commissioner Castro thought there should be people on Committee not directly impacted by the decisions. She said the community is divided about the fields. Commissioner Castro wants a committee to be formed; but not made up of just all the people who are currently using the fields. Commissioner O-Sullivan-Best said it sounds like the BOE and youth get the priority, and they should. New Haven adult leagues come last. Director Levine said that everyone from each of these leagues is a bit stuck on the Sunday playing times. The discussion went on for some time. Director Levine thought it would be a good idea to have a member of the Friends of East Rock Park and a member of the Friends of Edgewood. He stated that we will only call the Committee to order if the new adult league requests field time. President Belowsky didn't think it was fair for Commissioners Miller and Torres to take on more work without compensation. He suggested the Park Commission give them \$100 from the donation account each time they attend a Committee meeting. Commissioners Torres & Miller said that wasn't necessary.

Commissioner O'Sullivan-Best stated that there are lots of times when adults are practicing on the fields when they don't have a permit. The youth soccer people are intimidated by grown men taking over the fields. **Commissioner Torres motioned that a Field Use Committee be formed consisting of seven (7) participants, excluding the men's leagues & virgin del cesna. Seconded by Commissioner O'Sullivan-Best, and passed unanimously.**

Meeting Adjourned: 6:45 p.m.

Next Meeting: March 16, 2011

Location: Common Ground High School, 358 Springside Ave.