

New Haven Board of Park Commissioners

Meeting No. 1362
April 20, 2011

Meeting Location: Edgerton Park—Carriage House
Edgehill Road
New Haven, Connecticut

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

Meeting called to order 5:35 p.m.

Director Levine stated that President Belowsky was delayed.

I. Approval of Minutes—Meeting 1362: Commissioner Walton motioned to approve the Minutes of Meeting 1360; Commissioner Tucker noted a correction to the minutes “FERP” should be “FOEP” for Friends of Edgewood Park, seconded by Commissioner Torres with corrections. The Motion passed unanimously.

II. Treasurer’s Report: Treasurer’s Reports: Feb. 2011 & March 2011. Commissioner Tucker asked for funding info on the Blanch Spinner and Rock to Rock Account. Commissioners motioned to accept the Treasurer’s Reports and the Motion Passed unanimously.

III. Director’s Report: The 100th anniversary of the Carousel at Lighthouse Point Park event scheduled to take place on May 7 has been canceled due to low ticket sales.

IV. Urban Farms—New Haven Farms, Inc. & Edgerton Parks Conservancy: Mr. Harvey Koizim, Assistant Treasurer of Edgerton Park Conservancy (EPC) and a long term Board Member addressed the Commission. EPC would like to establish an urban farm in the NE corner of Edgerton Park. This use would be in keeping with EPC restoration work in Edgerton Park. This area had been used by New Haven Police Services for the mounted unit’s horses. We would eventually like to bring in a few sheep & keep them in the horse barn. Soil testing has been completed and we will need to replace/fix soil. Additionally, the road to the proposed farm area is in very bad shape. EPC would like to partner with Urban Farms on this project. We were hoping to get the Park Commission’s approval for the farm. Commissioner Tucker asked if they were going to also request financial help from the Commission. Mr. Koizim stated that they have always been successful raising money; but, may need some assistance repairing the roadway.

Mr. Charles Negaro addressed the Commission lives at 189 East Rock Rd. Mr. Negaro stated that he is owner of Chabaso Bread and Atticus Book Store and that he employs about 250 people; almost all of whom are New Haven residents. Mr. Negaro represents New Haven Farms, Inc. and described how they operate. He explained that urban farming is taking place across the country. Urban farms help inner city residents gain access to fresh vegetables and fruit. New Haven Farms, Inc. is asking permission to use 1 ½ “back acres” in Front St. Park for urban farming. There is a sewer issue at the site that has created a sink hole. Additionally, there is a homeless issue in this space.

Engineering is planning to repair the sink hole. It is the only area that would be able to be converted into farm land. The soil has been tested by Urban Farms and it’s not as bad as they thought it would

be, but would still need some remediation. Tucker, how would you be funded? They don't exactly know, and have some initial commitments. Commissioner Tucker asked about the funding strategy for the proposal and wondered whether Urban Farms would work with City Seed to sell produce? Mr. Negaro indicated that the funding would be similar to a "coop" where people could buy in or work for their access.

V. Tree Barn Proposal: Ted & Zeb Esselston of City Bench addressed the Commission. Ted stated that they have been using urban street trees to build furniture. New Haven alone takes down about 500 trees per year. Urban trees that must be removed are an underutilized resource. Just this morning they revealed a bench from the oldest elm in CT at the airport. The brothers have submitted an RFP to work with the department to re-use and recycle waste wood from city tree removals. Last year they used the wood from the Xmas tree on the green to create some benches. Zeb stated that right now they work out of three barns on Ted's property. They hope to use the tree barn at the maintenance yard to educate New Haven's children and create furniture from logs. People could visit and see the mill, finished work and work in progress. All trees tell a story and they are part of the community.

Commissioner Tucker asked if they were requesting to lease the barn. Director Levine stated that the RFP gave us the latitude to negotiate the concept with the successful bidder. School trips and our camps would come in to the site for educational purposes. Commissioner Tucker stated that what they want is us to approve the concept and then the department would work out the details.

Director Levine stated that the barn has not been used for the last 13 years that he has been at the Parks Department. He understood it was restored in the mid 80's. The barn is about 5000 sq. feet; with three different bays. There are two very usable spaces inside and excellent space outside to set up a milling area.

IX. Other Business: Greenway: Commissioner Tucker stated that a contractor at the Yale chiller plant has encroached upon the greenway at the Farmington Canal Greenway. Comm. Tucker had to go through much hassle with the architect and contractor. Dave Barone from City Plan ended up coming out to the site with him. Comm. Tucker wanted to make the Commissioners aware of the issue. Mr. Barone wrote a letter in which he talks about documentation from the contractor regarding the encroachment. Mr. Dick Lyons from Rails to Trails addressed the Commissioners. Mr. Lyons stated that he has sat on the Park Commission and understands their purpose. He stated that he has seen encroachments that are not dealt with immediately grown; and, he is worried about the loss of land. Mr. Lyons suggested that the Commission communicate with Yale University and that their punch list at this site should include a remediation of this encroachment. Mr. Lyons stated that Yale University should know they need to communicate with the City when they encroach on City land. Director Levine stated that the Park Dept. maintains the land but it is city owned, not park land. Director Levine added that City Plan and the CAO's office negotiated with Yale and that a \$100,000 fund will be set up and paid by Yale to the Park Commission for the perpetual maintenance of the Farmington Canal Line Trail or parkland in the Dixwell area. The 100k will be invested by the Commission and used towards this end. Director Levine stated that the agreement also includes wording that any future encroachment by Yale onto this land would trigger \$500 per day payments. Director Levine stated that the chiller lines are like a gas line or utility line in terms of footprint. The intention is for them to get rid of the construction fence and restore the land to its original condition. Commissioner Tucker suggested that we install permanent granite stone markers so we know where the property begins and ends.

VII. Amarantes—Parking Proposal: Alderwoman Arlene DePino addressed the Park Commission. The East Shore area has had an escalating problem with parking along the streets in the area of Lighthouse Point Park. Alderwoman DePino went through the Board of Aldermen to create an order to designate a residential parking zone in this area. Unfortunately, by doing this, we created a problem for Amarantes, which is a banquet facility in the immediate area. From Monday through Thursday from 5pm to 9pm Amarante's has a happy hour. Currently they have about 125 spaces for cars and all the overflow would go onto the street. Arlene has been working with T & P. Her question is, "Could, during these hours, Amarantes use Lighthouse Park parking area as an overflow parking option." Amarantes would make a donation to the Park Commission's 501c3 for this permission. Mr. Michael Piscitelli from the City's office of Economic Development addressed the Commission. Mr. Piscitelli stated the residential parking restrictions will be posted on additional streets prior to the summer. We will be posting restricted parking on Lighthouse Road, Cora, Marion as well as the rest of Cove. The problem for Amarantes is there will be no street parking at all in the neighborhood. The Commission asked questions about the proposal and discussed the matter for some time. If the Commission approves this proposal, Arlene will come back and give them an update mid-way through the summer.

VI. Portrait Restoration—Duffy's Décor: Director Levine stated that, as the Commission knows, the conference room on the first floor of 720 Edgewood has been under construction. There are a large number of portraits of past Park Commission Presidents all in different frames which are in various stages of disrepair. Director Levine stated that he asked Duffy Lynch from Duffy's Décor to price out reframing the portraits. Ms. Marianne "Duffy" Lynch addressed the Commission. Ms. Lynch stated that she has been framing within the city for the past 15 years. Ms. Lynch went on to explain the materials and methods she had to offer for the portrait reframing at various cost levels.

IV. Urban Farms—New Haven Farms (Cont.): Commissioner Tucker motioned to grant permission to New Haven Farms to utilize +/- 1.5 acres in Front Street Park for community farming with periodic reviews of their plans, seconded by Commissioner Miller. The Commission had a lengthy discussion on issues covering maintenance, vandalism, lease options, impact on local grocery stores including C-Town. Commissioner Walton stated that the CitySeed Farmer's Market in Front St. Park seems to draw more vehicle traffic as opposed to foot traffic from the surrounding neighborhood. Commissioner O'Sullivan-Best stated that if the people of Fair Haven are giving up +/- 1.5 acres of park land they should get a long term advantage from the land use. Commissioners discussed the cost to join the farm which would be like a co-op; or you could work at the farm for your share of the produce. Commissioner O'Sullivan-Best stated that they should find out if the neighborhood would want farm. **Commissioner Miller motioned to Amend the Motion to include New Haven Farms, Inc. be required to do a marketing survey of the area; agree to a short-term lease; and address the issues mentioned by Commissioner Walton.**

Commissioner Walton made a friendly Motion to amend the Amended Motion by removing all prior Motions and require a marketing assessment/neighborhood survey of Fair Haven residents on their level of interest, and return to the Commission with their findings prior to the Commission granting any permission to utilize the +/- 1.5 acres, seconded by Commissioner Tucker and it passed unanimously. Commissioner Tucker withdrew the original motion.

IV. Urban Farms—EPC (Cont.): The Commission discussed the request from Harvey Koizim of Edgerton Park Conservancy to establish an urban farm in the NE corner of Edgerton Park. **Commissioner Torres motioned to allow the Edgerton Park Conservancy to re-establish an urban farm in the NE corner of Edgerton Park, Seconded by Commissioner Tucker and it passed unanimously.**

V. Tree Barn (Cont.): Commissioner Walton Motioned to approve the City Bench Tree Barn Proposal to utilize the Tree Barn and outdoor space at the Park Maintenance Facility located at 180 Park Road in Hamden contingent upon a lease agreement being executed. Seconded by Commissioner O’Sullivan-Best and it passed unanimously.

VI. Portrait Restoration (Cont.): Commissioner Tucker Motioned to accept the framing proposal from Duffy’s Décor at a cost of \$2,800 with the high quality “museum” glass, Seconded by Commissioner Miller. Director Levine suggested the Commission include one additional frame for the current Park Commission President’s portrait. **Commissioner Miller amended motion to include an extra frame, and it passed unanimously.**

VII. Amarantes Parking (Cont.): The Commission discussed Amarante’s overflow parking issue. Commissioner Walton had to leave the meeting; but, stated **he would be in favor of allowing Amarante’s to Park at Lighthouse for a fee. Commissioner O’Sullivan-Best Motioned to allow Amarante’s to utilize a selected parking area at Lighthouse Point Park from 5:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m., Monday through Thursday during the summer for an amount to be negotiated in the form of a donation to the Park Commission’s “Donation” account. Additionally, Amarantes’ will be required to monitor the parking lot use of their customers and send a representative to the July 2011 Park Commission meeting for an update; Seconded by Commissioner Torres and it passed unanimously.**

VIII. Old Business—Pastore Memorial: President Belowsky attended a meeting of the East Shore Management Team and was met with opposition to placing a memorial clock to President Pastore at the Pardee Seawall. They did offer an alternative site across from the Firehouse on Lighthouse Road. Commission had previously approved the purchase of the clock for the Pastore Memorial. **Commissioners appoved the new location and asked President Belowsky to proceed with the project.**

Meeting Adjourned: 7:35 p.m.

Next Meeting: May 18, 2011

Location: TBD