

October 13, 2020

The meeting of the Board of Park Commissioners was held on Tuesday, October 13, 2020, at 5:00 p.m. This meeting was conducted by Zoom/Teleconference. The public had access to this meeting by calling the following conference line and then entering the conference code:

Dial to join Zoom Meeting by Phone:

1 (929) 436-2866

1 (877) 853-5257 US Toll-free

Meeting ID: 980 9106 3272

Mr. Labrador stated that this meeting is being conducted with the authority issued by the Governor of the State of Connecticut and read the following:

Tonight's meeting of the Board of Park Commissioner is the regular monthly meeting for October 13, 2020 and is being conducted by electronic means as authorized by Governor Ned Lamont executive order 7B which was issued on March 14, 2020, and which the Public has electronic access to witness this meeting.

The recording and transcription of this meeting will be posted on the City Clerk's website within 7 days.

Mr. Labrador asked that everyone abide by the Governor's request and directives contained in his various executive orders: 7 through 7J, with additional orders to be forthcoming.

OPENING CEREMONY

ROLL CALL

Present: President Labrador, Vice President Brideau, Commissioners: Wade, Cotto and Hosier, Clerk Ellen M. Gerrity. Also, in attendance were, Craig A. Nadrizny, Acting Public Facilities Director, Luann Conine, Recreation Superintendent, Luis Burgos, Manager of Roadway and Parks Services, and Lee Nastu, Recreation Coordinator with Angel DePara, Database Administrator, presiding as host of the meeting.

After determining there was a quorum, Mr. Labrador called the meeting to order.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF SEPTEMBER 8, 2020 PARKS BOARD MEETING

On a motion made by Mr. Brideau, seconded by Mr. Cotto, it was unanimously voted to approve the minutes as presented.

PUBLIC SPEAKING FORUM:

Due to the public health emergency, public speaking will be by written testimony only**
Please submit written testimony to Ellen.Gerrity@bridgeportct.gov by 4:30p.m.on Monday, October 12th***

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Mr. Labrador said that before we start the Parks Board meeting, he would like to take a moment of Personal Privilege with the Board.

He said that he has served on the Parks Board since 2007 as a Parks Commissioner and then was elected President of the Board of Park Commissioners.

He said that throughout this time he and the Commissioners that served have done nothing but try to do what is right for City of Bridgeport and its people.

He said that during the last few months he has been involved in a lot of phone calls with people who are concerned about many issues.

He said that the Parks Board took on the challenge of the Christopher Columbus statue that was taken down without anyone on the Park Board's knowledge, other than seeing it on the news and telephone calls that were made to him.

He said that he drove to Seaside Park to verify that the statue was taken down and he thought that he would receive a call regarding its removal from someone in the City.

He said that no one called him for over a week until people in the Bridgeport political field contacted him with their concerns about what happened, what transpired, and asked how they can fix it.

Mr. Labrador said that he told them that he would sit with his Board and take on the challenge of figuring out how to put the statue back.

He said that the Park's Board decision of having the statue put back up was not based on whether it was right or wrong for the City to take the statue down but was made because it was wrongfully taken down.

He said that at the August 11, 2020, Parks Board meeting the Board authorized the restoration of the Christopher Columbus statue at Seaside Park to take place within 45 days without incurring any expense to the Department of Parks and Recreation.

He said that since then he had received more telephone calls and verbiage on Face Book accusing the Parks Board that they do not know what they are doing.

Mr. Labrador said that he spoke with the City Attorney's Office and Acting Public Facilities Director Craig Nadrizny.

He asked Mr. Nadrizny, since the City does not want to put the statue back up due to the financial situation, would it be possible to put the statue back up if private citizens raised the money to do so.

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He said that Mr. Nadrizny stated that it wouldn't matter, the approval would have to come from the Mayor's Office.

Mr. Labrador asked him what it would take to access the statue and have the statue put back up.

Mr. Nadrizny reiterated that approval would have to come from the Mayor's Office.

Mr. Labrador commented to Mr. Nadrizny that no matter what efforts were made by the Parks Board it wouldn't happen unless the Mayor's Office approved it.

He said that Mr. Nadrizny said yes.

Mr. Labrador said he received a call many days later from Daniel Shamus telling him what the Parks Board can do and not do with the statue, and he has not received a call back since.

He said that he also made a call to one of the City Attorney's and has still not heard anything from him.

He said that recently before the Parks Board made the decision to put the statue back up, he received a call from a different City Attorney asking him how he could help the Parks Board with this situation.

Mr. Labrador gave the City Attorney the motion that was made by the Board regarding the statue and that he just wanted to get on a level playing field and the City Attorney said he would get back to him.

Mr. Labrador said that the City Attorney made several calls to the Acting Public Facilities Director.

Mr. Labrador said that he received a call from Acting Public Facilities Director Craig Nadrizny stating that the Christopher Columbus statue was being prepped and is due to be put back up by the end of the week.

Mr. Labrador said he received a phone call from Mr. Nadrizny an hour later that the Parks Board would have to get three quotes to put the statue back up and that the money would have to be taken out of the Parks Capital Development Fund.

He said he is very disappointed in the way that the City Hall Office's have disregarded the Board of Park Commissioners on something that they have tried to resolve in a calm and peaceful manner.

He said that he cannot understated why thirty people opposing the return of the statue would have the say when there are 140 thousand people in the City.

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Mr. Labrador said that the disrespect that has gone on towards the Parks Board who happen to be the most transparent Board in the City is disheartening.

Mr. Labrador said that the Parks Board does not base their decisions on any political reason; and that they base their decisions on what is best for the City, Community and to follow the City Charter.

He said that various City Departments have decided to take over decisions that are made by the Parks Board including the Mayor's Office, CAO's Office and the Health Department.

Mr. Labrador said that this is his opinion and he is not speaking for any of the other Board members, but he is tired of City Departments and certain Common Council members bad mouthing the Parks Board on the decisions they make.

He said that he has the utmost respect for the Board of Park Commissioners and they have been nothing but honest and clear as to the decisions they make for the City of Bridgeport and only have the best interest for the people who live in Bridgeport and use our parks.

Mr. Labrador said that he has been upfront with everyone on what he thinks about the parks and his intentions as Parks Board president.

He said as far as the conditions of the parks and ball fields, Mr. Burgos, Mr. Valeri, Mr. Hladun, Ms. Conine Mr. Nastu and others have done their best and have gone beyond the call of duty to make sure the parks are ready for the Bridgeport citizens who use the parks as a form of recreation for their families.

Mr. Labrador thanked everyone for listening to his concerns.

NEW BUSINESS

1. Maria Pereira, 85 Nutmeg Road, Bridgeport, CT, requesting to hold her tree lighting ceremony at Nob Hill Park on Friday, December 4, 2020, with a rain date of Sunday, December 6, 2020, from 3:00 p.m. until 7:00 p.m. with a cleanup time of 7:30 p.m.

On a motion made by Mr. Brideau, seconded by Mr. Hosier, it was unanimously voted to approve the event with the stipulations and that Ms. Pereira follow the State of Connecticut and City of Bridgeport COVID-19 Guidelines.

2. Maria Pereira, 85 Nutmeg Road, Bridgeport, CT, requesting to hold her tree lighting ceremony at Success Park on Saturday, December 5, 2020, with a rain date of Sunday, December 6, 2020, from 5:00 p.m. until 7:00 p.m. with a setup time of 3:00 p.m. and cleanup time of 7:30 p.m.

On a motion made by Mr. Brideau, seconded by Mr. Hosier, it was unanimously voted to approve the event with the stipulations and that Ms. Pereira follow the State of Connecticut and City of Bridgeport COVID-19 Guidelines.

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3. Bobbi Brown, Founder and President of #100GirlsLeading and Natalee Simone, Executive Assistant, requesting to use McLevy Park on Saturday, June 5, 2021, from 1:00 p.m. until 5:00 p.m. with a setup time of 11:00 a.m. and cleanup until 6:00 p.m. hold Summit 2021 with speakers and a DJ, and entertainment of dancers and cheerleaders during intermission.

Ms. Brown said that in 2018, they held one of their most successful girls' events in the City of Bridgeport where they provided mentors for the girls and gave the girls an opportunity to network with other young girls their ages.

She said that they gave out over 100 backpacks and were able to feed girls with bag lunches provided by sponsors from the City of Bridgeport.

She said that she is from Bridgeport and noticed that there was a lack of mentorship for girls so she took it upon herself and created a Board and in a matter of time to be able to give girls an opportunity to grow up in our community and be great young women and lead themselves.

She said that is why her event is called 100 Girls Leading.

On a motion made by Mr. Cotto, seconded by Ms. Wade, it was unanimously voted to approve the event with the stipulation that Ms. Brown follow the State of Connecticut and City of Bridgeport COVID-19 Guidelines.

4. Heather Oeschger, Project Manager, Siting & Construction Services, Eversource Energy and Shodhan Patel, Brian Alicea, and Helen Taylor, requesting to speak to the Parks Board to discuss a permanent access easement next to UI's Old Town Road Substation.

Tyisha Toms, Associate City Attorney said that they will not be attending the meeting tonight because it is right for the Park Board's review.

She said that she is asking that the Board table their request and have them come back to the November 10, 2020, Parks Board meeting.

On a motion made by Mr. Brideau, seconded by Mr. Cotto, it was unanimously voted to table the request and have them attend the November 10, 2020, Parks Board Meeting.

COMMISSIONER'S REPORT

Mr. Hosier submitted the following Moratorium for discussion and or approval of the Board of Park Commissioners:

On a motion made by Mr. Hosier, seconded by Mr. Brideau, it was voted to put the item on the table for discussion. Mr. Cotto voted no, Ms. Wade voted no, Mr. Labrador broke the tie and said yes.

**THE CITY OF BRIDGEPORT
BOARD OF PARK COMMISSIONERS
A MORATORIUM**

Whereas, in the current climate of national unrest that has led to the removal or vandalism of statues on public lands throughout the United States and,

Whereas, in light of the current and ongoing controversy surrounding the statue of Christopher Columbus at Seaside Park which has caused division within the community and has raised public safety concerns and,

Whereas, in light of the critical need to establish regulations and procedures for the approval of new statues, the naming of park land or structures (buildings), and the removal of existing statues, or the renaming of park land or structures (buildings) therein and,

Whereas, a complete and comprehensive review of the Strategic Plan for the City of Bridgeport as it relates to the parks is needed and,

Whereas, a complete and comprehensive review of current security systems and enhancements within the parks is needed and,

Whereas, in the interest of the public good, to protect public properties and enhance public safety for the residents of Bridgeport and the visiting public is in order,

Now, Therefore, Be It Resolved, The Bridgeport Board of Park Commissioners in accordance with Chapter 12 - Public Facilities; Section 10 (a), Section 12 (a) and Section 22 of the City Charter, hereby issues and authorizes a **FIVE YEAR MORATORIUM** on the approval of all new statues, or the naming of park land or structures (buildings) therein, **AND** on the removal of all existing statues, or the renaming of park land or structures (buildings) therein.

Furthermore, the Moratorium shall take effect on November 1, 2020 and end on November 1, 2025. The Moratorium shall not restrict the Board's authority to accept local, state or national funds or charitable donations for the improvement or maintenance of any park land or structures therein.

Furthermore, to satisfy the intent of the Moratorium, the Board of Park Commissioners, its professional staff, contracted consulting entities, or appointed members of the general public by the Commissioners shall begin the following review to include, but not limited to;

- A complete and comprehensive inventory of all existing statues, name plaques/plates and names of all park land and structures (buildings or other physical property) therein. A digital database of all information collected is to be created and maintained within the Department of Public Facilities.

- A complete and comprehensive inventory of all maps, map coordinates or origins, (date and funding source), imaging (photographs) and other identifying markings for all existing statues, name plaques/plates and park land structures (buildings or other physical property) therein. A digital database of all information collected is to be created and maintained within the Department of Public Facilities.
- The review and establishment of regulations and procedures for the approval of new statues and the naming of park land and structures (buildings) therein.
- The review and establishment of regulations and procedures for the approval to remove statues, or the renaming of park land or structures (buildings) therein.
- The review and establishment of regulations and procedures to accept donations of statues, structures (buildings or other physical property), or restricted monetary gifts.
- The review and establishment of regulations and procedures to identify funding sources for new statues or removal of existing ones and park structures (buildings or other physical property).
- A complete and comprehensive review of current security systems, maintenance and technology enhancements in the parks.
- A complete and comprehensive review of the Strategic Plan for the City of Bridgeport as it relates to the parks and the effect that new regulations and procedures would have on the Plan's overall mission.
- A complete and comprehensive review of all existing city ordinances, state statues and federal laws concerning vandalism or theft of park property. The Board of Park Commissioners shall recommend any new laws or changes to existing law to the Mayor of the City of Bridgeport, the President of the Bridgeport Common Council and the members of the Council, the Bridgeport State Legislative Delegation and the City's Congressional delegation.

Furthermore, and in conclusion, all proposed regulations and procedures prior to being approved by the Board of Park Commissioners, shall require a public hearing.

Mr. Hosier said that he thinks that the Moratorium is extremely necessary based on what we are going through in the City of Bridgeport regarding the Christopher Columbus statue.

He said that presently, we do not have any regulations in place regarding of what he just spoke of.

He said that he is asking for 5 years in this comprehensive review, so we get this right.

He said that each part of the Moratorium can be taken out separately if they put together guidelines and approve each part at a time; it does not necessarily have to last 5 years, but just until they get it concluded and completed.

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Mr. Hosier thanked the Commissioners for their time.

Mr. Labrador said that he believes that we will slowly relinquish the power that we have as a Parks Board to another entity.

He said that the City Charter specifically states who has the right as to what happens in the parks.

He said that unless we change the Charter completely, he does not feel that as a Parks Board we should have to rely on other sources to approve anything that needs to be done in the parks.

Mr. Labrador said that he does not think the rest of the Commissioners have had a chance to read and understand what they would be agreeing to.

He said that before the Christopher Columbus statue issue, he has had meetings at the Margaret E. Morton Government Center regarding the safety of our parks.

He said that he always received the same answer, that we do not have the manpower or money to provide police officers in the parks.

He said that he does not know where the money will suddenly come from to provide police officers even though it is City property and there should security provided.

He said that he feels that the Parks Board would be relinquishing their powers at the request of someone that they do not even know who it is, since the Moratorium does not specify who will be making these decisions.

He said that the Common Council who has their own council and handles other City matters should have no input whatsoever in what the Parks Board does.

He said that council members have had negative remarks about the Parks Board and have gone back on their word overnight.

He said he does not feel comfortable about approving this Moratorium and said that it should be looked over by all the Commissioners before a vote is taken.

Mr. Hosier said that the Parks Board would not be giving up any authority, and as a commission they have the right to create their own rules and regulations and that will be done solely by the approval of the Board of Park Commissioners.

He said that it does not have to be approved by the Common Council or any other entity, it is only setting up our own guidelines to follow now or in the future.

He said that presently the Parks Department does not have any guidelines.

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Mr. Labrador said that it must be looked at by an attorney and he will have his own lawyer look into this.

He said that he has not been able to contact any City Official for guidance.

Ms. Wade said that she agrees with Mr. Labrador and that the Moratorium does not sit well with her.

She believes that the Common Council will step in and take authority.

She also said that five (5) years is a long time and she is not comfortable with that many years.

Mr. Hosier asked the Board to table the request.

On a motion made by Mr. Hosier, seconded by Mr. Brideau, it was unanimously voted to table the item to another Parks Board meeting for discussion.

REPORTS – CRAIG A. NADRIZNY, ACTING PUBLIC FACILITIES DIRECTOR

Mr. Brideau asked how much money was in the Park Capital Improvement Fund.

Mr. Nadrizny said that there was approximately \$200,000.00 and is broken down into two accounts.

Mr. Brideau asked if some of the money could be used for Golf Course equipment.

Mr. Labrador asked that Mr. Nadrizny and Mr. Burgos and Mr. Kadi, get together a small list of small equipment that could be used in the parks.

Mr. Nadrizny said that we should investigate the particulars of how the Park Capital Improvement Fund could be used.

Mr. Nadrizny submitted the following from the City Charter.

Section 21. Capital Improvement Fund.

(a) There shall continue to be a fund to be known as the "Park Capital Improvement Fund." Said fund shall be separate and distinct from any other fund of the city and shall consist of all moneys received from the sales of any park department property. Said fund shall be used for the purposes of relocating, equipping, acquiring or developing park properties at any time leased or owned by the city, or any combination of such purposes.

(b) All moneys belonging to said fund shall be deposited with the city treasurer of said city, who shall be responsible for the management and investment of said fund. No expenditures shall be

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made from said fund without the approval of the board of park commissioners. All orders on said fund shall be signed by the president of the board of park commissioners.

Ms. Wade said that Section 21 should be looked at by the City and put into writing for the Park Commissioners to look at.

Assistant City Attorney Skyers spoke and said that he would be happy to review the Park Capital Improvement Fund for the Board.

Mr. Labrador thanked Attorney Skyers for his help and wanted him to know that he appreciates all the time Attorney Skyers has given him during this time and that he has been the only City Attorney to reach out to the Board.

He asked Attorney Skyers to look into what rights the Board has in regard to the Park Capital Improvement Fund and what exactly they can use the funds for.

Attorney Skyers said that he appreciates all the kind remarks and asked if the Board could give him something specific about their inquiry and he would be happy to get back to him on it.

Mr. Labrador wanted the Commissioners to know that Attorney Skyler has been nothing but kind and helpful to the Board and hopes that he will continue his relationship with the them.

Mr. Hosier said that he has known Attorney Skyers since high school and he has always had the same upright reputation.

Mr. Skyers thanked Mr. Hosier.

Mr. Labrador said that he is not involved in politics and is involved with what is right for the City of Bridgeport and our community.

He said that Attorney Skyers has been a gentleman to him and he wants everyone to know that there are still people in the City of Bridgeport who have morals, who stand for something and are humble and honest.

Mr. Nadrizny had no further business.

ADJOURNMENT

On a motion made by Ms. Wade, seconded by Mr. Cotto, it was unanimously voted to adjourn the meeting at 6:17 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Ellen M. Gerrity

Ellen M. Gerrity
Clerk