

December 8, 2020

The meeting of the Board of Park Commissioners was held on Tuesday, December 8, 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: 949 8702 3600

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 December 8, 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 NOVEMBER 10, 2020, PARKS BOARD MEETING

On a motion made by Mr. Cotto, seconded by Mr. Brideau, 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](mailto:Ellen.Gerrity@bridgeportct.gov) by 4:30p.m.on Monday, December 7, 2020.\*\*\*

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## OLD BUSINESS

1. 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.

Ms. Gerrity said that Eversource Energy will not be at tonight's Parks Board meeting but will attend the Tuesday, January 12, 2021 meeting.

On a motion made by Mr. Hosier, seconded by Mr. Cotto, it was unanimously voted to table the request

2. The Stratfield Historic District Association (SHDA) is requesting to put a sign on the corner of Brooklawn and North Avenues.

Also requesting permission to put signage in the parks such as flags to beautify it.

Ms. Margaret Judge, President, The Stratfield Historic District Association wanted to thank the Parks Board and Parks Department for beautifying their neighborhood with trees and she also thanked Ms. Gerrity for being very efficient and said that she is a pleasure to work with.

She said that they resurrected their association four years ago and they also take members that are not technically in their district.

She said they have campaigns such as a neighborhood watch program, and once a month they clean up the park and neighborhood and pick up bags of garbage off the street.

Ms. Judge said that there are metal signs posted that say the "Stratfield Historic District", but since they are proud of their neighborhood and they are keeping it clean, and more people are using the park such as the Stratfield Farmer's Market, they thought it would be a nice distinguishing feature to have a sign placed on the corner where the Christmas tree is, that would say "Welcome to the Stratfield Historic District, A National Register Historic District"; so you could see the sign while driving from Fairfield on North Avenue.

Mr. Hosier thanked Ms. Judge for all the association's work they do in the neighborhood.

She also said that they have been keeping their meetings as the Park Commission does through Zoom Meetings.

Ms. Wade asked how far from Clinton Avenue the sign would be placed?

Ms. Judge said that the sign would be right on the corner of Clinton Avenue.

Mr. Cotto said that the sign would beautify the area which is pristine.

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He said that he sees the association cleaning up the park to make it look better and thinks the sign would be a welcome sight.

Mr. Labrador said that he looks at Bridgeport as a beautiful place to live and knows that some outside people do not share his opinion.

He said that we have a lot of good people in the City of Bridgeport and they do not get the opportunity to showcase the parks.

He said that Bridgeport has been his home since he was five years old and he does not have anything bad to say about the City and he wanted to thank Ms. Judge and the Stratfield Historic District Association for continuing to keep the park and area clean.

Mr. Labrador questioned the type of signage that they would be putting up and the wording on it.

Ms. Judge said that they will only place the sign she had submitted and that the flags will be similar to the Black Rock flags put up for their anniversary at Saint Mary's By-The Sea and would just say that "You Are In The Stratfield Historic District Association."

Mr. Brideau said that he likes how the sign looks.

Mr. Labrador said that he also likes the sign and that it speaks for itself.

She said that there are many people in Bridgeport like herself who really believe in the City and how beautiful it really is, and if people just read the history of Bridgeport such as PT Barnum and more, they would be amazed of its parks small and large and how beautiful they are.

Mr. Labrador said that the Park staff has done an amazing job in parks such as Pleasure Beach with making sure that the bird nests do not get disturbed and the lifeguards that ensure the safety of the park's patrons.

Mr. Labrador said that if they need help to reach out to anyone in the Park Office.

Ms. Judge said that would like help installing the sign for them.

She said she wants to thank the Parks Commission and Parks Department and said that the Stratfield Historic District Association wants to keep the parks beautiful and will continue to do their part; she and the association appreciates all their help and support.

On a motion made by Mr. Brideau, seconded by Mr. Cotto, it was unanimously voted to allow the Stratfield Historic District place their sign in the park along with placing flags.

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Recreation Superintendent Luann Conine wanted to ask the Board to please keep the following people in their thoughts and prayers that recently passed away: William Carroll, Dennis Scinto and Gene O'Neil who was a Sergeant in the Bridgeport Police Department, and after he retired, was an employee in the Board of Education and also worked for the Parks and Recreation Department.

She said that Gene O'Neil was in our parks everyday walking from the arches at Park Avenue to west beach and whoever needed anything he was there to make sure it got done.

She is asking the Parks Board to donate a bench and plaque in Gene O'Neil's name at Seaside Park because Seaside Park was his life.

Mr. Labrador agreed that a bench should be put up on the Seaside walkway on the water maybe saying something such as "Gene O'Neil; just a walk in the park".

Mr. Brideau said that Gene O'Neil was quite a guy and they all remember him and what he did for everyone over the years and asked Ms. Conine to get a proposal for next months meeting.

Mr. Cotto said that he worked with Gene O'Neil for 39 years and he was like a brother to him and that this would be a well-deserved tribute to him and asked Ms. Conine to get a proposal together.

Mr. Labrador asked Ms. Gerrity to get a letter together to invite Acting Police Chief Rebecca Garcia to come to the January Parks Board meeting to address some concerns about police coverage.

He said on weekends we are only partially covered, but on weekdays we do not have many police covering the parks.

He said that officer Mike Bouchard is still considered a Park Policeman and he would like him to be more involved in the parks during weekdays.

He said that lately he is concerned about people riding four-wheel terrain vehicles tearing up Seaside and other parks.

Mr. Labrador also stated that he wants to put a timeframe of projects that come before the Parks Board that do not have a start or end date.

He said that the Parks Department needs to have a specified period for these projects that have always be left open ended.

Mr. Labrador said that next month he will re-address getting permission to fund the Christopher Columbus statue to be put back up.

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Mr. Labrador said that Sacred Heart University would like to put a scoreboard in the outfield at Veteran's baseball field.

He said that Sacred Heart University would pay for the scoreboard and material but would like the Public Facilities Department to help with running the power cables out to the scoreboard.

Mr. Labrador asked Mr. Nadrizny to investigate the possibility of Public Facilities running the cable out to the scoreboard or does he think it would have to go out to bid.

Mr. Labrador said he is waiting for Mr. Dowd to submit quotes as to what companies would charge the university.

Mr. Labrador said that after the scoreboard is put up, the wireless control of the scoreboard will be handed over to Recreation Coordinator Lee Nastu to have say on what local teams use the ballfield and scoreboard during the summer months.

Mr. Labrador said that he will also bring up to the Board next month that the Board will not give permission or sign anything from either university before the Board goes over it in detail.

Mr. Nadrizny said that he would look into getting three quotes for wiring the scoreboard since it will be a big job and will probably be pricey since they have to dig and run wires.

Mr. Labrador asked Mr. Nadrizny to look into the Parks Department's budget to help pay for it.

Mr. Labrador said that at the end of the day, when Sacred Heart leaves the scoreboard will stay there for us to utilize.

Mr. Nadrizny said that he hopes that the Bridgeport kids get to utilize the scoreboard as well to enjoy.

Mr. Labrador said that the agreement will be completely read by the City Attorney, Park Commissioners Lee Nastu and others before the Board approves it.

Mr. Cotto said that the lease should be looked over by the City Attorney's Office and then send back to the Board for final approval.

Mr. Labrador asked Mr. Nastu if he had any concerns with the scoreboard.

Mr. Nastu said that he has a copy of the Sacred Heart University contract regarding Veterans Field and that it should be looked over again, so the Commissioners know where we are in the present contract.

Mr. Hosier asked if he could have an update from Attorney Skyers regarding getting the funds to put the Columbus Statue back.

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Mr. Labrador said that Mr. Skyers is still looking at the City Charter and its language on the Capital Improvement Fund and what they need to do to use the funds to put the statue back up.

He said that he is also looking at the moratorium that Mr. Hosier submitted to the Board.

Mr. Labrador asked Mr. Burgos if he has concerns about the parks in reference to the equipment for maintenance of the parks that the Board could help him with.

Mr. Burgos said that right now he is in good status with the present equipment and has been concentrating with tree and stump removals.

He said that at some time he will sit down with Steve Hladun to discuss replacing aging equipment that is over 20 years old.

Mr. Labrador asked Mr. Burgos if he could get a list of equipment that will be needed in the next few years.

Mr. Burgos said that there is a list of needed equipment in the Park Department plans and it is presented to the Common Council for Capital money, but the money is usually needed for other things.

Mr. Brideau asked Mr. Nadrizny if they have purchased the roller for the golf course.

Mr. Nadrizny said that the golf course gets taken care of very well and whatever equipment they need and put in for is usually taken care of.

Mr. Brideau said he was just wondering if they the roller for the golf course was purchased yet.

Mr. Brideau said that Mr. Roach said that there was a deal made where they could get a roller.

Mr. Nadrizny said that Mr. Roach has money from the First Tee and that he is looking at purchasing equipment from there.

Mr. Brideau said that he is glad to hear that.

Mr. Nadrizny also said that the golf course has purchased a lot of equipment that he has signed off on.

Mr. Nadrizny said that the golf course has plans for new bunkers on the red and black course and that they are moving forward with a design concept plan.

Ms. Conine said that she knows that everyone gets their share of money from the capital budget and it comes down to where the money is allocated for, is where the money goes.

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Mr. Brideau said that he is at the golf course a lot and gets inquiries from many golfers about equipment.

Ms. Conine said that Mr. Nadrizny is on top of all the equipment and what needs to be ordered.

Ms. Conine said that she and her office gets many calls from kids asking about Night Recreation, Swimming Lessons which have been canceled due to COVID-19.

She said that with a hopeful heart perhaps in April or May, they can get their position requests approved from the Mayor's Office and move forward with opening the programs again even if only for four or five weeks.

She said that kids do not understand why Night Recreation has been closed due to COVID-19, they all just want to play basketball or go swimming.

Ms. Conine thanked Mr. Nadrizny because she knows he is cognizant of this situation.

Mr. Labrador said that he does not think that they as the Park Board and Parks Department should get into disagreements while everyone is listening into our meetings; he thinks that the issues should be ironed out inhouse.

He also thinks that no one should question Mr. Nadrizny's ability to do his job.

Mr. Labrador said that the Parks Department does have money, but when he asks for information on how much money is available and what we can do with the money, it seems that no one can give him the information.

Mr. Labrador said that from now on when the Board asks for something, they will stamp a start and end date as to how long the project should take.

He said that the Park Board should have some say on what the Park Department needs to keep the parks up to date with equipment etc.

Mr. Hosier asked if there is anyone that the Board could speak to directly regarding aspects of the budget and how they can spend it.

Mr. Nadrizny said that Mr. Labrador asked Mr. Skyers regarding the Park Capital Improvement Fund question at the last meeting and he should be the one to explain that to the Board.

Mr. Hosier said that he is also asking about other Park Department Funds.

Mr. Nadrizny said that money is asked for by City Managers for what they perceive they will need for the upcoming season.

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Mr. Labrador said that the Parks Board needs to know what money we have and what we can spend it on.

He said that this should be discussed with the Board, so they know what they are dealing with.

Assistant City Attorney Skyers said that he understands that there are several issues that have been raised concerning the budget that is connected to the Board of Park Commissioners as well as what the potential uses are of those funds.

He said that initially when the Parks Board asked him to inquire about the concerns they had it was very specific and centered around the statue and then it became a larger issue when Commissioners Hosier created a Moratorium document for development, taking down or erecting park statues or effects.

He said that he has been spending time working through the language that is contained in the Ordinance and in the Charter to make certain that the things the Board wants to do they can certainly do and do it legally.

Attorney Skyers said that he has found some language that is a little bit conflicting, but he is working through that.

He said that it sounds like now, that the Board has an additional query which they have a right to ask for additional inquiries because they want to do the best thing and best job for the City of Bridgeport in the confines of the law.

He that that he has made a note of the additional inquiry, but it seems to him that as he involves himself more in these meetings there will be even more inquiries.

He said that he apologizes that he is not able to work through some of these issues as quickly as the Board is able to raise them but believe him, he is going to work through these issues and has made a note of what they are looking for.

He said it all goes back to the language that gives the Board the authority of what they are trying to do, and he will work through that.

Mr. Nadrizny mentioned that he would never hold the Board up from purchasing anything that benefits the parks, that would not make sense to him.

Mr. Labrador said that his words were not meant for Mr. Nadrizny, but a lot of times what the Board asks, falls on the wrong ears.

Mr. Nadrizny said that the final decision regarding the budget and cuts is up to the Common Council and that is who he should go to.



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Mr. Hosier said that ultimately, he thinks the Board should get more involved with the City budget.

#### REPORTS – CRAIG A. NADRIZNY, ACTING PUBLIC FACILITIES DIRECTOR

Mr. Nadrizny gave the following report:

- Beardsley Park Master Plan – We are in the final draft plans of development.
- Svihra Park – Green infrastructure - grants were awarded and we will be working on a contract soon.
- Majestic Park – A group would like to do a memorial at the park and will probably address it at the January Parks Board meeting.
- Went Field Park – The playground will be redesigned and dedicated as a Memorial Playground “Ezequiel Santiago Memorial Park” in honor of the late State Representative Ezequiel “Chequi” Santiago.

Mr. Labrador said that the ball players at Went Field are willing to help as much as they can.

- Manila Park - The park was in disarray and the Public Facilities Department has replaced the entire park and has beautified it.

Mr. Labrador asked who takes care of the Parks Department website.

He also asked who takes the pictures of the work that was done in the parks and said that they should be posted to the website.

Mr. Nadrizny said that Steve Hladun has been taking pictures of the work done and that Angel DePara can post the pictures to the website.

Mr. Labrador said they should be posted so the public could see what a wonderful job they have done with the park.

Mr. Cotto asked Mr. Nadrizny how long the State project of widening East Main Street was going to take?

Mr. Nadrizny said that the project should take at least another two years to complete.

Mr. Cotto said he was asking because of the space in Beardsley Park that the State is taking up with their equipment.

Mr. Nadrizny said that they need to fence in the staging area for their equipment for safety reasons.

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Ms. Conine said that she wanted the Park Commissioners to know that everyone in Parks and Recreation is doing the best they can in these times, and they feel helpless with the program closures.

Mr. Labrador said that he stands by the Parks and Recreation employees 200% and he knows how hard they work.

Mr. Nadrizny wanted Mr. Brideau to know that he hired two full time employees at the Golf Course to help them out.

Mr. Brideau thanked Mr. Nadrizny for the new employees because he knows how much it takes to run two 18-hole golf courses.

Mr. Nadrizny had no further business.

The Commissioners wished everyone best wishes for the coming holidays!

ADJOURNMENT

On a motion made by Mr. Cotto, seconded by Mr. Hosier, it was unanimously voted to adjourn the meeting at 6:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

*Ellen M. Gerrity*

Ellen M. Gerrity  
Clerk