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The meeting of the Board of Park Commissioners was held on Tuesday, February 9, 2021, 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:

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Meeting ID: 962 7591 8701

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 February 9, 2021, 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 JANUARY 12, 2021, 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, January 8, 2021.***

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The following letters were submitted and read by Board of Park Commissioners:

1. Kate Rivera, Social Justice Advocate: Residents of the South End have many questions about Viceroy Cricket. A 35-year lease is a very long time. Is Viceroy Cricket a Bridgeport based company? No outreach has been done in our community and we need to know exactly what is being proposed. We ask that this matter be tabled until information and a plan is provided to the community.

Who is Viceroy Cricket? When I google that I get a team in India. What is the plan? What is their website? Do they have other locations? Are they good neighbors there? Would this restrict any area of the park and our bathhouse from the public? Is this a private club? Would they be open after park hours? What exact areas of the park will this affect?

This plan is completely unacceptable. It would displace the hundreds of kids who play soccer Saturdays and during the week and the adult teams that play here at Seaside too. This is also the best and driest part of the soccer fields. Has anyone even bothered to reach out to the AYSO and the other teams?

2. Marilyn A. Benitez, Bridgeport AYSO: I am the Regional Commissioner for with Bridgeport AYSO. We have been providing a volunteer soccer service to our Bridgeport youth for 25 years.

Is Viceroy Cricket Inc. requesting any part of the soccer fields area that we currently use for our youth program?

If so, since we will be displaced what is the plan to accommodate our children that use the area they are requesting?

3. Kacey Perkins: I am a resident of Laurel Ave. and a constituent of City Council Members Brown and Brantley. In reviewing the agenda for tonight's Parks Commission meeting, I was surprised to see an item (1) that has yet to be proposed and shared with the public for input. I am concerned about the continuing lack of transparency between elected officials and the community they serve. I urge every ethically responsible member of this commission to table the proposed lease with Viceroy Cricket Inc. until Bridgeport residents are presented with a description of the planned lease with sufficient time and opportunity to share feedback.

While I strongly recommend each person voting on this proposal do their own research, some questions I have after my own brief search:

Who is Viceroy Cricket Inc? There is no website or business listing or publicly available contact information for this developer, let alone examples of the work they've done in other cities. Why enter a 35+ year contract with a company with seemingly no past experience or record of their work?

Were other athletic field developers within the City of Bridgeport consulted to provide this service? Prioritizing contract options with local businesses (such as Diamond Landscapes & Athletic Fields Inc.) would boost the local economy and help to ensure an ongoing investment and relationship with the community.

Does this cricket field benefit residents? Will the casino bathhouse and cricket field be open to the public or a private park, further disenfranchising Park City residents from the outdoor spaces our tax dollars pay for? Will there be opportunities and/or commitments to employ city residents to maintain this site? Is there a plan to build relationships between the coaches, trainers, and athletes using the field and the young athletes in our city's schools?

These are a sampling of questions any city decision maker should be sure of before agreeing to binding contracts on behalf of their constituents. Again, I implore each of you to table this decision until such time as Bridgeport residents receive clarity and justification for this proposed contract. As we are still experiencing multiple public health emergencies, it would seem there is ample time for residents and city leaders to think critically about the city we deserve now and want to create and preserve for future generations before rushing legal commitments like this proposed lease.

4. AmyMarie Vizzo-Paniccia, Councilwoman, 134th District: I am still opposed to this commercialized scoreboard with all liability, money, maintenance, etc. on the taxpayers of Bridgeport. We have to stop allowing “outsiders” to benefit at our expense.

I understand the youth of Bridgeport - but playing sports is not all about a scoreboard being there. This is inside green space, open space and with many “creatures” walking and flying about. Not a good partnership for them.

Let SHU build in Fairfield!

Parks Board Members, please oppose this item.

***2nd: In regard to the cricket item:

I also oppose a private entity coming into our city/ public park (s) to use as a club and take up spaces needed for our youth.

This is just like the partnership with UB (which I do admit thought was good at one time until seeing beyond the drawings).

The same as closing streets to build a soccer field where Bpt. Taxpayers were to have much use there. That also did not work out well.

We have to know when to stop allowing outsiders taking over our parks and open fields. If they want to use, make reservations, and pay fees like everyone else. We know, I know, all too well that this will be another large cost to our Taxpayers in so many ways-including lawsuits. Does not matter their disclaimers, still on City properties. There are ALWAYS loopholes, gray areas and folks always find a way to sue

I have read many comments by many folks opposed to this via calls and social media.

*****Please object to this proposal.

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5. LaJeune Pollard: Please table the Viceroy Cricket 35-year lease until it can be placed before the public.
6. MaryAnn Provey / President, Seaside Village Homes, Inc., 43 Sims Street, Bridgeport, CT: I am writing as the President of Seaside Village Homes, Inc in the south end. We are totally against the proposal Viceroy Cricket 35-year lease on our bath house until there is transparency on the project.
7. Denis O'Malley, 260 Lake Avenue, Bridgeport, CT: I read of the Viceroy Cricket Club proposal to be presented at tonight's meeting. Thirty plus years is a long-time contract and before entered into, serious vetting should occur. It's not like cricket has a huge following in this country. I strongly suggest tabling this matter.
8. Howard Seat, 64 McKinley Avenue, Apt. A-10, Bridgeport, CT: I request the commission table the Viceroy Cricket proposal until the public is provided more detailed information about the terms and conditions. Our parklands, especially Seaside Park, are valuable treasures and proposals to use them need be carefully vetted.

OLD BUSINESS

1. Viceroy Cricket Inc. requesting to develop a cricket field at Seaside Park and secure a 35-year lease agreement for the Casino Bathhouse with an option for renewal through the Bridgeport Parks Department, Christy Duffy, Lakshman Bennabattula, Alfredo Castillo, Councilman, 136th District, and Jorge Cruz, Councilman 131st District.

Mr. Duffy said that the Viceroy Cricket is a Sports Club, and he would like to make sure it is represented correctly on the agenda.

He said that the agenda says they are seeking a 35-year lease and that they are seeking to develop the property.

Mr. Duffy said that they are actually looking for use of a field for a new sport called cricket which is a very popular sport and they would like to gain access to a field, whether it's on that side of the park or somewhere else.

He said that they never discussed developing the bathhouse but were interested in having locker rooms, but if there are other places available in the city, they would be interested in doing an RFP.

He said that Miss Rivera, made a comment in the news today and although he never spoke to her personally, she's a leader of the community and he would like to set up a time to talk to her about other options for the south end community which is represented by Councilman Cruz.

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He said that they approached Mr. Cruz early on to talk about the possibility of an amateur sport for children.

He said that they came up with the proposition where they would fund any improvements, where the Parks Department would find the best area for a cricket field.

He said that soccer is a great sport, baseball is a great sport football is a wonderful sport, but cricket is something they are trying to grate into the community where there is real growth as a minority population grows.

He said that is the proposition they are trying to put on the table today and to correct the agenda.

Mr. Duffy said that they do not want to develop a cricket field, or the bathhouse or to have a 35-year lease of the bathhouse.

He said that those were numbers that would be discussed when they go before the City Council because they have to talk to the City Attorney's Office about those numbers and they do not know what numbers they are going to use.

He said that one person said 10 years and some people said 100 years, and the 35 years came they came up with was to deal with the improvements; there will be a lot of improvements for the locker rooms.

He said if that's not the location and that it is not to be the site, they are asking that the Parks Department help them promote the sport and get them a place where they can do some official delineation so they can meet the league standards, and bring teams from outside that would be willing to come to Bridgeport safely and participate, not internationally but regionally, and they would be very excited if the Parks Board could help them with that.

Mr. Duffy said that the good news is that they have the money to do things, but they do not have location, and if this is one location where there is an opportunity, they would like to pursue it.

He said that if there are other opportunities he would like to sit down with Miss Rivera, or the others to find those opportunities if they exist. Again, they want to promote the cricket sport and they think there is a wonderful opportunity to grow it as a culture and as an athletic experience.

Mr. Duffy said that they want to make sure they get out of the gate with the right message, so it's not about a 35-year lease and it's not about developing; It is simply about having an interest for promoting the cricket sport and seeing if the Parks Department will help them get a site so they can play to league standards.

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Mr. Cruz said he spoke with Kate Rivera yesterday, for about an hour and explained the best he could about the reasons why he supports this Cricket League.

He said that he is a sportsman enthusiast who loves sports and he believes that children should be exposed to all kinds of sports with cricket is one of them.

Mr. Cruz said that he just wants to say that he is asking that the Parks Board exercises an open mind and consider giving them an opportunity to bring the sport of cricket into the City of Bridgeport because it is also going to be able to attract other youth in the City of Bridgeport to this new league just like other leagues try to attract kids to volleyball and tennis so he thinks that this would be very good for the City.

Mr. Cruz said that he is a lifelong resident of Bridgeport, Seaside Park is the area that he loves and he will be very careful of anything that would be coming into the Seaside Park, he was a lifeguard at Seaside Park in 1981 where they would store their equipment, and the bathhouse has not seen any attention for many decades.

He said that the City just approved \$17 million for the amphitheater in Bridgeport with a 10-year lease.

Mr. Cruz said that the City would not be spending a penny for any development of the Cricket League area or on the bathhouse; not one penny would come from City taxpayers.

He said that the benefits in the long run, would be beneficial to the City and to our youth because they are going to be hiring local youth and attracting and collaborating with other leagues, including the soccer leagues that we are trying to make contact with so we can bring them on board and meet with them because we are not trying to impose ourselves upon them in any way shape or form we want to work with them because they are very important.

He said that he believes that we can all coexist just like the Caribe League, who right now are utilizing many of the baseball diamonds at Seaside Park and elsewhere.

He said that he is asking the board to give them an opportunity to bring this league in without cost to the City taxpayers.

Mr. Cruz said that after this Parks Board meeting, they will ask for a meeting with the City Attorney's Office to work out any details.

He said that he has contacted the south end NRZ President Paul Boucher and the Secretary Craig and send them the same documents so they could put it on their agenda for next month.

He said that he gave them a breakdown of their plan and they sounded very interested will bring it to the NRZ, and to the constituents.

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He said that again he is asking the Park Commissioners to have an open mind and give them an opportunity like the Caribe League has received with the multiple diamonds.

He said that they are only asking for a corner of the field which is shown on the document they submitted which is a small area.

He said as for parking, they are working with the amphitheater to utilize their parking lot so they can shuttle people from the amphitheater parking lot to Seaside Park.

Mr. Cruz asked the Park Commissioners to give them an opportunity and they will definitely be setting up meetings with the South End community and the NRZ and any anyone else who has a concern.

He said that they want to be as transparent as possible and to get their proposal in order before they try to sell their proposal to their constituents.

Councilman Cruz thanked the Board for listening.

Alfredo Castillo Councilman 136th District said that as Councilman Cruz stated, they are just trying to work with elected officials to bring some good opportunities to the City of Bridgeport, and to not burden the taxpayers, but to collaborate with the City to improve a bathhouse that has been closed for many years.

He said that Viceroy Cricket would like to come and help our City to develop the Bathhouse for not only themselves, but for the community to utilize with no cost to the City.

He said that the building would be used for not only the Viceroy Cricket, but for the community to have a place to have for collaborating, even with the Caribe League, AYSO and others, trying to be transparent and to work together.

He said that we have an opportunity for an investor who wants to come in and help the City of Bridgeport fix the bathhouse to make it look presentable. And, bring a new sport, cricket to the City of Bridgeport that has been played all around the world and is now coming to America, just like the sport of soccer did.

Mr. Castillo said he and Mr. Cruz are both committed to our communities and when he presented this proposal to Mr. Cruz he agreed with him that it should be presented to the Board of Park Commissioners to see if they would like to bring cricket to Seaside Park and if not they would go somewhere else.

He said that they both agreed that it would be an opportunity to not only fix the bathhouse but to bring in cricket, the future sport of America and to work with the community.

Mr. Castillo thanked the Board and stated that he appreciates them.

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Ms. Wade asked why they want to have this proposal approved before they go to the community.

Mr. Duffy said that they are community based and they are reaching out through the community Councilmen and working with the Board of Park Commissioners, so they are making this a community project.

Ms. Wade asked if they have had meeting with the community, not the representatives?

Mr. Duffy said that they have not had meetings with the community, NRZ, or City Council because they understand they have to go before the Board of Parks Commissioners, and City Council to see if it is viable the then they have to talk it to local stakeholders and then they would go out to the community.

Ms. Wade said that the Parks Board should first hear how the south end community and NRZ feel about the proposal first.

Mr. Duffy said that he thought that the Parks Department authorizes permission for use of the fields; we're just looking for use of the fields

Mr. Duffy asked the Board to please guide them, they thought that they were following instructions.

Mr. Labrador said that if they were just looking to have a basic league where they are not leasing any part of the park and we are just granting them permission to use part of the park to have their instructional league or camp, then you are at the right place.

He said that that Parks Board is not in the position to speak on any leases or parking situations, we would just make the decision that it is a good idea to bring a cricket league to Seaside Park.

Mr. Duffy asked if they need to make improvements to the ground, pitching mound, white borders, and the perimeters to make it league acceptable is this something the Parks Department would help them pay for or should they pay for it themselves so they can make the season for next year.

Mr. Labrador said that they would be able to do that with the Board.

Mr. Labrador said that they would have to get together with Craig A. Nadrizny, Acting Public Facilities Director, Luis Burgos, Manager of Roadway and Parks Services, and Lee Nastu, Recreation Coordinator

Mr. Duffy said that for the record, he would like to have the agenda amended tonight that they are not looking to develop the property they are just seeking the use of the fields for a

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new sport, and there is no 35-year lease or a 99-year lease, that was a proposition for the discussion with the City Attorney's Office.

He said that if they have to get lockers, and they have to make it public to the public, and they put money into it then they would have to secure that, and it was told to them that at that point they would have to do a lease.

He said that they were just following instructions.

He said that he likes the Park Board's recommendation to work with the community by all means, he just needs to get use of the field for cricket and if they have to go to the commission for that, or to the Parks Department they will do that, but if they have to go to the community, just let them know who they need to talk to, to get the use of the field so they could begin improving the field for next season.

Mr. Duffy said that there is most definitely a need to take care of priority of sports if there are other locations for cricket, we should use them.

He said that if there is no room for cricket, it should be told to them so they could be clear about it.

He said that cricket is a very successful minority sport and the Latino community is very popular in it.

He said that the African American Caribbean community is very popular in it; it's a very emerging minority sport and it would be very successful for our youth to be exposed to such a good athletic.

Mr. Duffy said that it is something that's going to require the use of a field and if it's not available in the Bridgeport park, it is okay, they just need to know if it's all soccer or baseball and that there is not enough space for cricket, they understand and just need to know.

He said that if they have the opportunity to improve the fields, they will ask the Parks Department to do that for them like they would for the tennis courts, baseball or soccer fields and if the Parks Department cannot do that, they would be happy to do it.

He said that if they cannot do that, then they would ask the Parks Department to find us another place where they can go, and if there is nothing in Bridgeport parks to give them the opportunity, that is okay, they do not want to interfere with people. But again, everything that we are talking about tonight it has only been a discussion, it has never been a narrative at all.

He said that what they are saying is that they want to play cricket, and if they can do that in a league format which means they have to have standards, they cannot do pickup games.

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He said that he is with the Parks Commission in that they would go to the community and community leaders and get their input.

He said that he went to the Councilmen to be sure they were talking to leadership and by all means they would be willing to sit down with the community.

Ms. Conine said that she was under the understanding that their proposal included the bathhouse as well.

Mr. Duffy said that there were three parts to the proposition: The first was the league readiness for the fields and the question of whether they could work with the parks department as well as the maintenance to keep it ready for the lead on a regular seasonal way.

He said the second piece of the proposal was the storage of facilities for equipment. They have not concluded where it is going to be, they are talking about a one of the twelve stables that are there.

He said that the third option was to have a locker room for the home and away teams which is required by league standards and the second floor would be room enough for that purpose; the first floor is way too much space for them but they could definitely turn that into a public facility at the Parks Department's direction and make it a concessionary place for the public or whatever is necessary, they can make those improvements; per league standards they need to have a place to home the league when they visit like a locker room.

He said that it doesn't have to be the Casino Bathhouse, but if that building is available they talked about it and they were told that there's only one way to get that and they would have to go through the City Attorney's Office.

Ms. Conine said that the Recreation Department usually holds their summer camp with between 150 to 172 children in attendance.

She said that they utilize the building for storage, and they teach swimming lessons to children on that small beach in front of the bathhouse and they also use the bathhouse to shower afterwards.

She said that her concern is will they still hold their program there.

Mr. Duffy said that it will be if that is what the City and community will want.

He said he does not know what people want in there but if they are approved, they can do something for them.

He said that the Casino Bathhouse is a beautiful building, but it is gutted, and it would be a nice if the Parks Department had a vision for that and we could get that funded, it would be great to help these children.

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Mr. Duffy said that it is all about league standards and he is struggling with this. He has to meet league standards in terms of the field, which is the first part, and the maintenance equipment which is the second part.

He said that he has to meet the Parks Department's list of questions, they just need lockers, and they are willing to put the extra investment in, if it means that we're going to have proximity to the field. But if it doesn't make sense to the Parks Department, he understands.

He said that they just want to play cricket and they want to do it by league standards, and at the same time they want to have the youth come in, because if they can find the next generation of cricket stars,

That would help them to be really established as a league in the region of New York and the Bronx, and they would love to be able to have minority leadership, as they did with the Caribe which is a wonderful model of how you cultivate athleticism and community, which is something they wish we they could do with cricket.

Mr. Cruz said that he agrees with Commissioner Wade in that this has to be taken to the public and that they want them to know that they are not selling them a pipe dream as to what they would like to have done at Seaside Park, out of respect to his constituents and the people of Bridgeport they want to work and collaborate with everyone concerned.

He said that right now the idea is to bring this to the Parks Board and the other steps that they have to take.

He said that they just want the opportunity to establish a Cricket League and coexist with the others that play a Seaside Park.

He said that that they are only asking for a small portion on the corner of Atlantic Street, and one of the horse stables for storage.

He said that as far as the bathhouse as Chris was saying we would also want to work with Luann Conine and the Recreation Department's summer camp.

He said that they will not exclude anyone, especially dealing with kids they want to work with everyone and will speak with the different groups, afterward, they can get the numbers and could get together and have a logical conversation he believes that they can all coexist and the more diverse of sports, the better it is for our children.

He said that the Cricket League is going to be hiring local youth, off duty police officer so, some of the monies will be going to either to the Parks Department or the City budget.

He said that these things have to be discussed with the City Attorney's Office because they would prefer that the money go directly to the Parks Department, so they can utilize the money to buy whatever equipment they feel is needed such as lawn mower, snow blowers, etc.

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Mr. Cruz said that as far as working with other organizations, that's what they are all about.

Mr. Cruz thanked the Park Commissioners for letting him speak.

Mr. Duffy said that since someone suggested that they table this item, he is requesting that the item be tabled and in the meantime we could put modest expectations by asking the Parks Department whether or not cricket has a place in the physical sports arena in some sort of place in Bridgeport

He said that they could come back and have that conversation offline, and if it does have a place in Bridgeport, we can revisit with more meetings with Kate Rivera and the Park Commission and whoever else in the community that needs to sit down and have that conversation, and it may not be Seaside Park, the city may want to suggest another location to have their cricket field.

He said that we should ask the question if the cricket field makes sense in Bridgeport and if it does let's do this and have the community meetings and City meetings.

Mr. Hosier said that he would like to make a statement, very simply put and with all due respect, upon reviewing the Viceroy Cricket Inc. proposal, he wholeheartedly believes it has no merit to even be considered by this commission, therefore I move to deny this proposal.

On a motion made by Mr. Hosier, seconded by Mr. Brideau, it was unanimously voted to deny the Viceroy Cricket Inc.'s proposal.

2. Charles Dowd, Deputy Director of Athletics, External Operations and Bobby Valentine, Executive Director of Athletics, Sacred Heart University, requesting to speak to the Board regarding putting up a scoreboard at Veteran's Memorial Park baseball field.

Mr. Dowd said that Mr. Valentine apologizes that he could not be here tonight.

Mr. Dowd thanked the Commissioners for taking the time to listen to him.

He said that as he discussed with the Parks Commissioners at the January 12th Parks Board meeting, they would like to install a scoreboard at Veterans Park Field where they currently play baseball.

He said that hopefully they will play baseball by this June, but during the last meeting the Board tasked them with coming up with some pricing on the electrical installment of the scoreboard, as they had requested that the City participate in the install, as this scoreboard is in fact a fixture that will remain in the park well after if Sacred Heart were to leave although they have no plans of not playing at a Veterans Park in the near or long term future as we enjoy welcoming various teams from the NAC as well as other institutions.

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He said that in speaking with a number of vendors they came up with the price for the install of the electric side which is between \$5,000 and \$6,000 and the deviation would be based upon how readily and how easily the trenching would be done, and he thinks it would be closer to the lower number; their investment in this project would be at least \$40,000 if not more, depending upon the install price, assuming that they get the engineering passed.

He said that timing is critical, and they are hoping to be playing baseball in six to eight weeks, while once the product is on site it would not take long but it has to be manufactured and that would take a number of weeks.

He said that they are tweaking the design of the board a little bit and it might not have the ad panels, they are trying to reduce the weight to reflect some of the hurricane standards that are relative to engineering.

Ms. Wade asked if they have spoken to any of the community because the people in the north end would be paying the electricity.

Mr. Dowd said that they have discussed a couple of options because they certainly don't want to burden the taxpayers with something they were not planning on.

The first option would be solar, but they do not know if that would be viable.

The second option would be putting in a separate meter

He said that the electrical usage is nominal but again they do not want to burden anyone that bill.

Mr. Nadrizny stated that the City Attorney is looking at the lease agreement with Sacred Heart University, and they have advised him on what they want to do, and this would have to be added to the agreement.

He said that until we hear back from the City Attorney's Office, he would not approve anything.

Mr. Cotto stated that anyone coming into Bridgeport would look at the sign and think that the field is on Sacred Heart University property; he said that the last month he spoke about adding the City of Bridgeport to the scoreboard.

Mr. Dowd said that he apologizes that he did not provide an updated phone of the scoreboard, they can certainly add City of Bridgeport to the graphics.

Mr. Labrador asked Mr. Dowd if he has been contacted by the City Attorney's Office?

Mr. Dowd said that his last conversation was with Craig Nadrizny and he mentioned that he would speak to the City Attorney's Office.

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He said that he would be happy to reach out and any guidance would be appreciated.

Mr. Nadrizny said that he sent a Request for Legal Services to the City Attorney's Office and was supposed to have an answer by this meeting but so far, he has not heard back from them.

He said when he does, he can respond to the Parks Board.

Assistant City Attorney Eroll Skyers said that the City Attorney's Office has received the RLS and the City Attorney's Office is working through it, he said that Mr. Dowd can e-mail him for further information.

Mr. Dowd reiterated that timing is of the essence for baseball season.

Mr. Labrador asked the Parks Board for a motion to table the request.

Mr. Cotto asked that Attorney Skyers makes sure that they add the City of Bridgeport to the scoreboard.

Mr. Dowd said that he will make sure the City of Bridgeport is prominently displayed.

On a motion made by Mr. Hosier, seconded by Mr. Brideau, it was unanimously voted to table the request until they hear back from the City Attorney's Office.

NEW BUSINESS

1. Daniel Roach, Director of Construction Services, requesting to speak to the Board regarding McLevy Park's closing hour.

Mr. Roach thanked the Commissioners for speaking with him.

He said that he is in front of the Parks Board tonight because the situation at McLevy Park has gotten a little bit worse over the last couple of years, particularly in the warmer weather, more particularly with the amount of loitering and drinking associated at the park.

He said that the Police Commission participated in several meetings with the residents downtown as well as the business owners, and the situation is getting progressively worse and at the last meeting they had a couple of months ago with several of the the residents both in the City Trust building and the four stone building among others had lodged several complaints.

He said that the meeting was also attended by Captain Lougal and other members of the Police Department, that it is not only the drinking but what is left behind afterwards such as smashed bottles and other things and a certain amount of noise that goes with it.

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He said that they have also received complaints from residences walking their dogs who also complained of people urinating in the park.

He said that there has been a major complaint from businesses and restaurants between the comedy club and a couple of the restaurants that are adjacent or close to McLevy Park, and it has been the same complaints as well when people go downtown to either see a show or use one of our restaurants, that is not a very welcoming site when you have folks congregating and, with the amount of drinking and noise that's going on.

He said that at the last Police Commission meeting a couple of months ago someone from the Police Department suggested that they needed some tools to work with, and since the park right now technically closes at dusk but during the summer months dusk doesn't take place until later in the evening, and the early evening times are the major concern, it was suggested to amend the 8:00 p.m. closing time to officially close McLevy Park at 6:00 p.m.

He said that his first thought is that we have a lot of activity in the park but of course that would not affect the Downtown Thursday's series or other uses of McLevy Park.

He said that certainly this rule would not target folks that actually use the park for the right reasons ng to be going after senior citizens that sit and play chess, or residents that are use the park to walk their dogs.

He said that it would be a tool that the Police Department would use to make their job a little bit easier to clear the park of the folks that are abusing it and kind of help to get us to the point where we want to be downtown.

Mr. Labrador said the concern is about people hanging out in McLevy Park drinking and carrying on and doing whatever, so they want the park to close at 6:00 p.m. because it is hurting the nightlife downtown.

He said that his thought is this that is not a park situation to close the park at 6:00 p.m. to get rid of the problem, that is a police problem to go into the park and tell people they shouldn't be hanging out and drinking beer.

He said that no one should have to order the Bridgeport Police Department to handle that business in the middle of downtown Bridgeport, he is not ready to close McLevy Park 6:00 p.m. in the afternoon, because what happens when Downtown Thursday's come, and they want to end at 9:00 p.m., do we change the rules then to open the park back up at 9:00 p.m.

He said that not only are we not being fair to other people who do not abuse the park but simply because, maybe we are driving by the park with our windows up and we seem to not want to see what's going on; he does not want to open up the opportunity for someone else to say that we should close Seaside Park and one time, Beardsley Park at another time and others at another time.

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He said that all City of Bridgeport parks should close at the same time.

He said that when they were having demonstrations at McLevy Park illegally, with no permit from the Parks Department to host any of these rallies, no one from the City seemed to care to tell them that they cannot be there, no one spoke up and came to the Park Board to ask why is the they allowing these people to have demonstrations at will.

Mr. Labrador said that there were a number of demonstrations at will, without any of these people, even taking into concern that it is a park and they should be coming to the park board to ask permission.

He said that all of a sudden everything the Park Board does is not right; the Parks Board is a transparent Board and does not hide what it does.

He said that the Parks Commissioners are all volunteers, no one on this board gets a stipend, as opposed to other city boards.

He said how can we tell other groups in the City of Bridgeport who have some say, why is it that every time something comes down, it is made to sound like the Park Commissioners do not care.

He said that we on the Parks Board have never turned our head on the City of Bridgeport parks as long as he has been on this Board.

He said that he has been here a few years now and he is sick and tired of people telling the Parks Board whatever they want to do with our parks without any regrets.

He said that we talked about this months ago, with COVID-19 and the social distancing and all the guidelines that happened in the parks, but nobody was concerned about people going into McLevy Park and asking if they have a permit.

He said that all of a sudden, because a few people downtown are starting to realize that if we don't allow people in the park during the hours of operation those people would have to enter their establishments to drink, and have a good time.

He said that we have to be very careful in what we wish for because understand that it's not just the people who gather out there sometimes or the people that hang out there, while they've been drinking at other establishments, you would have to look at them also before you just say that it's, the other people in that area who maybe don't financially contribute to the City of Bridgeport, but again this goes on the whole day.

He said he is not one bit interested in agreeing with this park to be closed at any other hour than the other parks.

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Mr. Roach said that he is conveying a suggestion that was made by the Bridgeport Police Department or at least the captain of the police department.

He said that it was a suggestion to make the Park Department's job easier to clean up the park a little bit, and it was endorsed by the residents from downtown.

He said that he is bringing this to the Board so they are aware of the situation and so they can make a decision.

He said that the Board could say that you cannot close McLevy Park at 6:00 p.m., the board can say you have to keep it open until dusk or you can make it 24 hours if you want to. It is at the Park Board's discretion.

He said that the Police Department would be using the closing time of 6:00 p.m. at their discretion, meaning that they are not there to chase out the residents they are not there to chase out folks that are legitimately enjoying the park.

Mr. Labrador said that his question is if there are no alcoholic beverages allowed in any of our parks, there is not a time to distinguish as far as when you can drink in our parks or not; there is an ordinance stating that there is no drinking in the parks.

He said that they do not need a closing time from the Parks Board to say you cannot drink in McLevy Park; there are no alcoholic beverages allowed at any of our parks, but in the past, we have been asked to overlook this and allow alcoholic beverages to be sold and consumed in the park, now all of a sudden there are a number of establishments down there, who have taken part in having events whether it was with Downtown Thursday's or whoever ventured out to sell alcohol right at the park with their own little bars, their own little portable bar, and no one was ever interested in stopping that and now we get some people who hang out there who could be homeless and have nowhere to go.

He said that right now all of a sudden, this is a burden on the downtown businesses and people who live; this is a public park, when did the police department say it is their job to make sure that this does not happen, whether there is at a closing hour for the park or not.

He said that this is the part that he is not understanding, why is the police department all of a sudden asking us to change the closing time for the park, so they can enforce it: why can't they enforce it 24 hours a day; it is their job to enforce it.

Mr. Labrador also said that we have one Park Police Officer who is working under the Police Department who is supposed to work in the parks, but they have him use for many other things other than patrolling the parks, he wonders why no one is addressing that issue.

Mr. Roach said that this just gives the Police Department something to work with, to try to deal with the problem.

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He said that he is bringing up a lot of other issues and that is fine, they need to be addressed at some point, but this is a simple thing.

He said that if the board does not want to approve it that is okay and however the vote comes out that's great.

He said that it is the Park Board's decision and he understands that the police department will still use their discretion.

He said that they are not after the folks that use the park, they are after the folks that abuse the park.

Mr. Labrador asked if there is signage up, why does the Police Department need the park to be closed earlier.

Mr. Roach said that it just makes it easier for the Police Department, and the residents have requested it.

Mr. Labrador said that we've asked for police coverage with all our parks, and the answer we get is that we do not have the manpower, there is no money for overtime.

He said that we do have a Park Police Officer that should be available to the Parks Department and there is money available to pay him a few hours of overtime at the end of his shift.

Mr. Roach said that the City used to use the Park Policeman in question, and he did do a great job, unfortunately, the police overtime has been tightened up and we do not have access to him.

Mr. Labrador said there is money in the Park Budget, but we will not use the officer at that level.

Mr. Hosier said that he has to believe that we have to give more teeth to our police department if they are asking for this, he can agree with it, we are not taking anybody that wants to properly use the park out of the park.

He said that he understands some of Mr. Labrador's complaints and wholeheartedly support them especially the rallies that were going on and misleading; we need to tighten things up right and he thinks this is very simple.

He said that the Police Department is asking for it, the residents are asking for it and we are not stopping people from going into that park, we are just giving the Police Department some teeth to help them.

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He said that once the park is closed at 6:00 p.m., that means there is no drinking, they can get them out of the park, where somebody that is drinking or was drunk can say, "it is not dusk yet, so you can't touch me."

Mr. Labrador said to remember, when a park is posted at a certain time, that means no one will be allowed in that park if they are drunk, sober, preaching, or anything else.

Mr. Roach said that the people who leave a restaurant on a nice summer evening and wants to just sit at the park and enjoy the rest of the evening, or someone wants to walk their dog, even if the park is open or closed. He does not anticipate that they would be bothered.

Mr. Hosier said that maybe there is some sort of compromise they can come to, he understands exactly where Mr. Roach is coming from, he said that he supports it.

Ms. Wade said that what would happen to Downtown Thursday's, or evening events,

She said to the Commissioners to think about what they are asking for because they just might get what they ask for

She said that she doesn't believe people should be in the park if they are going to be drinking, violent or breaking glass she is not for that, but if the park closes at six o'clock that means for everyone including people walking their dog.

She said that she does not care where you come from you are not supposed to be in a park if the sign states it closes at 6:00 p.m.

A motion was made by Mr. Hosier that they allow McLevy Park to close at 6:00 p.m.

Mr. Brideau said that he likes Mr. Roach's statement on the Police Department using their discretion of asking troublemakers to leave the park, but if they see a couple on a nice evening walking in the park that are not causing problems then they would not bother them.

Mr. Labrador said there is a motion on the table by Mr. Hosier to accept the closing of the McLevy Park at 6:00 p.m., so we either get a set a second or the motion dies so that is basically what I'm for.

Mr. Brideau said that if the motion is made to close McLevy Park at 6:00 p.m., then it is a strict rule.

Mr. Hosier withdrew his motion.

Mr. Cotto said there is no further action to be taken.

Mr. Roach thanks the Board for their time.

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REPORTS – CRAIG A. NADRIZNY, ACTING PUBLIC FACILITIES DIRECTOR

Mr. Nadrizny gave the following report:

Park Projects:

Comfort Station Renovations: Newfield Park Restroom renovations are being planned. A request for pricing is being prepared to hire an architect to create renderings and a bid set. Went Field restroom fixture replacements are in the process of being scheduled with Public Facilities Building Maintenance.

- Court Reconstruction / Resurfacing: Several courts have been visited to review needed repairs and resurfacing where cracks have formed in the asphalt. We are hoping to be able to complete renovations at priority locations later this year. Pickleball striping of certain courts will also be considered for seniors.
- D. Fairchild Wheeler Memorial Golf Course:
 - FWB057213—Red Course Holes #10-18 Sand Bunker Project @ Fairchild Wheeler has been published for bid and is due to be opened on Tuesday, March 2, 2021 at 2PM.
 - Tree trimming and removal work has been underway in select locations on the course.
 - A new compact tractor purchase order has been processed to replace the old tractor.
- Newfield Park “Juneteenth” Memorial: Approved at the May 2020 meeting held by the Board of Park Commissioners, the memorial plaque is in the process of being drafted. A stone and beautification area shall be reviewed for the project to work towards completion in the coming months.
- Parks Maintenance Division:
 - Field improvements are being planned at Newfield Park to support a new little league being planned as well as Seaside Diamond 11 and Beardsley Diamond 5.
 - Picnic Areas at Beardsley, Newfield, Seaside and Went Field are in the review process for new grills, benches, and picnic tables.
 - In-House Tree stump grinding in city districts continue weather permitting. Almost 200 stumps have been grinded.
- Perry Memorial Arch at Seaside Park: Assessment report and preliminary opinion of cost has been completed by the Consultant. Funding including grant opportunities are being sought for the construction bid process. Additional probes and prep work being planned in the coming months to finalize bid set.
- Seaside Health & Wellness Trail: Planning and fundraising work continues by the Nature Conservancy and various partner organizations to fund the project that was previously approved by the Board of Park Commissioners during the June 2019 meeting. An update will be provided to the Board soon.

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Recreation Dept.

- The Seaside Lifeguard Station at West Beach is being cleaned out and renovated before the season.
- Sports Permits: We are preparing for the Spring Sports Season when state guidelines are released and contacting our sports leagues to come up with a safe plan for play this year.
- Seasonal Hiring: We are taking applications for seasonal positions - lifeguards, checkpoint attendants, splashpad attendants, and hopefully if it is able to be held, summer camp.

Ms. Conine commended Mr. Nadrizny for giving the okay to renovating the Seaside Park lifeguard station with Luis Burgos and all of his crew; she said that the old things have been removed and it looks stellar.

She said that the Recreation Department in conjunction with the Department on Aging, are helping the seniors with obtaining dial a ride to schedule the Seniors to get their vaccinations from Wednesday through Saturday at Central High School.

Mr. Cotto asked if it was possible to get a copy of the Director's Report in the Commissioner's packet, so they could look at the report ahead of time.

Mr. Nadrizny said that could be arranged.

Mr. Nadrizny had no further business.

COMMISSIONER'S REPORT

Mr. Labrador said that with no disrespect to anyone on the Parks Board, because the Commissioners mean a lot to him.

He said that first and foremost, he will not and never will be put in the position of being called a liar in front of people.

He wanted the Commissioners to know that this gentleman had never called him or text him and he does not know where he sent the text.

He said he has no reason to lie about that and again this is a board that is voluntarily; we are not appointed.

Mr. Labrador said for those people who might have made comments in emails about transparency, he thinks they are talking to the wrong board when they talk about transparency. Mr. Labrador said that he can't believe that in the years that he has been on this board that we have in a small way let political figures determine what we think is right and what we think is wrong for the parks.

He said he doesn't know what the Commissioners think, but he likes to think out of the box.

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He said that in the last seven or eight months he has started to realize some of that.

He said that he gets that some of the Commissioners were appointed by people who sit on the common council and who have some political say, and then feel like they owe them something.

He said that we should not feel like we owe people and he believes that the Parks Board decisions should not be made on what we owe to any political party, they should be made based on what we honestly think is the right thing.

He said that he's lived in Bridgeport for 55 years, going back to when the Table Talk Pie Company was here, and they used to make the letter carrier trucks down at the old Jai alai site.

He said that he watched a lot of things come and go, and literally watched the chance to have a Little League Complex given away at Veteran's Memorial park because people thought that there would be too much traffic.

He said it went to Bristol, CT and now they are getting a lot of money yearly.

He said that all the traffic the residents said they didn't want they have it because now there's dorms up there with kids are driving all over the place, as opposed to people who came to watch a little league game that wouldn't get drunk and drive crazy, we let that that go away.

He said that right now we were put in a situation with two other things where, at the end of the day, all we stand to do is have improvements we've allowed that to go by the wayside.

He said that the biggest problem he has in his life is that he does not bite his tongue, because he does not owe his job to anyone in the City.

He said that the gentleman that he did owe his job to was Albert Beraducci who has passed away, he was a straight shooter, and he learned many things from him.

Mr. Labrador said that if that's the kind of Board we are going to have at the Parks Department where our decisions are based on political favors, he does he will say this to you right here in front of everybody.

Mr. Labrador said that tomorrow morning he will send Ellen his letter of resignation, he no longer wants to be part of a Parks Board that is politically moved towards making decisions that we know in our hearts that are not right.

He said how do we sit here today and make a motion to close a park at 6:00 p.m. because they do not want the unwanted there, but it is okay for others to sit in the park when the park is officially closed.

He said that he has the utmost respect for the Park Commissioners, Public Facilities and Parks and Recreation employees.

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He said that he knows that there are a lot of people sitting in other places that are very happy about hearing this, and he is okay with that because he knows who he is; he knows what his morals are and he knows what everything else is; and with that being said he wants to thank them for attending the meeting tonight.

Mr. Labrador said he appreciates everything that Parks Department and Commissioners have done while he has been Chairman of the Board of park Commissioners.

Mr. Labrador thanked Ellen Gerrity who has been a stand-up person through thick and thin, through the truth and lies and through all of that she has withstood that fire, and she is still there every day for him.

Mr. Labrador thanked Lee Nastu who assigns the park permits, and sometimes catches more havoc than we on the park board can imagine.

Mr. Labrador thanked Luann Conine who gets a lot of things done for our kids and our seniors that people don't know about.

Mr. Labrador thanked Luis Burgos and his crew who keeps our parks looking the best that they can be on the east coast and do a great job with the little they have.

Mr. Labrador thanked Steve Hladun who did a lot for the Parks Board and who his misses.

Mr. Labrador thanked the Park Board members, but he can no longer want to be a part of what he sees the Park Board turning into.

He said that with that being said, he wants to say good night to everyone.

He said that he is done with the parks and the Parks Board can could do whatever they think is right for the parks.

He said that his real name is Banjed Labrador and he is officially resigned from the Parks Board.

He said stay safe, stay healthy, and stay blessed and enjoy the rest of your day. Thank you.

ADJOURNMENT

On a motion made by Ms. Wade, seconded by Mr. Cotto, it was unanimously voted to adjourn the meeting at 6:34 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Ellen M. Gerrity

Ellen M. Gerrity
Clerk