

**CITY OF BRIDGEPORT
BOARD OF PARKS COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING
OCTOBER 11, 2022**

ATTENDANCE: Banjed Labrador, Acting President; Cruz M. Cotto, John Mark Hosier, Denese Taylor-Moye, Lillian Wade

OTHERS: Tatiana Urena, Parks Department; Craig Nadrizny, Acting Public Facilities Director; David Martin, Garden Bros Circus; Razul Branch, Bridgeport Arts & Cultural Council; Dawn Spearman, YANA (You Are Not Alone), Lee Nastu, Recreation Coordinator; Atty. E Skyers, City Attorney's Office; Steve Hladun, Parks

This meeting was conducted via teleconference.

OPENING CEREMONY / PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Commissioner Labrador called the meeting to order at 5:49 p.m. He noted that the meeting was being conducted via Zoom/teleconference.

Commissioner Labrador then led those present in reciting the Pledge of Allegiance.

ROLL CALL

Ms. Urena called the roll. A quorum was present.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

• SEPTEMBER 13, 2022 (REGULAR MEETING)

**** COMMISSIONER COTTO MOVED THE MINUTES OF THE SEPTEMBER 13, 2022 MEETING.**

**** COMMISSIONER HOSIER SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE SEPTEMBER 13, 2022 MEETING AS SUBMITTED PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

PUBLIC SPEAKING FORUM:

The public may call the office of Parks and Recreation at 203-576-7234 and speak with Tatiana Urena or email her at tatiana.urena@bridgeportct.gov to sign-up for Public Speaking.

Commissioner Labrador noted that there was no one listed to address the Board at this time.

OLD BUSINESS:

1. City Attorney's Office, Bridgeport, CT, response and recommendation of the Christopher Columbus statue removed from Seaside Park.

Commissioner Labrador informed the Board that the statue had been removed to another location without their knowledge.

**** COMMISSIONER TAYLOR-MOYE MOVED TO REMOVE ITEM OB-1 CITY ATTORNEY'S OFFICE, BRIDGEPORT, CT, RESPONSE AND RECOMMENDATION OF THE CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS STATUE REMOVED FROM SEASIDE PARK FROM THE AGENDA.**

**** COMMISSIONER HOSIER SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

2. Tammie V. Smith, Praise Worthy Theater Group, 132 Richard Street, New Britain, CT, requesting to host a Vending Fundraising event for Praise Worthy Theater Group at McLevy Green Park on Saturday, November 5, 2022 from 1:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. with a set-up time at 12:00 p.m. and clean-up at 7:00 p.m. for approximately 50 people in attendance.

Ms. Urena informed the Board that she had received an email from Ms. Smith requested that they remove the item from the agenda because Ms. Smith would like to postpone the event to next spring.

**** COMMISSIONER COTTO MOVED TO REMOVE ITEM OB 2. TAMMIE V. SMITH, PRAISE WORTHY THEATER GROUP, 132 RICHARD STREET, NEW BRITAIN, CT, REQUESTING TO HOST A VENDING FUNDRAISING EVENT FOR PRAISE WORTHY THEATER GROUP AT MCLEVY GREEN PARK ON SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 5, 2022 FROM 1:00 P.M. TO 6:00 P.M. WITH A SET-UP TIME AT 12:00 P.M. AND CLEAN- UP AT 7:00 P.M. FOR APPROXIMATELY 50 PEOPLE IN ATTENDANCE FROM THE AGENDA.**

**** COMMISSIONER HOSIER SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

NEW BUSINESS:

1. Razul Branch, Bridgeport Arts & Cultural Council, Bridgeport, CT, is requesting to host the Downtown Thursday's Concerts at McLevy Green Park beginning Thursday, June 29, 2023, through Thursday, August 17, 2023, from 5:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. with approximately 1,500 people in attendance.

Mr. Branch was not present on the call.

**** COMMISSIONER HOSIER MOVED TO TABLE AGENDA ITEM 1. RAZUL BRANCH, BRIDGEPORT ARTS & CULTURAL COUNCIL, BRIDGEPORT, CT, IS REQUESTING TO HOST THE DOWNTOWN THURSDAY'S CONCERTS AT MCLEVY GREEN PARK BEGINNING THURSDAY, JUNE 29, 2023, THROUGH THURSDAY, AUGUST 17, 2023, FROM 5:00 P.M. TO 9:00 P.M. WITH APPROXIMATELY 1,500 PEOPLE IN ATTENDANCE.**

**** COMMISSIONER TAYLOR-MOYE SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

2. Dawn Spearman, YANA (You Are Not Alone), Bridgeport, CT, requesting to host a Trick or Trunk event at McLevy Green Park with set-up on Bank Street and Main Street on Monday, October 31, 2022 from 5:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. for approximately 100 people in attendance.

Ms. Spearman was not present on the call.

**** COMMISSIONER COTTO MOVED TO TABLE AGENDA ITEM 2. DAWN SPEARMAN, YANA (YOU ARE NOT ALONE), BRIDGEPORT, CT, REQUESTING TO HOST A TRICK OR TRUNK EVENT AT MCLEVY GREEN PARK WITH SET-UP ON BANK STREET AND MAIN STREET ON MONDAY, OCTOBER 31, 2022 FROM 5:00 P.M. TO 8:00 P.M. FOR APPROXIMATELY 100 PEOPLE IN ATTENDANCE.**

**** COMMISSIONER HOSIER SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

3. David Martin, Garden Bros Circus, 2187 Siesta Drive, Sarasota, FL, requesting to host a Family Fun Circus event at Seaside Park (Bandshell) in 2023. Load-in on Monday, July 10, 2023; show dates: Thursday, July 13, 2023 thru Sunday, July 16, 2023 from 3:30 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. and a load-out on Monday, July 17, 2023 for approximately 500 people in attendance.

Mr. Martin greeted the Commissioners. Mr. Martin said that they were a no animal circus and would like to present this at Seaside Park. Commissioner Labrador asked what other names the group had operated under. Mr. Martin said that they had been Garden Brothers since 2015, previously, the family owned circus was known as Piccadilly Circus.

Commissioner Labrador pointed out that Mr. Martin had been on the last agenda, but had asked to postpone it. Mr. Martin confirmed that they had requested the item be postponed to this month due to a change in another tour schedule.

Commissioner Labrador said that the date was in July, one of the most requested times. Mr. Martin said that he would be happy to answer questions.

Commissioner Wade said that the information sheet says a child's ticket would cost \$14.50. Mr. Martin said that children under a certain age would be free with a paid adult.

Commissioner Cotto asked about a \$68.00 ticket. Mr. Martin said that the maximum adult price was \$60.00. There is a sliding scale for the tickets. Discussion followed about the details, including the lack of a senior discount.

Commissioner Hosier said that in the past, there were reports of cruelty of animals. Mr. Martin said that there were no animals used since 2015. Commissioner Labrador agreed and noted that there were also reports of tickets being sold on line and the event never happened. Mr. Martin said that he had joined the company four years ago and there had never been animals since he was there. Commissioner Cotto asked why they hadn't moved to a no animal show years ago. Mr. Martin said that he could not speak to what was done years ago.

**** COMMISSIONER COTTO MOVED TO DENY AGENDA ITEM 3. DAVID MARTIN, GARDEN BROS CIRCUS, 2187 SIESTA DRIVE, SARASOTA, FL, REQUESTING TO HOST A FAMILY FUN CIRCUS EVENT AT SEASIDE PARK (BANDSHELL) IN 2023. LOAD-IN ON MONDAY, JULY 10, 2023; SHOW DATES: THURSDAY, JULY 13, 2023 THRU SUNDAY, JULY 16, 2023 FROM 3:30 P.M. TO 9:30 P.M. AND A LOAD-OUT ON MONDAY, JULY 17, 2023 FOR APPROXIMATELY 500 PEOPLE IN ATTENDANCE.
** COMMISSIONER HOSIER SECONDED.
** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

Commissioner Wade noted that Ms. Spearman was now on the call.

**** COMMISSIONER HOSIER MOVED TO TAKE AGENDA ITEM 2. DAWN SPEARMAN, YANA (YOU ARE NOT ALONE), BRIDGEPORT, CT, REQUESTING TO HOST A TRICK OR TRUNK EVENT AT MCLEVY GREEN PARK WITH SET-UP ON BANK STREET AND MAIN STREET ON MONDAY, OCTOBER 31, 2022 FROM 5:00 P.M. TO 8:00 P.M. FOR APPROXIMATELY 100 PEOPLE IN ATTENDANCE OFF THE TABLE.
** COMMISSIONER WADE SECONDED.
** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

2. Dawn Spearman, YANA (You Are Not Alone), Bridgeport, CT, requesting to host a Trick or Trunk event at McLevy Green Park with set-up on Bank Street and Main Street on Monday, October 31, 2022 from 5:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. for approximately 100 people in attendance.

Ms. Spearman said that this would be a trunk-or-treat. She said that she had partnered with the Police Department in the past and would go back to Acting Chief Garcia about the street closure issue. Commissioner Labrador said that Ms. Spearman would have to get a permission slip from Ms. Urena and take it to the Police Department and get it back to the Commission before the 31st. Ms. Spearman said that this should not be a problem. The Commissioners pointed out that they do not have jurisdiction over the streets.

Mr. Nadrizny said that they could make a motion to permit the event with the condition that she get the Police approval to close the street.

**** COMMISSIONER WADE MOVED TO APPROVE AGENDA ITEM 2. DAWN SPEARMAN, YANA (YOU ARE NOT ALONE), BRIDGEPORT, CT, REQUESTING TO HOST A TRICK OR TRUNK EVENT AT MCLEVY GREEN PARK WITH SET-UP ON BANK STREET AND MAIN STREET ON MONDAY, OCTOBER 31, 2022 FROM 5:00 P.M. TO 8:00 P.M. FOR APPROXIMATELY 100 PEOPLE PROVIDED SHE OBTAINS THE WRITTEN PERMISSION OF THE POLICE DEPARTMENT TO CLOSE THE NECESSARY STREETS.**

**** COMMISSIONER HOSIER SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

Ms. Urena said that Mr. Branch was now present on the call.

**** COMMISSIONER HOSIER MOVED TO REMOVE AGENDA ITEM 1. RAZUL BRANCH, BRIDGEPORT ARTS & CULTURAL COUNCIL, BRIDGEPORT, CT, IS REQUESTING TO HOST THE DOWNTOWN THURSDAY'S CONCERTS AT MCLEVY GREEN PARK BEGINNING THURSDAY, JUNE 29, 2023, THROUGH THURSDAY, AUGUST 17, 2023, FROM 5:00 P.M. TO 9:00 P.M WITH APPROXIMATELY 1,500 PEOPLE IN ATTENDANCE FROM THE TABLE.**

**** COMMISSIONER COTTO SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

1. Razul Branch, Bridgeport Arts & Cultural Council, Bridgeport, CT, is requesting to host the Downtown Thursday's Concerts at McLevy Green Park beginning Thursday, June 29, 2023, through Thursday, August 17, 2023, from 5:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. with approximately 1,500 people in attendance.

Mr. Branch apologized for not being present earlier. He explained he had been detained in another meeting.

Mr. Branch said that he was requesting an expanded schedule for the Free Downtown Concerts at McLevy Green. Commissioner Labrador asked Mr. Branch if he had been involved in this

event before. Mr. Branch said that he had, but it was usually behind the scenes and Mr. Jackson had presented the request to the Board.

Commissioner Labrador asked Mr. Nastu if there had been any problems with the event in the past. Mr. Nastu said that he was not aware of any issues.

**** COMMISSIONER HOSIER MOVED TO APPROVE AGENDA ITEM 1. RAZUL BRANCH, BRIDGEPORT ARTS & CULTURAL COUNCIL, BRIDGEPORT, CT, IS REQUESTING TO HOST THE DOWNTOWN THURSDAY'S CONCERTS AT MCLEVY GREEN PARK BEGINNING THURSDAY, JUNE 29, 2023, THROUGH THURSDAY, AUGUST 17, 2023, FROM 5:00 P.M. TO 9:00 P.M. WITH APPROXIMATELY 1,500 PEOPLE IN ATTENDANCE.**

**** COMMISSIONER COTTO SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

1. City Attorney's Office, Bridgeport, CT, response and recommendation of the Christopher Columbus statue removed from Seaside Park. CONT'D

Commissioner Hosier said regarding Agenda Item OB-1, the removal of the statue, which was done improperly, he was not sure if their motion was sufficient. Commissioner Labrador said that the removal of the statue was done by the City without the Parks Commission's knowledge but it was already done. There was no opportunity to discuss it with the City Attorney's Office.

Commissioner Hosier said that the Parks Commission was the only ones with the authority to give the statue back to the Italian American Society. He said that he felt that it was necessary for the Board of Parks Commission to approve the return of the statue. Commissioner Hosier asked if there was anyone present from the City Attorney's Office to discuss this.

Atty. Skyers said that he was on the call and thought that the Commissioners had received his opinion regarding the matter. Commissioner Hosier said that they had not received his opinion regarding the matter. Atty. Skyers said that he had sent out the opinion along with a proposed motion. The Commissioners said that they had not received anything from the City Attorney's Office.

Commissioner Labrador said that he had received a call from someone that the statue was being moved and had gone to see the statue removed from storage and its subsequent relocation to a new place. He said that the Board needs to discuss whether they are going to continue to allow the City to take actions like this or hire an outside attorney to sue the City. Discussion followed.

Commissioner Hosier said that they should move to return the statue to the Italian American Society to absolve them of any responsibility of the statue.

Atty. Skyers requested to be heard. He said that the Parks Board has both the possession and authority over items that are within its jurisdiction and placed within the parks. The Parks Board has jurisdiction over that statue. He then suggested wording for a motion if the Board wished to return it to the rightful owner. He said that when the statue was originally installed, the City accepted the statue from a designated owner. Commissioner Hosier said that to his knowledge, it was the Society of Italian Americans. Discussion followed.

**** COMMISSIONER HOSIER MOVED TO TABLE AGENDA ITEM OB-1 CITY ATTORNEY’S OFFICE, BRIDGEPORT, CT, RESPONSE AND RECOMMENDATION OF THE CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS STATUE REMOVED FROM SEASIDE PARK.**

Atty. Skyers said that the Board had the authority over the statue. Commissioner Labrador asked why they should trust the City Attorney’s Office to give them the information they need, whether it was positive or negative.

Atty. Skyers said that the statue was an incendiary issue with staunch advocates on both sides. The context of the removal of the statue was one of exegete circumstances, but was also water under the bridge.

Commissioner Labrador pointed out that while the Board had authority over the statue, it was still taken down without their authority and now it has been moved to a new location, without their authority. He asked when they were going legally stop doing this. He also mentioned that the City had entered into discussion with the UB about providing more land for athletic fields without discussing it with the Board.

**** COMMISSIONER HOSIER MOVED THAT BASED ON THE RECOMMENDATION OF THE CITY ATTORNEY THAT THE BOARD OF PARKS COMMISSION RETURN THE COLUMBUS STATUE AND THE BASE TO THE RIGHTFUL OWNERS AND THEY HAVE FULL AUTHORITY AND CONTROL OVER IT.**

**** COMMISSIONER COTTO SECONDED.**

Commissioner Hosier said that he had intends to vote against the resolution because he was choosing to support an alternative resolution. He noted that for the past two years, the Commission had reached out to the community, its leaders and politicians to resolve the issues with the Columbus statue with no response. However, they have chosen to embrace the political winds of the day. This is a sad commentary, to say the least.

Commissioner Taylor-Moye said that she understands what happened. She noted that she wasn’t on the Commission when the statue was removed. She said that Board should find out whether they could have an outside attorney come in for advice. The administration has been doing their job to the best of their ability and the Board needs to do their job to the best of their ability. It is

important to work together. The Board should figure out what they need to do to prevent this from happening again.

**** THE MOTION PASSED WITH FOUR (4) IN FAVOR (COTTO, WADE, LABRADOR AND TAYLOR-MOYE) AND ONE (1) OPPOSED (HOSIER).**

Commissioner Cotto left the meeting due to another commitment.

REPORTS

- **Commissioner's Report** – No report at this time.

- **Director's Report**

Mr. Hladun said that he had not been able to send the Parks Report out earlier. Ms. Urena then displayed the document on the screen. Mr. Hladun reviewed the highlights of the report with the Commissioners.

Mr. Nadrizny noted that the City had approved funding to repair the street at Seaside and it will take place in the spring of 2023. The Department will also be receiving LED message boards at Seaside and one at Beardsley.

Commissioner Labrador noted that the Commissioners had not been invited to the opening of the exercise area at Seaside. He thanked the Board Members and staff for their continued hard work.

ADJOURNMENT

**** COMMISSIONER WADE MOVED TO ADJOURN.
** COMMISSIONER HOSIER SECONDED.
** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting adjourned at 7:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted

S. L. Soltes
Telesco Secretarial Services

City of Bridgeport
Board of Parks Commissioners
Regular Meeting
October 11, 2022