

**CITY OF BRIDGEPORT  
BOARD OF PARKS COMMISSION  
REGULAR MEETING  
NOVEMBER 8, 2022**

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

**OTHERS:** Tatiana Urena, Parks Department; Luann Conine, Recreation; Luis Burgos, Parks Department; Steve Hladun, Parks Department; Craig Nadrizny, Acting Public Facilities Director; Eroll Skyers, Esq. Barbara Geddis, unKlerol, Bishop Theodore T. Plummer, Full Gospel Church; Pastor Gabrielle Beam, Full Gospel Church; Timothy Cooper, March for Education Foundation; Beth Santa, Seaside Gateway Project, Debra

This meeting was conducted via Zoom/Teleconference.

**OPENING CEREMONY / PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

Commissioner Labrador called the meeting to order at 5:28 p.m. Commissioner Labrador led those on the call in reciting the Pledge of Allegiance.

**ROLL CALL**

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

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

**• OCTOBER 11, 2022 (REGULAR MEETING)**

**\*\* COMMISSIONER COTTO MOVED THE MINUTES OF THE OCTOBER 11, 2022 REGULAR MEETING.**

The following correction was noted:

Page 1, under **ATTENDANCE:** please change “Acting President” to “President”.

**\*\* COMMISSIONER HOSIER MOVED TO AMEND THE OCTOBER 11, 2022 MINUTES.**

**\*\* COMMISSIONER WADE SECONDED.**

**\*\* THE MOTION TO AMEND THE OCTOBER 11, 2022 MINUTES PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

**\*\* COMMISSIONER HOSIER SECONDED.**

**\*\* THE MOTION TO APPROVE THE OCTOBER 11, 2022 MINUTES AS AMENDED PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

**PUBLIC COMMENT.**

Commissioner Labrador said that the public had the right to submit comments via email to Ms. Urena, who will distribute it to the Commissioners.

**NEW BUSINESS:**

**1. Pastor, Bishop Theodore T. Plummer, Full Gospel Church, 36 Beechwood Avenue, Bridgeport, CT, requesting to host a Community Outreach event with religious and health care activities at Washington Park from Sunday, August 13, 2023 to Friday, August 18, 2023 with a set-up Saturday, August 12, 2023 and take down Sunday, August 19, 2023 from 11:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. for approximately 100 people in attendance.**

Bishop Plummer greeted the Commissioners and said that Pastor Beam was also on the call. He said that they had held this outreach for many years before COVID happened. He added that Pastor Gabriel would be holding a children's Bible Camp.

Pastor Beam then addressed the Commissioners and said that the church had previously held a program called Rise To Read and noted that 76% of the school children could not pass a 3rd grade reading test. They provide services to approximately 100-150 children in Washington Park and other church parking lots.

Bishop Plummer said that they would hold the VBS during the day for the children and at night they will hold a two hour religious service from 7 to 9 p.m.. They will also allow the attendees to select clothing and other items for those in need. He added that the church will be celebrating their 90 years of service in November on the 20th.

Commissioner Labrador said that it was good to know that people would be meeting together in person because that is what people need. He wished Bishop Plummer the best of luck.

Commissioner Cotto asked how long they had been holding the program. Bishop Plummer said that they had been holding it for at least 35 and it started in 1985 in the North End. He gave a brief overview of where they had held these events in the past, including Newfield Park, Seaside Park and Washington Park.

Commissioner Taylor-Moye said that she would support this event. Commissioner Wade agreed.

**\*\* COMMISSIONER COTTO MOVED TO APPROVE AGENDA ITEM 1. PASTOR, BISHOP THEODORE T. PLUMMER, FULL GOSPEL CHURCH, 36 BEECHWOOD AVENUE, BRIDGEPORT, CT, REQUESTING TO HOST A COMMUNITY OUTREACH EVENT WITH RELIGIOUS AND HEALTH CARE ACTIVITIES AT WASHINGTON PARK FROM SUNDAY, AUGUST 13, 2023 TO FRIDAY, AUGUST 18, 2023 WITH A SET-UP SATURDAY, AUGUST 12, 2023 AND TAKE DOWN SUNDAY, AUGUST 19, 2023 FROM 11:00 A.M. TO 9:00 P.M. FOR APPROXIMATELY 100 PEOPLE IN ATTENDANCE.**

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

Commissioner Grisby asked about the noise level in the evening. Bishop Plummer said that they stop at 9 p.m. and the noise ordinance takes effect at 11 p.m.

**\*\* THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

**2. Timothy Cooper, March for Education Foundation, 405 Woodrow Avenue, Bridgeport, CT, requesting to host a Festival (after Parade) at McLevy Green on Sunday, August 20, 2023 from 3:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. with vendors/sponsors, donated food, bounce house, and DJ for approximately 120 people.**

Mr. Cooper greeted the Commissioners and said that they were going to have a fund raiser and would be focused on getting supplies for the teachers and their classrooms. The children are the focus and they would like to have a bounce house.

Commissioner Labrador asked about insurance for the bounce house. Mr. Cooper said that he has had a bounce house before and does have an insurance policy for it.

Commissioner Hosier asked where the bounce house would be placed. Mr. Cooper said that it would be on the stage.

Commissioner Wade said that she was in favor of this event and that Mr. Cooper had done this before.

**\*\* COMMISSIONER WADE MOVED TO APPROVE AGENDA ITEM 2. TIMOTHY COOPER, MARCH FOR EDUCATION FOUNDATION, 405 WOODROW AVENUE, BRIDGEPORT, CT, REQUESTING TO HOST A FESTIVAL (AFTER PARADE) AT MCLEVY GREEN ON SUNDAY, AUGUST 20, 2023 FROM 3:00 P.M. TO 6:00 P.M. WITH VENDORS/SPONSORS, DONATED FOOD, BOUNCE HOUSE, AND DJ FOR APPROXIMATELY 120 PEOPLE.**

**\*\* COMMISSIONER HOSIER SECONDED.**

**\*\* THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

### **3. Beth Santa, Seaside Gateway Project, 511 Lake Avenue, Bridgeport, CT, requesting permission to begin Phase I – Install Trail and Irrigation at Seaside Park.**

Ms. Santa greeted the Commissioners and named the other members of her project team. Ms. Santa then displayed a site plan by Waldemere Avenue and said that this plan shows the tree planting and landscaping they wished to do. She gave the details. They are requesting permission to start the installment of the stone dust trail and the irrigation lines. They will create two additional entries to the area. This has been previously approved by the Commission and they have been working to create community support and raised funds and received grant funding, along with the donation of 17 trees. The trees were planted in the park during the spring. They would like to begin in early November to work on this. There is a contractor who is willing to work on this.

Commissioner Labrador pointed out that there would not be any construction work done on the street. Everything would be done on park land. Ms. Santa said that this was so, but noted that in the future, there might be a crosswalk added.

Commissioner Labrador asked Mr. Hladun and Mr. Burgos if they had any concerns about this project. Mr. Burgos said that he was concerned about the number of benches that might be removed and who would be maintaining the area. He asked how they would be able to deploy the mowers over the area where the walkway would be.

Ms. Santa said that she thought it would be a hard crushed stone to make it accessible for bicycles, strollers and others. There will be a six foot mulch radius around the base of the trees.

Ms. Geddis said that this was the same one acre plot that they had been discussion with the Parks Department for the last five years. She added that at the recent major festival, it was just a small corner piece in context with the rest of the park. An aerial photo was displayed of the area. Ms. Geddis said that they would be using the same type of trail surface that they had used in Norwalk and Wilton. It will be accessible for wheelchairs and other motorized devices. There will be a concrete pad poured at the entrance of the trail. She said that it was easy to maintain and her town had done this nine years ago. They just add more stone to the bio-fabric base.

The seventeen new trees with the mulch borders have been installed already. One dead tree will be removed and one tree will be relocated to provide better access. Discussion followed.

Mr. Hladun said that the trail examples were in a more forested setting. He said that when they had introduced hard pan surfaces into other urban parks. He asked about the width of the paths. Ms. Geddis said that the path would be 10 feet wide to allow two people and a bicycle rider or someone with a stroller to pass each other. It is a pedestrian orientated path. Commissioner Labrador said that he would love to see this happen if the staff did not have any additional concerns. Mr. Burgos asked if they would be expecting them to plow the trail. Ms. Geddis said that she did not expect them to plow the trail.

Mr. Nadrizny reminded everyone that the group would need to apply for permits regarding the ADA compliance for the concrete pads leading to the trail and the grading of the area. Mr. Hladun said that they would have to apply to the Tree Warden for review also.

Ms. Geddis said that they had a number of landscaping plans she would like the Parks Department to review. She then displayed a photo of the main arch and indicated where the dead tree was located along with the two other trees that need work. She said that in order to complete the project this year, they needed to start construction after Thanksgiving. Discussion followed.

**\*\* COMMISSIONER HOSIER MOVED TO APPROVE AGENDA ITEM 3. BETH SANTA, SEASIDE GATEWAY PROJECT, 511 LAKE AVENUE, BRIDGEPORT, CT, REQUESTING PERMISSION TO BEGIN PHASE I – INSTALL TRAIL AND IRRIGATION AT SEASIDE PARK WITH THE STIPULATION THAT ALL THE NECESSARY PERMITS ARE APPROVED AND NOTIFICATION OF THE PARK DEPARTMENT ADMINISTRATION.**

**\*\* COMMISSIONER GRISBY SECONDED.**

**\*\* THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

## REPORTS

### **• Commissioner's Report**

Commissioner Wade said there was a letter from the City Attorney's Office.

**\*\* COMMISSIONER HOSIER MOVED TO ADD AN ITEM TO THE AGENDA REGARDING THE LETTER FROM THE CITY ATTORNEY'S OFFICE DATED OCTOBER 22, 2022 REGARDING THE CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS STATUE.**

Commissioner Hosier read the letter which stated that it was the recommendation of the City Attorney's Office to relocate the Christopher Columbus statue from Seaside Park.

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

**\*\* THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

Commissioner Labrador said that the letter stated what the Board has jurisdiction over and what it does not. He noted that the statue was taken down illegally and then removed by another group without the Board's knowledge a month ago. He said that there was nothing left for the Board to do.

Atty. Skyers said that it was his understanding that this letter was simply a matter of clarification. He noted that at the last meeting, the Board was agreeable to relinquishing the statue. The letter clarifies the background and identified the entity that now has control and possession of the

statue. Commissioner Labrador pointed out that the statue was removed and stored elsewhere without the Board's knowledge. Then it was removed by another group without the Board's acknowledgement. If it wasn't for an early morning phone call, he would not have known that it was removed from Seaside Avenue to another location. This issue has put a lot of stress on the Board and it clearly shows the lack of respect that the City has for the Board of Park Commissioners. He said that he would not sign any documents about the statue and hope none of the other Commissioners would either. He asked what went wrong.

Atty. Skyers said that the Board does have control over the parks and this letter demonstrates the Board's intention to return the statue to the other group. He said for the record that actions that were taken by the Board and recorded on paper, the motion indicated that it was going to be released back to the rightful owner.

Commissioner Labrador stated for the record that he no longer has any faith in the City Attorney's Office. He listed a number of things that might have happened to the statue while it was in storage. He said that the next time that something happens to something that the Parks Board has jurisdiction over, the Board will take it a step further and seek legal action. He added that when the exercise area was installed, the Board Members were not invited to attend the opening ceremony.

Commissioner Taylor-Moye said she agreed with Commissioner Labrador about the lack of respect that the Board Members receive despite the amount of time that they take to sit in the meetings and work to make the City look nice for the residents. The City Attorney's Office and the Board have to find a way to work together.

Commissioner Hosier said that they had worked very hard to try to get the statue back up in Seaside Park. After two years of not being able to get it restored to the Park, Mr. Caruso asked to have the statue back. It saddens Commissioner Hosier that this happened this way. It's time for the Board to move on and clear up the record by never allowing this to happen again.

Commissioner Wade said that she was sick of hearing about this statue. She said that they should give it back to the Italian community and let it go. The Parks Commissioners were the ones who were really being stepped on. They should show the Parks Commissioners some respect.

**\*\* COMMISSIONER HOSIER MOVED TO ACCEPT AND MAKE PART OF THE RECORD THE CORRESPONDENCE DATED OCTOBER 11, 2022 FROM THE CITY ATTORNEY TO THE PARKS BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS ATTORNEY, ITEM #1.  
\*\* COMMISSIONER WADE SECONDED.**

Commissioner Hosier said that this was just to clear up the action that the Board took last month.

**\*\* THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

**\*\* COMMISSIONER HOSIER MOVED TO RETURN PHYSICAL POSSESSION, CARE, CUSTODY AND CONTROL OF THE CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS STATUE AND THE MARBLE PEDESTAL FORMERLY ERECTED AND DISPLAYED AT SEASIDE PARK TO THE LOCAL ITALIAN AMERICAN COMMUNITY BY TRANSFERRING THE STATUE AND THE MARBLE STONE PEDESTAL TO THE COUNCIL OF ITALIAN AMERICAN SOCIETY OF GREATER BRIDGEPORT, INC. IN ORDER THAT SUCH AN ORGANIZATION MAY DETERMINE WHERE AND HOW TO APPROPRIATELY EXHIBIT THE STATUE SUBJECT TO ANY LEGAL CLAIMS SUBMITTED BY ANY THIRD PARTY, INDIVIDUALS, ORGANIZATIONS, SOCIETY OR OTHER LEGAL ENTITIES.**

Commissioner Labrador asked if the cost of removing the statue's base was on the Italian American Society. Discussion followed as to whether the pedestal would be included as part of the statue. Commissioner Labrador said that if the Italian American Society wanted the marble base, they should get the appropriate approvals and remove the base at their own cost.

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

Commissioner Grisby said that he would not forget the morning that he saw this happen on the news. Now as part of the Parks Board, he understands how wrong it was procedurally. Despite being a Bridgeport resident for most of his life, he's been amazed at the number of events that take place in the parks during the summer. He would love to see the unity that the Board Members have continue. He stated for the record that he did not feel that they had failed in their handling of this issue.

**\*\* THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

### **DIRECTOR'S REPORT** –

Craig A. Nadrizny, Acting Public Facilities Director

Mr. Nadrizny had the Parks and Recreation report dated November 8, 2022 displayed on screen. Mr. Hladun then gave a brief overview of the contents of the Parks portion report for the Commissioners. Ms. Jen then presented the Recreation portion of the report as outlined in the report. Ms. Conin said that they were working on the swimming program. This time they will be held at the Sheehan Center and will be making an announcement when the dates and times are confirmed.

Commissioner Labrador thanked the Parks and Recreation Departments for all their hard work and mentioned the wonderful work that had been done prior to the Sound on the Sound event to make the park look wonderful. Mr. Nadrizny thanked the Public Works crews that worked with the Parks crews to get the work done. Commissioner Labrador thanked the Commissioners who take time out of their week to attend the meetings.

City of Bridgeport  
Board of Parks Commissioners  
Regular Meeting  
November 8, 2022

Mr. Nadrizny reminded everyone that the Parks Department maintains 48 parks along with the esplanades with the trees and plantings.

**ADJOURNMENT**

**\*\* COMMISSIONER WADE MOVED TO ADJOURN.  
\*\* COMMISSIONER TAYLOR-MOYE SECONDED.  
\*\* THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting adjourned at 7:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted.

S. L. Soltes  
Telesco Secretarial Services.