

**CITY OF BRIDGEPORT
BOARD OF PARKS COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING
MARCH 14, 2023**

ATTENDANCE: Banjed Labrador, President; Cruz Cotto, Vice Chair; Lee Grisby, John Mark Hosier, Lillian Wade, Denese Taylor-Moye (6:00 p.m.)

OTHERS: Tatiana Urena, Parks Department; Sam Kadi, Fairchild Wheeler Golf Course; Craig Nadrizny, Public Facilities; Luis Burgos, Parks Department; Luann Conine, Recreation; Beth Santa, Seaside Gateway Trail, Tristan M. Haller, Connoisseur Media CT; Dr. Lesly J. Valbrun, Greater Bridgeport NAACP, Elsie Mercardo, Police Captain Manuel Cotto, Council Member M. Pereira, Lauren Vincent Coakley, Bridgeport Downtown Special Services District, Nina Gibson, Black Rock Community Council; Aida Z. Rivera, a Latin Expo and Community Outreach; Charlie Dowd, Sacred Heart University; Aaron Curry, Public Facilities, Chineka Haye, Lee Nastu

OPENING CEREMONY / PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Commissioner Labrador greeted everyone and called the meeting to order at 5:10 p.m. He led those present in reciting the Pledge of Allegiance.

ROLL CALL

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

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.

There was no one signed up for Public Speaking.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF:

• FEBRUARY 14, 2023 (REGULAR MEETING)

**** COMMISSIONER COTTO MOVED THE MINUTES OF THE FEBRUARY 14, 2023 REGULAR MEETING.**

**** COMMISSIONER HOSIER SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION TO APPROVE MINUTES OF THE FEBRUARY 14, 2023 REGULAR MEETING AS SUBMITTED PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

OLD BUSINESS

Commissioner Labrador announced that there were two items that needed to be expedited on the agenda. Ms. Urena explained that the Freedom Ride presenter had a schedule conflict and requested to defer to the April Agenda. This was acceptable to all.

Commissioner Labrador said that Council Member Pereira had a City meeting at 6 p.m., so he would like to have her address the Board now about an item of old business.

**** COMMISSIONER COTTO MOVED TO CONSIDER AGENDA ITEM 10 - THE UPDATED ON THE STATUS ON THE DOG PARK PROJECT AT SUCCESS PARK AT THIS TIME.**

**** COMMISSIONER WADE SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

10. Maria Pereira, Councilwoman 138th, Bridgeport, CT, requesting status on the dog park project at Success Park.

Council Member Pereira said that she respects the fact that the Parks Commission has the right to make every decision about the City Public Parks. She reminded them that she had started a request to install a dog park at Success Park. Council Member Pereira then reviewed the history of her application for the dog park. She said that the item has been approved at the August 2022 meeting and installation was planned for October.

She said that she had followed up with Mr. Nadrizny but the fencing had not been installed due to the work load. She said that she had sent a strongly worded email about this on February 13th and requested to be placed on the March agenda. The first P.O for the project was issued the day after she sent the email.

Council Member Pereira said that she was informed that she would not be allowed to speak, but she does not live in Russia, China or North Korea. She said she lives in a democracy where people are allowed to speak to the School Board, the City Council or the State legislature on a first come/first serve basis.

Council Member Pereira said that she had to contact Deputy Chief of Staff, Tom Gaudett, and also Commissioner Labrador about this. When she was finally added to the agenda, she was place at the bottom of the agenda. She said that she felt that there was some type of Fascist or retaliatory behavior going on and this is not acceptable. Anyone, regardless of whether they are a Council Member or a homeless individual, should be given the right to address the Board.

Council Member Pereira asked how they could move this project forward. She said that Mr. Nadrizny had contacted her and said that the park will be installed by the end of April after the fencing is installed.

Council Member Pereira said that she was not asking for anything additional, but wanted to share with the Board what has been happening. This is not new business. She said that she knew they could not respond to her if she was placed on the Public Comment list. She felt that there were a lot of shenanigans going on and that this was inappropriate.

Commissioner Labrador said that they did not place her in Public Comment because the Commissioners would not be able to reply to Council Member Pereira's comments. He went on to say that Council Member Pereira had spoken with the staff and a timeline for the project had been determined.

Commissioner Labrador said for future reference, the Board should not announce when a project should be completed because there are too many variables such as availability of materials and delivery schedules. While they can ask the staff about the status of a project, it is not their job to determine when a project should be completed. Discussion followed.

Council Member Pereira thanked the Commissioners for their time.

NEW BUSINESS

1. Tristan M. Haller, Connoisseur Media CT, 440 Wheeler Farms Road, Suite 302, Milford, CT, requesting to host the 991 PLR Mike Lapitino Golf Tournaments on Friday, August 11, 2023 at the Fairchild Wheeler Golf Course from 12:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. with a set-up at 6:00 a.m. which will also benefit the local Breast Cancer Awareness programs for approximately 200.

Mr. Haller said that this would be their third year sponsoring the Golf Tournament and reviewed the details of the event.

Commissioner Labrador asked about the vendors on site. Mr. Haller said that the vendors are parked on the street near the holes. Mr. Kadi said that they had sponsored the event in the past and there had not been any issues. The event is advertised on the radio and this helps the course also.

Commissioner Wade said that she supports this event because of the number of family members who had breast cancer.

**** COMMISSIONER WADE MOVED TO APPROVE AGENDA ITEM 1 - TRISTAN M. HALLER, CONNOISSEUR MEDIA CT, 440 WHEELER FARMS ROAD, SUITE 302, MILFORD, CT, REQUESTING TO HOST THE 991 PLR MIKE LAPITINO GOLF**

TOURNAMENTS ON FRIDAY, AUGUST 11, 2023 AT THE FAIRCHILD WHEELER GOLF COURSE FROM 12:00 P.M. TO 6:00 P.M. WITH A SET-UP AT 6:00 A.M. WHICH WILL ALSO BENEFIT THE LOCAL BREAST CANCER AWARENESS PROGRAMS FOR APPROXIMATELY 200.

**** COMMISSIONER COTTO SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

2. Lauren Vincent Coakley, Bridgeport Downtown Special Services District, 938 Broad Street, Bridgeport, CT, requesting to host the Downtown Thursday's Farmers Market starting Thursday, July 6, 2023 through Thursday, October 26, 2023 at McLevy Green from 10:30 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. with a set-up at 9:00 a.m. for approximately 200 people.

Ms. Vincent Coakley said that this was their 13th year providing the Farmers Market. They bring in vendors from all over and offer coupons to double the dollars for seniors and SNAP recipients. They are also looking for new vendors.

Commissioner Labrador asked if they would be having any avocados. Ms. Vincent Coakley said that they would like to, but she didn't know.

Commissioner Taylor-Moye said that she had been to the market in the past and the vendors were very kind and helpful.

**** COMMISSIONER GRISBY MOVED TO APPROVE AGENDA ITEM 2 - LAUREN VINCENT COAKLEY, BRIDGEPORT DOWNTOWN SPECIAL SERVICES DISTRICT, 938 BROAD STREET, BRIDGEPORT, CT, REQUESTING TO HOST THE DOWNTOWN THURSDAY'S FARMERS MARKET STARTING THURSDAY, JULY 6, 2023 THROUGH THURSDAY, OCTOBER 26, 2023 AT MCLEVY GREEN FROM 10:30 A.M. TO 2:00 P.M. WITH A SET-UP AT 9:00 A.M. FOR APPROXIMATELY 200 PEOPLE.**

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

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

3. Nina Gibson, Black Rock Community Council, 38 Woodland Avenue, Bridgeport, CT, requesting to host a family picnic at Ellsworth/Brewster B. Rock Park on Sunday, June 11, 2023 from 12:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. with a set-up at 6:00 a.m. for approximately 500 people.

Ms. Gibson greeted the Commissioners and said that they had omitted to include that this event was being held on Black Rock Day. There will be a concert and local restaurants will be selling food and beverages. They are hoping for a "Run for the Rock" race along with a parade.

Commissioner Labrador asked if they would be having any avocados. Ms. Gibson said that there may be avocado toppings available.

**** COMMISSIONER COTTO MOVED TO APPROVE AGENDA ITEM 3 - NINA GIBSON, BLACK ROCK COMMUNITY COUNCIL, 38 WOODLAND AVENUE, BRIDGEPORT, CT, REQUESTING TO HOST A FAMILY PICNIC AT ELLSWORTH/BREWSTER B. ROCK PARK ON SUNDAY, JUNE 11, 2023 FROM 12:00 P.M. TO 6:00 P.M. WITH A SET-UP AT 6:00 A.M. FOR APPROXIMATELY 500 PEOPLE.**

**** COMMISSIONER HOSIER SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

4. Helen Limberis, Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church, 4070 Park Avenue, Bridgeport, CT, requesting to use the overflow parking of Veteran's Memorial Park for their annual Greek Festival and Fair from Friday, June 2, 2023 to Sunday, June 4, 2023 from 11:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. for approximately 200 people.

There was no one on the call to present the item.

**** COMMISSIONER HOSIER MOVED TO TABLE AGENDA ITEM 4 – HELEN LIMBERIS, HOLY TRINITY GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH, 4070 PARK AVENUE, BRIDGEPORT, CT, REQUESTING TO USE THE OVERFLOW PARKING OF VETERAN'S MEMORIAL PARK FOR THEIR ANNUAL GREEK FESTIVAL AND FAIR FROM FRIDAY, JUNE 2, 2023 TO SUNDAY, JUNE 4, 2023 FROM 11:00 A.M. TO 10:00 P.M. FOR APPROXIMATELY 200 PEOPLE.**

**** COMMISSIONER COTTO SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED WITH THREE IN FAVOR (WADE, COTTO, TAYLOR-MOYE) AND ONE OPPOSED (GRISBY).**

5. Aida Z. Rivera, 664 Bishop Avenue, Bridgeport, CT, requesting to hold a Latin Expo and Community Outreach event on Saturday, June 17, 2023 at Washington Park from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. and a set-up at 8:00 a.m. for approximately 1,000 people.

Ms. Rivera greeted the Commissioners and said that her church has a community pantry that is open 24/7 for pick up or drop off. She also mention a number of projects that she is involved in and said that she had been a Bridgeport resident for over 40 years. She noted that there was an increase in the number of Hispanic resident in the City during the recent years. The goal is to give the Hispanic community members a hand up rather than a hand out. She said that at the pantry, they have a large number of undocumented Hispanic people asked about various resources such as learning English, their citizenship, getting a GED or finding employment. This event will help empower the community.

Commissioner Taylor-Moye asked if a list of vendors was available. Ms. Rivera said that she had one firm commitment and the others were waiting on approval. Ms. Rivera said that the groups were actually service providers.

Mr. Burgos asked if they had a site plan laid out. Ms. Rivera said that she wanted the four Spanish churches located at the four corners and then would space the service providers out between them. He noted that they would need garbage cans and a site plan if there are tents. Discussion followed about the details including food, parking and bathrooms. The dates are available.

**** COMMISSIONER HOSIER MOVED TO APPROVE HOLDING THE DATES FOR AGENDA ITEM 5 -- AIDA Z. RIVERA, 664 BISHOP AVENUE, BRIDGEPORT, CT, REQUESTING TO HOLD A LATIN EXPO AND COMMUNITY OUTREACH EVENT ON SATURDAY, JUNE 17, 2023 AT WASHINGTON PARK FROM 9:00 A.M. TO 3:00 P.M. AND A SET-UP AT 8:00 A.M. FOR APPROXIMATELY 1,000 PEOPLE WITH THE UNDERSTANDING THAT THERE WILL BE A SITE PLAN PROVIDED.
** COMMISSIONER COTTO SECONDED.
** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

6. Charlie Dowd, Sacred Heart University, 5151 Park Avenue, Fairfield, CT 06825, requesting to host a Fireworks Show on Friday, September 29, 2023 at the Fairchild Wheeler Golf Course from 9:00 p.m. to 9:15 p.m. with a set-up time at 6:00 p.m. for approximately 1,500 – 2,500 (attendees will be in Sacred Heart Football Stadium).

Mr. Dowd greeted the Commissioners and said they were hoping to replicate the event that they had done last year. He said that they understand that there will be a tournament that day, but they can set up after the tournament.

Mr. Kadi said that last year, everything went well and there was no damage to the property.

**** COMMISSIONER HOSIER MOVED TO APPROVE AGENDA ITEM 6 -- CHARLIE DOWD, SACRED HEART UNIVERSITY, 5151 PARK AVENUE, FAIRFIELD, CT 06825, REQUESTING TO HOST A FIREWORKS SHOW ON FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 29, 2023 AT THE FAIRCHILD WHEELER GOLF COURSE FROM 9:00 P.M. TO 9:15 P.M. WITH A SET-UP TIME AT 6:00 P.M. FOR APPROXIMATELY 1,500 – 2,500 (ATTENDEES WILL BE IN SACRED HEART FOOTBALL STADIUM).
** COMMISSIONER GRISBY SECONDED.
** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

7. Dr. Lesly J. Valbrun, Greater Bridgeport NAACP, 55 Eaton Street, Bridgeport, CT, requesting to host a Run/Walk & Community Outreach/Health Fair, that will start from Baldwin Plaza to Seaside Park and end at McLevy Green on Monday, September 4, 2023 (Labor Day) from 8:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. with a set-up at 8:00 a.m. for approximately 250 people.

Dr. Valbrun greeted the Commissioners and then gave a brief overview of the event, which is to raise funds for a scholarship. He explained that Rev. Lord was the previous president of the

NAACP who has died. To honor his legacy, they are creating this scholarship fund. Rev. Lord had managed to raise over \$500,000 for students to go to college. He outlined the route the event would take and indicated that it was on the diagram.

Discussion followed about the fact that this was set up on Labor Day and they may have to close some streets. Commissioner Labrador pointed out that they can give permission to use the park, but not the streets. Concerns were expressed about the I-95 underpass.

Dr. Valbrun was asked if they had done this before. He explained that the NAACP had done this elsewhere, but not in Bridgeport.

Commissioner Labrador said that they would need a site plan at Baldwin Plaza and McLevy Green to review. Dr. Valbrun said that Baldwin Plaza will be just registration table. At Seaside Park, the runners will be turning around and heading back. McLevy Green will have a health fair. Dr Valbrun will meet with Captain Cotto about the route and other details.

**** COMMISSIONER COTTO MOVED TO HOLD THE DATES FOR AGENDA ITEM 7 – DR. LESLY J. VALBRUN, GREATER BRIDGEPORT NAACP, 55 EATON STREET ,BRIDGEPORT, CT, REQUESTING TO HOST A RUN/WALK & COMMUNITY OUTREACH/HEALTH FAIR, THAT WILL START FROM BALDWIN PLAZA TO SEASIDE PARK AND END AT MCLEVY GREEN ON MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 4, 2023 (LABOR DAY) FROM 8:00 A.M. TO 3:00 P.M. WITH A SET-UP AT 8:00 A.M. FOR APPROXIMATELY 250 PEOPLE.**

**** COMMISSIONER GRISBY SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

8. Conroy Hall, SBG Media Group, 785 Light Street, Stratford, CT, requesting to host a church event at McLevy Green on Saturday, March 20, 2023 from 12:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. with a set- up at 9:00 a.m. for approximately 200 people.

There was no one on the call to present the application. It was noted that the date on the agenda is incorrect and the correct date is actually May 20, 2023.

**** COMMISSIONER COTTO MOVED TO TABLE AGENDA ITEM 8 – CONROY HALL, SBG MEDIA GROUP, 785 LIGHT STREET, STRATFORD, CT, REQUESTING TO HOST A CHURCH EVENT AT MCLEVY GREEN ON SATURDAY, MAY 20, 2023 FROM 12:00 P.M. TO 9:00 P.M. WITH A SET- UP AT 9:00 A.M. FOR APPROXIMATELY 200 PEOPLE.**

**** COMMISSIONER WADE SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

9. Beth Santa, Seaside Gateway Trail, 71 Old Post Road, Southport, CT, providing an update on the groundbreaking trail in Seaside Park occurring in March of 2023.

Ms. Santa greeted the Commissioners and said she had great news. The safety fence was scheduled for today, but due to the weather, it was delayed. The first construction meeting will be held on Thursday the 16th at the site. They need a point person from the City for the project. Mr. Nadrizny said that Mr. Burgos would be the point person for the project.

Ms. Santa said that the project will take about five weeks and she reviewed the details of the installation. There will be underground irrigation.

Ms. Santa said that they had changed their plan and there was no need to discuss the location of a tree. They are hoping for a ceremony at the end of April. They have been working on this plan since 2017. She thanked the Commissioners, and generous donors: ETF, the Santa Energy Environmental Fund and O&G Industries.

Once this portion is completed, they would like to have benches and a few other items installed.

REPORTS

1. Commissioner's Report

Commissioner Labrador thanked Captain Cotto and to Chief Porter for having a representative present at the meeting. He suggested that Captain Cotto check in with Ms. Conine during the summer regarding the life guards and the summer programs.

Ms. Conine said that they were working on getting all the checkpoints organized.

Captain Cotto said that he would be the liaison for the Park Commission and was looking forward to working with everyone. He said that the important focus is public safety. Captain Cotto said that he had coordinated the events for the last seven years.

2. Director's Report—Craig A. Nadrizny, Director of Public Facilities

Mr. Nadrizny said that they have appointed a new Deputy Director, Aaron Curry, to oversee parks and he was present. Mr. Curry greeted the Commissioners and said they were doing an amazing job.

Mr. Nadrizny said that the Director's Report had been sent out and contained the list of on-going projects.

In reference to Council Member Pereira's comments, he reminded everyone that the Department has a budget that they have to maintain. There was only so much funding allotted for fencing and they needed to insure that there were funds available. There is a P.O. in place and the Department is waiting on the vendor to provide a schedule for the dog park. The vendor has

stated that they will be starting in mid-April and if there are delays, Mr. Nadrizny will be emailing the Council Member.

Commissioner Labrador asked for an update on the basketball program, which Ms. Haye provided for him. He also asked about the St. Patrick's Day luncheon at the Senior Center. Ms. Conine said that it was this Friday and everything was moving forward well.

Mr. Nadrizny said that there was an issue with people driving on the grass at Nolan Street Park. There is a P.O. in place for bollards to prevent this.

Mr. Nadrizny reiterated that they wanted to make sure they had enough money in the General Fund for the fencing at Success Park after the winter was over. He said that it was important for the Commissioners not set start dates for projects.

Commissioner Labrador agreed and said that there were too many variables that have to be considered. Commissioner Labrador welcomed Mr. Curry. He said that he will be working on overseeing the projects. Mr. Nadrizny said that if the Commissioners have suggestions or improving the parks, they should let him know and he will present it to the Council for the budget.

Mr. Lee Nastu said that even with the snow that fell during the day, the new sport season has started. They will be working on the dirt fields for the upcoming games.

ADJOURNMENT

**** COMMISSIONER WADE MOVED TO ADJOURN.**

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

Commissioner Cotto thanked Ms. Mercado and Mr. Curry for listening to the entire meeting.

**** THE MOTION TO ADJOURN PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting adjourned at 7:10 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

S. L. Soltes
Telesco Secretarial Services