

**CITY OF BRIDGEPORT
BOARD OF PARK COMMISSIONERS
REGULAR MEETING
NOVEMBER 14, 2023**

This meeting was held via Zoom.

ATTENDANCE: Banjed Labrador, President; Cruz Cotto, Vice President; Lee Grisby, John Mark Hosier, Denese Taylor Moye, Lillian Wade

OTHERS: Tatiana Urena, Parks Department; Luann Conine, Recreation Department; Sam Kadi, Parks Department; Brett Caulfield, Superintendent of Parks; Luis Burgos, Parks Department; Lee Nastu, Parks; Chineka Haye, Recreation Department; Peter Spain, Donna Curran, Ash Creek Conservation Association; Gail Robinson, Ash Creek Conservation Association; Lauren Supolia; Gerard Azor, Jr., United Haitian American Society/Caribbean American Festival Experience, Frank Borres, Ms. Gina Malheiro, Director of City Events; Craig Nadrizny, Public Works Director (6:17 p.m.); Claudette Beamon, West Indian American Association of Greater Bridgeport; Victor Luna, Jr., Luna Entertainment Productions, LLC, David Mestre, Boy Scout Troop 34

OPENING CEREMONY / PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Commissioner Labrador greeted everyone and called the meeting to order at 5:17 p.m. Commissioner Labrador led those present in reciting the Pledge of Allegiance.

ROLL CALL

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

APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF:

- **October 10, 2023 (Regular Meeting)**

**** COMMISSIONER COTTO MOVED THE MINUTES OF THE OCTOBER 10, 2023 REGULAR MEETING.**

**** COMMISSIONER WADE SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION 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.

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OLD BUSINESS

1. Peter Spain, 280 Grovers Avenue, Bridgeport, CT, providing an update on the cost of putting the lights at St. Mary's by the Sea Park on a timer for shut-off at approximately 10 PM and shut-on at 6 AM for photo-sensitive on/off (in case darkness occurs during daytime hours). And the savings opportunity throughout the year, beyond the two-bird migration windows.

Mr. Peter Spain greeted the Commissioners and said that they had been listening to the Commissioners, the community, the officers of the Ash Creek Conservation Association and other residents, including Ms. Donna Curran. He said that if the Commissioners had questions, there were individuals available to help provide information.

Mr. Spain said that Commissioner Labrador had suggested the use of timers. He mentioned that Lights Out Connecticut has addressed this issue. Turning out the lights from 10 p.m. at night to 6 a.m. would save 3,000 hours of providing electric to those lights. It would reduce the climate emissions for those lights. It will help bio-diversity and additionally human health by reducing light trespassing in people's homes.

Mr. Spain said that the cost of installing the timers would be approximately \$930.00. The City would recover the cost of the installation of the timers in a matter of months.

Commissioner Labrador said that the Parks Commissioners did not have concerns, but felt that the people who would have to approve this would be the Chief of Police and the Director of Public Works. He said that it would be important to have a letter from the Police Chief that it was okay to do this. Discussion followed.

Commissioner Hosier then made the following comment:

“The buck stops here. Mr. Spain’s recommendation to the Park City in the preservation of its wonderful natural assets, is highly commendable. I appreciate the effort that you have put into this situation and it needed time and consideration. Unfortunately, I cannot support lights out at St. Mary’s. Beside preserving the beauty of our parks, our number one responsibility on this Park Board is the protection of those that enjoy the parks. I believe that the lights add to the park, enhance the safety and [inaudible]. If you shut them off, sir, as Benjy said and I agree, if there is one incident, one tried [inaudible] to happen, there will be somebody who will turn around and say, “Who gave the authority to shut those lights off?” I believe we ultimately have that authority and that question of who gave the authority if one [inaudible] event happens, the buck will stop with us and it speaks for itself. I appreciate your commitment to the City, sir, but for this issue, I cannot support you.

Commissioner Wade asked who would be paying for this. Mr. Spain said that there were experts on the call who would be able to answer that question. He said he could address the that the perception of safety and lights. He said that Ms. Curran and others were on the call.

Mr. Spain said that it would be \$930 for the installation and he would raise the money from the community if he had to. However, he reminded everyone that there would be thousands of dollars saved in cost reduction over time. The use of the timers over the first six months would more than return the cost.

Commissioner Wade said that if someone was hurt while walking in the park when the lights were off, it would come back to the Park Commissioners.

Commissioner Labrador asked why the Police Chief had shied away from answering whether the lights being off would be a problem. He said that the Commissioners had been told that studies had been done but the Commission had never been told what the conclusion of the studies had been.

Ms. Curran then spoke about the history of the park and the lighting. The park was established in 1922 and the lights were installed by Mayor Fabrizi without any consultation with the community. During the upgrade of Fairfield Avenue, there was an over delivery of light poles. The excess lights were installed at St. Mary's and others were given to Captain's Cove and Park Avenue. There was no study done about the height of the lights or the illumination that the bulbs would provide. The poles are much too close and the residents have to put up heavy light blocking curtains. The park is closed and the lights only come on at 10 p.m. They were never installed for safety, they were put in to utilize the excess items left over from the project. She noted that the State had taken up the Lights Out Connecticut initiative, also.

Discussion followed about the light pollution and potential of turning off every other light.

Commissioner Grisby said that he felt that the issue was much bigger than the Park Commission.

**** COMMISSIONER GRISBY MOVED TO DENY AGENDA ITEM 1. PETER SPAIN, 280 GROVERS AVENUE, BRIDGEPORT, CT, PROVIDING AN UPDATE ON THE COST OF PUTTING THE LIGHTS AT ST. MARY'S BY THE SEA PARK ON A TIMER FOR SHUT-OFF AT APPROXIMATELY 10 PM AND SHUT-ON AT 6 AM FOR PHOTO-SENSITIVE ON/OFF (IN CASE DARKNESS OCCURS DURING DAYTIME HOURS). AND THE SAVINGS OPPORTUNITY THROUGHOUT THE YEAR, BEYOND THE TWO-BIRD MIGRATION WINDOWS BASED ON JURISDICTION AND THE FACT THAT IT HAD BECOME A PUBLIC PETITION.**

**** COMMISSIONER HOSIER SECONDED.**

Ms. Urena explained that Gail Robinson of the Ash Creek Conservation Association had requested to address the Commissioners. She said that she understood the situation that the Commissioners were in and asked if appealing to the Mayor for approval would be possible.

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Commissioner Labrador said that if the Mayor would issue a statement saying that the City would be liable, it would resolve the situation. He noted that a City attorney was not present at the meeting.

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

Mr. Spain thanked the Commissioners for their effort. He noted for the record that the Police Chief had stated that the decision was solely up to the Park Commission and added that Mayor Ganim had stated that the decision was in the hands of the Parks Board.

2. Gerard Azor, Jr., United Haitian American Society/Caribbean American Festival Experience, 91 Ridgeley Ave., Fairfield, CT, providing an update on the request of the Caribbean Culture Festival at Seaside Park Band Shell on Saturday, July 27, 2024 from 12:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. with a set-up time at 7:00 a.m. and clean-up at 8:00 p.m. for approximately 500 people.

Mr. Azor greeted the Commissioners and said that he was the Vice Chair of the United Haitian American Society/Caribbean American Festival. He said that he was following up on the September 19th meeting where the Commissioners had requested that he meet with Mr. Burgos and Mr. Caulfield for a walk through at Seaside Park. He said that the meeting went well and discussed how they would set up for the festival. A diagram of the set up was given to Ms. Urena. They are looking to set up between 10 to 12 tents with five or six on each side. The main tent would be in the middle. The participants would park on the street. There may be two food trucks.

The Commissioners reviewed the plans. Mr. Caulfield said that he had been at the park with Mr. Azor and reviewed the details for the event, which would be open to all. Commissioner Labrador reminded Mr. Azor that there was no parking on the grass and the parking passes and port-a-potties. It was also noted that the application would have to be signed off by the Police Department and the Health Department.

**** COMMISSIONER HOSIER MOVED TO APPROVE AGENDA ITEM 2. GERARD AZOR, JR., UNITED HAITIAN AMERICAN SOCIETY/CARIBBEAN AMERICAN FESTIVAL EXPERIENCE, 91 RIDGELEY AVE., FAIRFIELD, CT, PROVIDING AN UPDATE ON THE REQUEST OF THE CARIBBEAN CULTURE FESTIVAL AT SEASIDE PARK BAND SHELL ON SATURDAY, JULY 27, 2024 FROM 12:00 P.M. TO 8:00 P.M. WITH A SET-UP TIME AT 7:00 A.M. AND CLEAN-UP AT 8:00 P.M. FOR APPROXIMATELY 500 PEOPLE.**

**** COMMISSIONER WADE SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

NEW BUSINESS

1. Frank Borres, 168 Hammertown Road, Monroe, CT, is requesting to name the Glenwood Park tennis courts after Harry Weichsel with a plaque dedicated at this location.

Mr. Borres greeted the Commissioners and explained that even though he no longer lived in Bridgeport, he was part of the West Side NRZ and Chairman of the BCYA and a former TV news reporter and producer in Bridgeport. He said that in 1988, he had met Mr. Weichsel who had brought Grassroot Tennis for inner city youth in Bridgeport. The group was able to hold a program for many Bridgeport students for many years. Mr. Weichsel immigrated to Bridgeport from Germany with his mother in 1941. The remainder of his family were murdered in Germany so after he retired, Mr. Weichsel would travel about speaking about the Holocaust and why it was important to break the cycle of violence and hate. He graduated from Bassick and also served on the Ethics Commission. PBS produced a documentary called “My Friend, Harry” about Mr. Weichsel about 10 years ago. Mr. Weichsel died recently and Mr. Borres would like to install a plaque dedicated to him at Glenwood Park.

Commissioner Grisby said that Mr. Weichsel was the type of person they were looking to honor. Ms. Gina Malheiro, the Director of City events, said that she had been involved with the Grassroots Tennis program. A tentative layout of the plaque was displayed on screen along with a page of names from an online petition. Ms. Malheiro said that the kids were very excited with the program.

Commissioner Grisby asked if they had held the program at Beardsley. A brief discussion followed and Commissioner Grisby said that he had probably attended the program when he was younger.

Mr. Nadrizny joined the meeting at 6:17 p.m.

Commissioner Labrador asked how the money would be raised for the plaque.

Mr. Nadrizny said that he had attended the Grassroots program as a student and enjoyed it.

Mr. Borres said that in answer to Commissioner Labrador’s question, they would raise the funding and did not expect any funding from the Parks Commission.

**** COMMISSIONER GRISBY MOVED TO APPROVE AGENDA ITEM 1. FRANK BORRES, 168 HAMMERTOWN ROAD, MONROE, CT, IS REQUESTING TO NAME THE GLENWOOD PARK TENNIS COURTS AFTER HARRY WEICHSEL WITH A PLAQUE DEDICATED AT THIS LOCATION.**

**** COMMISSIONER WADE SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

Mr. Nadrizny said that this was a well deserved honor. Commissioner Labrador asked Mr. Borres to let them know when the plaque was going to be placed.

2. Claudette J. Beamon, West Indian American Association of Greater Bridgeport, 25 Hamden Hills Drive, Unit 2B, Hamden, CT, requesting to host the 2024 Jerk Festival on Saturday, July 20, 2024 at Seaside Park Band Shell from 12:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. with a set-up time at 8:00 a.m. and clean-up at 9:00 p.m. for approximately 3,000 people with DeeJay, vendors and food/trucks.

Ms. Beamon greeted the Commissioners and said that her co-chair was also on the call. Last year, the event was held in Seaside Park for the first time and it worked out wonderfully. She reviewed the layout with the Commissioners. The Park staff were very kind and helpful.

Commissioner Labrador asked Mr. Burgos how the event had gone. Mr. Burgos said that it had gone well. He suggested that they have extra staff on hand for break down.

**** COMMISSIONER HOSIER MOVED TO APPROVE AGENDA ITEM 2.
CLAUDETTE J. BEAMON, WEST INDIAN AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF
GREATER BRIDGEPORT, 25 HAMDEN HILLS DRIVE, UNIT 2B, HAMDEN, CT,
REQUESTING TO HOST THE 2024 JERK FESTIVAL ON SATURDAY, JULY 20, 2024
AT SEASIDE PARK BAND SHELL FROM 12:00 P.M. TO 8:00 P.M. WITH A SET-UP
TIME AT 8:00 A.M. AND CLEAN-UP AT 9:00 P.M. FOR APPROXIMATELY 3,000
PEOPLE WITH DEEJAY, VENDORS AND FOOD/TRUCKS.
** COMMISSIONER WADE SECONDED.
** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

3. Victor Luna, Jr., Luna Entertainment Productions, LLC, 17 Chapin Place, Hartford, CT, requesting to host the 2nd annual 2024 Bridgeport Latino Pop-Up Festival on Saturday, September 24, 2024 at McLevy Green from 12:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. with a set-up time at 8:00 a.m. and a clean-up at 6:00 p.m. for approximately 500 people with DeeJay, vendors, food/trucks and the closure of Bank Street.

Mr. Luna greeted the Commissioners and said that they had the festival last year and it went well. This year, they will not have the live bands, which proved to be too loud, so they will have a D.J.

Mr. Burgos said that everything went well. Commissioner Hosier said he had attended and it was a good time.

**** COMMISSIONER COTTO MOVED TO APPROVE AGENDA ITEM 3. VICTOR
LUNA, JR., LUNA ENTERTAINMENT PRODUCTIONS, LLC, 17 CHAPIN PLACE,
HARTFORD, CT, REQUESTING TO HOST THE 2ND ANNUAL 2024 BRIDGEPORT
LATINO POP-UP FESTIVAL ON SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 24, 2024 AT MCLEVY
GREEN FROM 12:00 P.M. TO 6:00 P.M. WITH A SET-UP TIME AT 8:00 A.M. AND A
CLEAN-UP AT 6:00 P.M. FOR APPROXIMATELY 500 PEOPLE WITH DEEJAY,
VENDORS, FOOD/TRUCKS AND THE CLOSURE OF BANK STREET.
** COMMISSIONER HOSIER SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

4. David Mestre, Boy Scout Troop 34, Golden Hill United Methodist Church, 2070 Nichols Avenue, Stratford, CT, I am requesting to host an overnight camping event at Veteran's Memorial Park from Saturday, November 18, 2023, to Sunday, November 19, 2023. Start time at 8:00 a.m. on Saturday and end at 9:00 a.m. on Sunday. It will be attended by approximately 50 people or less and will be held in conjunction with a trip to Adventure Park.

Mr. Mestre greeted the Commissioners and said that they meet at the Golden Hill United Methodist Church. He said that the group was small and there would be two or three leaders supervisors. They will not be serving food from food trucks. The adults and boys will each be cooking their own food. He explained that the Cub Scouts are for boys under 11 and the parents are required to camp out with their children. However, this is a Boy Scout troop and there will be at least two registered leaders on site.

The discussion moved to the location of the camp site. Mr. Mestre said that back in the early 2000's, he had organized a large camping event at Veteran's Park before the Discovery School was located there.

**** COMMISSIONER HOSIER MOVED TO APPROVE AGENDA ITEM 4. DAVID MESTRE, BOY SCOUT TROOP 34, GOLDEN HILL UNITED METHODIST CHURCH, 2070 NICHOLS AVENUE, STRATFORD, CT, I AM REQUESTING TO HOST AN OVERNIGHT CAMPING EVENT AT VETERAN'S MEMORIAL PARK FROM SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 18, 2023, TO SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 19, 2023. START TIME AT 8:00 A.M. ON SATURDAY AND END AT 9:00 A.M. ON SUNDAY. IT WILL BE ATTENDED BY APPROXIMATELY 50 PEOPLE OR LESS AND WILL BE HELD IN CONJUNCTION WITH A TRIP TO ADVENTURE PARK.**

**** COMMISSIONER COTTO SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

PUBLIC SPEAKING FORUM CONT'D:

Ms. Urena said that Ms. Elizabeth Santa had requested a moment to address the Commissioners. Commissioner Labrador said that Ms. Santos could address the Commission. Ms. Santa said that on behalf of the Gateway Seaside Trail, she wished to thank you to all of the Commissioners who help them make the Gateway Seaside Trail come true. The Ribbon Cutting was on October 17th and there were about 50 people present for the ceremony. The trail is there because of the Park Commissioner. She went on to mention a project with the South End NRZ and installation of some park benches.

Commissioner Labrador thanked Ms. Santa for the group's patience and persistence.

REPORTS

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• Director's Report

Mr. Caulfield presented his report and said that several projects were nearing completion. The information was included in the written report.

Ms. Chineka Haye from the Recreations Department presented her report to the Commissioners.

Mr. Nadrizny said that they would like the Commissioners' approval for a new splash pad and playground at B.J. Brown Park. There are existing basketball courts on site and will remain intact. In the past, there were issues with

**** COMMISSIONER HOSIER MOVED TO ADD AN ITEM REGARDING A NEW SPLASH PAD AND PLAYGROUND AT B.J. BROWN PARK TO THE AGENDA.**

**** COMMISSIONER GRISBY SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

**** COMMISSIONER HOSIER MOVED TO APPROVE A NEW SPLASH PAD AND PLAYGROUND AT B.J. BROWN PARK TO THE AGENDA.**

**** COMMISSIONER WADE SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

• Commissioner's Report

Commissioner Labrador said that the Board Members were rushing home to attend the meeting by 5:30 p.m. He said that they may have to move the meeting to 6:00 p.m. Commissioner Labrador said that they need to keep the agenda down to a minimum.

Commissioner Labrador said that he did not want any of the other Commissioners to have to answer for his actions. The Commission needs to make decisions that are true to the City of Bridgeport. It is important to have all the Commissioners present on time and to make quorum. He thanked the Commissioners for their service and their time. He added that if the Commissioners felt that he was not doing the job properly, they should say something. It will be important to continue to remain transparent and do what is best for the City.

Mr. Nadrizny said that the Parks Department has the Commissioners' back and work to make the Parks the best they can be.

Commissioner Wade said that Commissioner Labrador was doing a great job. Commissioner Taylor-Moye agreed.

ADJOURNMENT

**** COMMISSIONER HOSIER MOVED TO ADJOURN.**

**** COMMISSION COTTO SECONDED.**

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**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting adjourned at 7:05 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

S. L. Soltes
Telesco Secretarial Services.