

**CITY OF NORWALK
RECREATION, PARKS & CULTURAL AFFAIRS COUNCIL COMMITTEE
BY VIDEO CONFERENCE AND TELECONFERENCE
WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 14, 2022.
REGULAR MEETING
7:00PM.**

Members of the public can call in and listen to a meeting. They will not be able to speak or see any of the meeting participants. Each meeting will use a unique Meeting/Webinar ID. Please find the information using the link above.

Members of the public who wish to provide “live comments” will need to register in advance and use the Zoom meeting platform. All participants will be muted upon entering the meeting. To speak, click the “raise your hand indicator” and you will be called on by the host of the meeting during the public comment section. Please find the information using the link above.

Members of the public who wish to view the meeting, but are not participating, can view a live stream on the City of Norwalk YouTube channel. This stream is delayed by approximately 20 seconds. Please find the information using the link above. The meeting recording and minutes will be posted on the City of Norwalk website within seven (7) days after the meeting.

Members of the public who wish to provide public comment are encouraged to submit those via e-mail in advance of the meeting. For these comments to be read into the record, they should be submitted at least three hours in advance of the meeting start time. Please email Dilene Byrd at dbyrd@norwalkct.org to provide written comment prior to the meeting.

ATTENDANCE: Darlene Young, Chair; Bryan Meek; John Kydes; Nicol Ayers; Jenn McMurrer; Lisa Shanahan; Josh Goldstein

STAFF: Robert Stowers, Director, Recreation and Parks; Ken Hughes, Superintendent, Recreation and Parks

OTHERS: Nick Kuhn, Principal Project Manager from Kimley-Horn Consultants

I. ROLL CALL

Ms. Young called the meeting to order at 7:10PM.

II. MINUTES OF JULY 13, 2022

**** MS. MCMURRER MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES AS SUBMITTED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

III. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Ms. Lauricella said in the past under the direction of Mr. Mocciaie they tried to get money for the master plan, and she is so happy that this council along with the mayor's office got the money and asked if there is a chance that the public can still comment because she never saw any surveys or was contacted for public engagement and she has been living in this town for a long time.

Ms. Lauricella suggested going back to the drawing board regarding the Freeze Park railing because former designs of Freese Park included the possibility of an amphitheater to get people closer to the Norwalk River and she is not sure if spending money on a railing makes sense if the rehabilitation of the park may include changes.

Ms. Lauricella said she is not opposed to ARPA funds being placed to renovate this park however, this particular park was the first boundless outdoor playground in Fairfield County that was dedicated to both children with and without sensory disabilities and asked when this park is being designed that a special effort is made to put in additional plant screening to screen out the dust and diesel fuel.

IV. OLD BUSINESS

There was no old business discussed this evening.

V. NEW BUSINESS

The City of Norwalk reserves the right to cancel the Event for public health or safety reasons as determined by the City of Norwalk in its sole discretion. The City of Norwalk shall not be liable for damages arising from the cancellation of the Event.

- 1. APPROVE THE USE OF NHS ATHLETIC FIELD AND IMMEDIATE SURROUNDING GROUNDS BY MARCHING BEARS INC. FOR THEIR CAVALCADE OF BANDS EVENT TO BE HELD ON SATURDAY, OCTOBER 8, 2022, FROM 11:30 AM TO 9:00 PM. SET-UP TO BEGIN AT 8:00 AM WITH TEAR-DOWN AT 10:00 PM. APPROXIMATELY 1,000 PEOPLE.**

Mr. Hughes said this is an annual event and it is an excellent event and there have been no issues and he recommends that it be approved.

**** MR. GOLDSTEIN MOVED TO APPROVE THE USE OF NHS ATHLETIC FIELD AND IMMEDIATE SURROUNDING GROUNDS BY MARCHING BEARS INC. FOR THEIR CAVALCADE OF BANDS EVENT TO BE HELD ON SATURDAY, OCTOBER 8, 2022, FROM 11:30 AM TO 9:00 PM. SET-UP TO BEGIN AT 8:00 AM WITH TEAR-DOWN AT 10:00 PM. APPROXIMATELY 1,000 PEOPLE.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

- 2. APPROVE THE USE OF LOCKWOOD-MATHEWS PARKING LOT (NEAR CEMETERY) AND IMMEDIATE SURROUNDING GROUNDS BY NORWALK RIVER VALLEY TRAIL (NRVT) FOR THEIR NRVT MUTT STRUT EVENT TO BE HELD ON SATURDAY, OCTOBER 22, 2022, FROM 3:00 PM TO 5:00 PM. SET-UP TIME AT 1:00 PM WITH TEAR-DOWN AT 6:00 PM. APPROXIMATELY 80-100 PEOPLE.**

Mr. Hughes said this is the second or third year the event has taken place and is a cute event where people come and walk their dogs on the NRVT and it brings exposure to the trail and it is a good community event.

**** MS. MCMURRER MOVED TO APPROVE THE USE OF LOCKWOOD-MATHEWS PARKING LOT (NEAR CEMETERY) AND IMMEDIATE SURROUNDING GROUNDS BY NORWALK RIVER VALLEY TRAIL (NRVT) FOR THEIR NRVT MUTT STRUT EVENT TO BE HELD ON SATURDAY, OCTOBER 22, 2022, FROM 3:00 PM TO 5:00 PM. SET-UP TIME AT 1:00 PM WITH TEAR-DOWN AT 6:00 PM. APPROXIMATELY 80-100 PEOPLE.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

- 3. AUTHORIZE THE PURCHASING AGENT TO ISSUE A PURCHASE ORDER TO BOBCAT OF CONNECTICUT, INC. IN THE AMOUNT NOT TO EXCEED \$83,211.00 FOR THE PURCHASE OF A BOBCAT TOOLCAT, UW53 FROM CAPITAL ACCOUNT: 0923-6030-5777-C0486, OFF THE COMBUYS PRICING CONTRACT, FAC88.**

Mr. Hughes said this is a purchase that was approved in the capital budget process and the parks department currently has one existing Bobcat Toolcat and it is a multi-use machine and is one piece of equipment that has many uses, and they would like to purchase a second one.

****MS. SHANAHAN MOVED TO AUTHORIZE THE PURCHASING AGENT TO ISSUE A PURCHASE ORDER TO BOBCAT OF CONNECTICUT, INC. IN THE AMOUNT NOT TO EXCEED \$83,211.00 FOR THE PURCHASE OF A BOBCAT TOOLCAT, UW53 FROM CAPITAL ACCOUNT: 0923-6030-5777-C0486, OFF THE COMBUYS PRICING CONTRACT, FAC88.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

4. AUTHORIZED THE PURCHASING AGENT TO ISSUE A PURCHASE ORDER TO EMBANKSCAPE EQUIPMENT LLC, DBA RC MOWERS IN AN AMOUNT NOT TO EXCEED \$62,950.00 FOR THE PURCHASE OF A TRACKED 60" ROTARY MOWER, FROM CAPITAL ACCOUNT: 0923-6030-5777-C048, OFF THE HGAC GR20AAF1 PRICING CONTRACT.

Mr. Hughes said this is another capital account purchase and one of the sites they are tasked to maintain is Oyster Shell Park which is one of the most difficult sites to maintain in the city. He said they currently have a slope mower that is now 12 years old and is no longer reliable. Ms. Young asked if the old one will be replaced. Mr. Hughes said they will keep the older one as a backup and DPW also uses it to cut the banks along the river.

****MS. AYERS MOVED TO AUTHORIZED THE PURCHASING AGENT TO ISSUE A PURCHASE ORDER TO EMBANKSCAPE EQUIPMENT LLC, DBA RC MOWERS IN AN AMOUNT NOT TO EXCEED \$62,950.00 FOR THE PURCHASE OF A TRACKED 60" ROTARY MOWER, FROM CAPITAL ACCOUNT : 0923-6030-5777-C048, OFF THE HGAC GR20AAF1 PRICING CONTRACT.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

5. AUTHORIZE THE PURCHASING AGENT TO ISSUE A PURCHASE ORDER TO M. E. O'BRIEN AND SONS FOR THE FOLLOWING PLAYGROUND RENOVATIONS OFF THE CT STATE PRICING CONTRACT # 17PSX0081.

Mr. Hughes said that M.E. O'Brien is their landscape vendor, and they supply landscape structure equipment, and they have an extensive stock of landscape structure equipment, so it makes it easy to stock replacement parts and they are on the state pricing contract list.

**** MS. MCMURRER MOVED TO AUTHORIZE THE PURCHASING AGENT TO ISSUE A PURCHASE ORDER TO M. E. O'BRIEN AND SONS FOR THE FOLLOWING PLAYGROUND RENOVATIONS OFF THE CT STATE PRICING CONTRACT # 17PSX0081.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

5A DEVON'S PLACE PLAYGROUND, AMOUNT NOT TO EXCEED \$316,558.35 FROM CAPITAL ACCOUNT: 0923-6030-5777-C0364.

Mr. Hughes said that Devon's Place is a boundless ADA playground and is widely used and is time for a renovation. He said there are some sections of the rubberized surface and there are also sections that have a mulch surface so this renovation will replace all of the surface material with a rubberized surfacing and will address some of the play pieces. Ms. Ayers said a concern that she has is the water elements in that area and asked if there are some areas that can be improved or if the original design will just be updated because the whale in the splash pad at the park needs to be addressed, as well as the roller slide and suggested that more modern pieces that can be looked at to eliminate some of the issues. Mr. Hughes said that some play pieces will be replaced so it will be a good refresh to the park.

**** MS. MCMURRER MOVED TO APPROVE DEVON’S PLACE PLAYGROUND, AMOUNT NOT TO EXCEED \$316,558.35 FROM CAPITAL ACCOUNT: 0923-6030-5777-C0364.
** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

**5B BOUTON STREET PARK, AMOUNT NOT TO EXCEED \$114,556.65 FROM
ARPA ACCOUNT: 134010-5796-ARP01.**

**** MS. MCMURRER MOVED TO APPROVE THE BOUTON STREET PARK, AMOUNT NOT TO EXCEED \$114,556.65 FROM ARPA ACCOUNT: 134010-5796-ARP01.
** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

**5C FLAX HILL PARK, AMOUNT NOT TO EXCEED \$132,268.40 FROM ARPA
ACCOUNT: 134010-5796-ARP01.**

**** MS. MCMURRER MOVED TO APPROVE THE FLAX HILL PARK, AMOUNT NOT TO EXCEED \$132,268.40 FROM ARPA ACCOUNT: 134010-5796-ARP01.
** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

**5d AUTHORIZE THE DIRECTOR OF RECREATION AND PARKS, OR HIS
DESIGNEE, TO ISSUE CHANGE ORDERS ON THE RENOVATION OF
DEVON’S PLACE PLAYGROUND IN AN AMOUNT NOT TO EXCEED \$31,658.00
FROM THE SAME CAPITAL ACCOUNT.**

**** MS. MCMURRER TO AUTHORIZE THE DIRECTOR OF RECREATION AND PARKS, OR HIS DESIGNEE, TO ISSUE CHANGE ORDERS ON THE RENOVATION OF DEVON’S PLACE PLAYGROUND IN AN AMOUNT NOT TO EXCEED \$31,658.00 FROM THE SAME CAPITAL ACCOUNT.
** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

**6. AUTHORIZE THE PURCHASING AGENT TO ISSUE A PURCHASE ORDER TO
GENGRAS FORD IN AN AMOUNT NOT TO EXCEED \$142,345.80 FOR THE
PURCHASE OF THREE F-250 REGULAR CAB 4 BY 4 PICK-UP TRUCKS FROM
ARPA ACCOUNT: 134010-5796-ARP02 OF THE STATE CONTRACT #
19PSX0161.**

Mr. Hughes said these will replace three of their existing 2000 F-250 pickup trucks and are very much needed. Mr. Meek asked for justification at the Common Council meeting as to why they are not electric vehicles. Mr. Hughes said it that the fleet manager did not recommend electric vehicles for this purchase due to the heavy use and he has done some research regarding electric vehicles for trucks, but the wait time is over 18 months to get them, and they are “just not there yet” for what they need in terms of power and workability. Mr. Goldstein said he does not know if there are hybrids available for this style of vehicle but asked that staff “chart the course” of what they think the future is and the timeliness of getting there. Mr. Stowers said that Mr. Montgomery will be attending a conference and will be looking at

electric vehicles and that it is his plan to establish a conversion plan over several years to convert some of the equipment and trucks to either hybrid or completely electric.

**** MS. MCMURRER MOVED TO AUTHORIZE THE PURCHASING AGENT TO ISSUE A PURCHASE ORDER TO GENGRAS FORD IN AN AMOUNT NOT TO EXCEED \$142,345.80 FOR THE PURCHASE OF THREE F-250 REGULAR CAB 4 BY 4 PICK-UP TRUCKS FROM ARPA ACCOUNT: 134010-5796-ARP02 OF THE STATE CONTRACT # 19PSX0161.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

7. AUTHORIZE THE PURCHASING AGENT TO ISSUE A PURCHASE ORDER TO GABRIELLI ISUZU TRUCK IN AN AMOUNT NOT TO EXCEED \$78,676.64 FOR THE SOLE SOURCE PURCHASE OF A 2023 NPRGAS HD ISUZU BOX TRUCK FROM ARPA ACCOUNT: 134010-5796-ARP02.

Mr. Hughes said that they use a box truck to carry their small lawnmowing equipment and this request is to replace that truck.

****MS. SHANAHAN MOVED TO AUTHORIZE THE PURCHASING AGENT TO ISSUE A PURCHASE ORDER TO GABRIELLI ISUZU TRUCK IN AN AMOUNT NOT TO EXCEED \$78,676.64 FOR THE SOLE SOURCE PURCHASE OF A 2023 NPRGAS HD ISUZU BOX TRUCK FROM ARPA ACCOUNT: 134010-5796-ARP02.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

8. AUTHORIZE THE MAYOR, HARRY W. RILLING TO EXECUTE AN AGREEMENT WITH GIACORP CONTRACTING, INC. FOR PROJECT RNP 2022-3 –FREESE PARK RAILING REHABILITATION FOR A SUM NOT TO EXCEED \$129,650.00 (PHASE 1 ALTERNATE 2), \$159,569.30 (PHASE 2), \$112,418.00 (PHASE 3), \$124,193.50 (PHASE 4). ACCOUNT: 0920-6030-5777-C0657 AND 0923-6030-5777-C0657.

Mr. Hughes said this request is based on the 2017 master plan for Freese Park and the reason why there are different phases is because they were not sure what the dollar amounts were going to be, but the bids came back in within the budget to do all four phases which will be a complete replacement of the entire fence. He said there was a thought to canter lever a stage over the river but throughout discussions the idea was too high in cost but did settle on an amphitheater area and this fence replacement will in no way effect that. Mr. Stowers said it terms of the Wall Street renovation he has been in discussions with Mr. Travers regarding the feasibility of installing a walk bridge across to get better access to the right of way. Mr. Meek requested that staff sent a full scope of the project to the Common Council members prior to the next Common Council meeting where it will be voted on.

**** MS. AYERS MOVED TO AUTHORIZE THE MAYOR, HARRY W. RILLING TO EXECUTE AN AGREEMENT WITH GIACORP CONTRACTING, INC. FOR PROJECT RNP 2022-3 –FREESE PARK RAILING REHABILITATION FOR A SUM NOT TO EXCEED \$129,650.00 (PHASE 1 ALTERNATE 2), \$159,569.30 (PHASE 2), \$112,418.00 (PHASE 3), \$124,193.50 (PHASE 4). ACCOUNT: 0920-6030-5777-C0657 AND 0923-6030-5777-C0657.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

**8A AUTHORIZE THE DIRECTOR OF RECREATION AND PARKS TO
EXECUTE CHANGE ORDERS ON CONTRACT WITH GIACORP
CONTRACTING, INC. FOR A SUM NOT TO EXCEED \$52,583.08. ACCOUNT:
0920-6030-5777-C0657 AND 0923-6030-5777-C0657.**

**** MS. AYERS MOVED TO AUTHORIZE THE DIRECTOR OF RECREATION AND PARKS TO EXECUTE CHANGE ORDERS ON CONTRACT WITH GIACORP CONTRACTING, INC. FOR A SUM NOT TO EXCEED \$52,583.08. ACCOUNT: 0920-6030-5777-C0657 AND 0923-6030-5777-C0657.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

Mr. Meek left the meeting at 7:55PM.

VI. DISCUSSION

1. Recreation and Parks Master Plan Briefing -45 to 60 minutes

Norwalk Recreation and Parks Master Plan Briefing will be conducted by Nick Kuhn, Principal Project Manager from Kimley-Horn Consultants. The briefing will update on the Recreation and Parks and Cultural Committee on the status of the Master Plan Study and the results of the public engagement up to now, and the quantitative and qualitative Survey findings. Also, the Consultants will update the council on the committee on the schedule of the remaining steps to get to a draft to a Draft Master Plan.

Mr. Kuhn provided an overview of the project schedule and said they are working diligently to have the process completed by the end of the calendar year; however, they want to be sure that the steps are taken as needed to be sure the plan represents the community's needs and has an actual implementation component. He said the next steps are to hold the visioning workshops and the city staff session will be held on October 13th from 11:00AM to 3:00PM, the first public session will also be held on October 13th from 5:00PM to 8:00PM, and second public session will be held on October 15th from 10:00AM to 1:00PM and will begin doing the outreach over the next week. He said the visioning workshops will be followed with a city staff implementation workshop in early November, and the vision and strategic plan will be will also be presented to the public in early November, and the presentation of the master plan will be presented to the Common Council in December.

Mr. Kuhn discussed the key findings and said they started looking at the parks themselves and looked at 40 different elements and were able to rank the parks more or less on how they performed and looked at the successes of each location as well as the opportunities and will roll them into the implementation phase. He said they also looked at the level of service and looked at the acreage provided per 1,000 population and currently and Norwalk is above the healthy benchmark and is on target with the neighboring peer communities but also looked at

how this will change as the city continues to grow so by 2040 if the level of service is to maintain the same as what it is today would need to add 106 acres of additional park land. Mr. Goldstein asked that larger communities such as Stamford also be looked at as a comparison.

Mr. Kuhn said the public engagement was launched in April and asked what the needs and priorities were in terms of parks and recreation and had a series of virtual workshops as well as focus groups and had eight different topic areas. He said there were also stakeholder and elected official interviews as well as online engagement and a statistical survey and had over 2500 visits to the online engagement and had just under 400 responses to the online survey and were happy to see that 93% were residents of Norwalk.

Mr. Kuhn presented the benchmarking for expenditures and staffing and said that 56 communities across the country fell within the range of peers for the comparison and the median operating expenditure was \$97 per capita but Norwalk was in the \$53 range and 51 agencies had populated staffing levels and the average staffing for jurisdictions of this size had 9.3 fulltime positions per every 10,000 population and Norwalk was at 2.97.

Mr. Kuhn said one of the questions that was asked was whose needs for activities are being partly met or not met and 35.2% of household across the city said they have a need for nature and enjoyment and are not getting that need met, and 85% of households said the need for aquatic programs is not being met or is only partially being met. He said the standout results for key findings were that nature-based program results were atypically high, program willingness to pay results aligns with staff's observation of fees being low and 2/3 of households with a need for special recreation have unmet or partly met needs, but that 80% of Norwalk residents that participated in programs rated them excellent or good versus the national average of 79%.

Mr. Kuhn said another question that was asked to the respondents was what actions they would be willing to fund with their tax dollars and there is a strong desire to maintain the existing parks and the beach as well as water access but developing new trails and the development and improvement of beaches and waterfront parks were the top two choices for the under 34 years old population. He said there is also a strong support for more athletic fields and sports courts from households with children under 10 years old and the top choice for households with children under 10 years old is the development of indoor/outdoor aquatics. He said the question that was also asked was what additional amount the respondents are willing to pay in property taxes to fund actions are most important to their household and 67% of residents would be willing to pay additional property taxes to fund their most important actions, and 25% of the population under 44 years old do not support additional property taxes while 21.4% of with households that have children under 10 years old support the highest amount.

said another question that was asked was what sources of funding were most preferred for parks and recreation facilities programs, school parks and trails and respondents under 45 years old have the highest support for parks foundations and sponsorships and males have higher support for property taxes and bonds and females have higher support for parks foundations and user fees.

The additional amount respondents are willing to pay in user fees or charges for their favorite recreation and parks activity and program and said that 68% of the population are in favor of additional user fees and the highest support for the highest amount of \$5.00 was the 18-64 population but dropped off for the 65 and older population. He said that 35.7% of households with children support the \$5.00 user fee.

Ms. McMurrer said that many things in the presentation stood out to her but the two things that predominantly stood out to her were youth programs and aquatics and that it is important to have more aquatic programs because we are a water community and it is important to have water safety and education for our youth, and it should be equitable and affordable for all and the only way to do that is to offer more programming and there is money available in grants and scholarships for programs, but we need the facilities. She also said she loves that alternate funding sources are being discussed and she is going to help the recs and parks team to get a foundation going or alternate funding sources so we can then fund pools and other programs and she will make it her number one priority over the next year.

Ms. McMurrer requested that the presentation be emailed to the committee members.

Ms. Shanahan said the feedback she receives is that the fields are not accessible to teams across the city and asked how that is reflected in the master plan. Mr. Kuhn said that will be looking at before they recommend adding more fields and finding more land to start looking the low hanging fruit and the department has begun to implement a registration for field management that what is has historically been which will come into the implementation of the strategy on how the existing field can be used to more benefit the community with more access. Mr. Stowers said that staff is also working on an RFP for a scientific analysis of a fee structure and also within that RFP there will be a study on a fee policy and the intent is to allow both public and private entities to use the fields, and are now working on the interim plan that will do that but are waiting to confirm it with the strategic and master plan but that is the direction they are going in

Ms. Ayers asked if there is checklist or documentation for a level of standard that all the parks should have. Mr. Kuhn said there are some standards in terms of how certain elements of parks have to be developed but as far as park design standards noted that the design quality and the mix of choices were well done but there will be case studies included in the master plan and will focus on is how parks can be flexible in terms of meeting the needs of future changes. Mr. Stowers said the parks should be classified in the strategic plan. Ms. Ayers asked if it is possible to have a "Norwalk standard" of what any park should look like and identify in the strategic plan on how to get them to that standard if they are not. Mr. Stowers said that is what they will be working towards for each classification.

Ms. Young asked as the parks continue to grow and develop if staffing levels are being connected to help maintain that. Mr. Kuhn said as recommendations are developed for the phasing of the

implementation they will go back and make sure that they are tying operational and maintenance costs and staffing needs to that phased approach.

Mr. Stowers said it is important to get as many people out on October 13th for both the staff and public session as well as for the session on October 15th and the city's communications director will be pushing the information out.

ADJOURNMENT

**** MS. MCMURRER MOVED TO ADJOURN.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting adjourned at 8:55PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Dilene Byrd