

CITY OF NORWALK
RECREATION, PARKS, CULTURAL AFFAIRS COUNCIL
PUBLIC HEARING
VIA VIDEO AND TELECONFERENCE
AUGUST 9, 2023

ATTENDANCE: Darlene Young, Chair; Nicol Ayers, Josh Goldstein,
Nora Niedzielski-Eichner; Lisa Shanahan

ABSENT: John Kydes, Jenn McMurrer, Bryan Meek

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

OTHER: Nick Kuhn, Kimley-Horn Consultants

CALL TO ORDER/ ROLL CALL

Ms. Young called the meeting to order at 6:16 p.m. and acknowledged those in attendance as listed above.

PUBLIC HEARING

Recreation and Parks Department proposed Recreation and Parks Master Plan before final adoption.

Ms. Young asked Mr. Stowers to present the item, and he reviewed the highlights involved with the two-year process in the development of the ten-year master plan. He introduced Mr. Nick Kuhn, with Kimley-Horn Consultants and asked him to provide an overview of the phases of the various stage of the process.

Mr. Kuhn highlighted the following charts from the Master Plan presentation:

Level of Service Analysis, Acreage, Facilities, Access, Staff & Funding, Expenditures per capita;
Public Engagement – Stakeholder Interviews, Community Workshops, Focus Groups, Surveys;
Chart of Actions Residents are willing to support – Priority ranking;
Needs Assessment Matrix – Top 10 Needs for Facilities and Programs/Activities;
Vision Components- Guiding Principles of Parks, Athletic Facilities, School Parks, Programs
Implementation Funding Analysis – Cost Recovery by Park, Program Source;
Capital Project Strategies – Phasing Projects, Grant Stacking, Project Prioritization
Short-Term Priority Projects Ranking; Implementation Strategies Takeaways; Funding
Community Input – Comments from Survey – Approval Support

Ms. Young asked those in attendance to participate to follow the rules of public comments, to provide name and address, to speak only on the topic and to limit comments to three minutes.

Public comments are not verbatim and represent summarizations of comments and points.

Public Participation Comments:

1. Ms. Diane Lauricella thanked the Council for the work done and stated that overall, she is happy with the comprehensive study, but the final approval needs to be delayed another month to provide more outreach and community response. The link is hard to find and it should have been posted on the City website homepage as it was difficult to find so residents gave up on searching. August is a time when residents are away on vacation, many meetings are not scheduled, therefore tonight's public hearing is not well attended. Another month is needed to provide a more appropriate platform, the presentation is cumbersome with hundreds of pages, and it is difficult to sort through to digest and analyze. She supports additional staffing, there should be user fees when applicable, there needs to be aquatic facilities and more soccer fields, and the education element needs to be expanded. The critical element of the plan is the artificial turf fields that are hazardous to the environment and not safe as there is increased accidents, and they should be converted to natural turf. She emphasized the need for another month before this plan is ready to be forwarded to the Common Council for approval.
2. Mr. Richard Bonenfant spoke on the need to enforce park rules especially when it comes to dogs, and to have posted dog-walking areas. Tax dollars for funding is high and there should be open space grants such as what was done for Fodor Farm. The land deeds should be checked for restrictions before park expansion as many parks have specific restrictions as to wetlands and building structures.
3. Ms. Diane Ceci asked in interest of time to echo the comments made by above participants. The link is very difficult to find and there needs to be a better way for community input. She asked why the prior analysis done for Veteran's Park has put on the shelf after millions of dollars and years of development time were spent on a plan that has not been materialized. The artificial turf fields are dangerous and should not be used for school fields. The ice-skating debacle at Vet's Park must not be repeated. Non-profit agencies should be used to ensure safety of residents is the top priority. The need for another month before this plan is ready to be forwarded to the Common Council for approval is of utmost importance.

There were no other participants to speak, and the Public Hearing was closed at 7:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Dilene Byrd

CITY OF NORWALK
RECREATION, PARKS, CULTURAL AFFAIRS COUNCIL
REGULAR MEETING
VIA VIDEO AND TELECONFERENCE
AUGUST 9, 2023

ATTENDANCE: Darlene Young, Chair; Nicol Ayers, Josh Goldstein,
Nora Niedzielski-Eichner; Lisa Shanahan

ABSENT: John Kydes, Jenn McMurrer, Bryan Meek

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

OTHER: Nick Kuhn, Kimley-Horn Consultants

I. CALL TO ORDER/ ROLL CALL

Ms. Young called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. and acknowledged those in attendance as listed above.

II. MINUTES OF JULY 12, 2023

**** MR. GOLDSTEIN MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES AS SUBMITTED.**
**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

III. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Ms. Young asked those in attendance to participate to follow the rules of public comments, to provide name and address, to speak only on the topic and to limit comments to three minutes.

Public comments are not verbatim and represent summarizations of comments and points.

Ms. Diane Lauricella noted that she spoke earlier at the Public Hearing that overall, she is happy with the comprehensive study and wanted to thank the Mayor and the City Commissions on the development of a Master Plan. The plan is hard to read—235 pages and cumbersome. The final approval needs to be delayed another month to provide more outreach and community response. She asked to have her previous comments reiterated that the link is hard to find and it should have been posted on the City website homepage as it was difficult to find so residents gave up on searching. Another month is needed to provide a more appropriate platform, the presentation is cumbersome with hundreds of pages, and it is difficult to sort through to digest and analyze. The critical element of the plan is the artificial turf fields that are hazardous to the environment and not

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only toxic but not safe as there is increased accidents, and they should be converted to natural turf. There should be an inclusion of Indians and Indigenous Peoples on relics found at Veteran's Park. Installing artificial fields that unless the Committee pays attention to the known toxicity and environmental hazards of the materials. There should be a comparison of natural fields and an evaluation of the science, but there was a broken promise by not examining the health issues. She emphasized the need for another month before this plan is ready to be forwarded to the Common Council for approval.

There were no others to speak, and public participation was closed.

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. **THE RECREATION AND PARKS DIRECTOR RECOMMENDS TO THE RECREATION AND PARKS AND CULTURAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE OF THE COMMON COUNCIL, THE ACCEPTANCE AND APPROVAL OF THE 2023 RECREATION AND PARKS TEN YEAR MASTER PLAN AND STRATEGIC PLAN DEVELOPED IN CONCERT WITH KIMLEY-HORN CONSULTANTS, AND FURTHER RECOMMENDS THE 2023 MASTER PLAN AND STRATEGIC PLAN BE MOVED TO THE NEXT MEETING OF THE COMMON COUNCIL FOR FINAL ADOPTION.**

**** MS. AYERS MOVED THE ITEM FOR DISCUSSION.**

Mr. Goldstein spoke about the PFAS issue and a clear and present danger and there should be nothing in the parks plans that is a health hazard, and there should be a re-examination of synthetic fields. He reviewed the positive aspects of the plan for the parks but the section on artificial fields should be removed.

Ms. Shanahan spoke in support of Mr. Goldstein's comments and expressed her concern that turf fields cannot be recycled and the research of the PFAS issue that is toxic and pollutes our waters and this is an irresponsible liability on the clean-up that will be required. She asked if this section can be removed and grass fields can complete with a modification. The consultants and Mr. Stowers did an incredible job on the Master Plan, but she cannot endorse the artificial turf section.

Ms. Ayers thanked Mr. Stowers and his department on the tremendous amount of work and said a huge thank you. She asked about the public comment about previous masterplans that the city had used and are they still stuck on the shelf.

Mr. Stowers replied that they did go through previous plans and incorporated elements through the Consultant's recommendation. Ms. Ayers noted that this was important to inform the public that those prior

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plans have been embedded into this current plan. She asked if parts of the Master Plan can be modified or if it has to be approved in totality.

Mr. Stowers outlined that the synthetic elements can be removed, but the City needs to proceed with the parks and so many elements of the plan need to move forward. He suggested that any reference to synthetic fields can be removed but the major improvements as outlined in the plan need to remain and approved to move forward. Ms. Ayers noted that the Council has work to do to modify the plan, and an increase in staff was a major priority and a maintenance plan is essential to keep what we have.

**** MS. AYERS MOVED TO AMEND THE MOTION TO MODIFY THE PLAN TO REMOVE THE IMPLEMENTATION OF TURF FIELDS AND CONSTRUCTION OF SYNTHETIC FIELDS.**

There was further discussion to promote more staffing and the removal of turf fields. Mr. Kuhn outlined that the cost is the same of natural turf versus artificial or synthetic fields, and suggested it was an easy swap of the wording to replace synthetic with natural grass fields.

**** MS. AYERS MOVED TO AMEND THE MOTION TO MODIFY THE PLAN TO ELIMINATE THE TERMINOLOGY WITH REFERENCE TO NEW FIELDS AND TO REMOVE THE IMPLEMENTATION OF TURF FIELDS AND CONSTRUCTION OF SYNTHETIC FIELDS BUT TO KEEP REPLACEMENT OF TURF FIELDS WITH NO MENTION OF SYNTHETIC MATERIALS.**

**** MR. GOLDSTEIN MOVED TO AMEND TO MOTION TO INCLUDE THAT THE RECREATION AND PARKS DIRECTOR RECOMMENDS TO THE RECREATION AND PARKS AND CULTURAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE OF THE COMMON COUNCIL, THE ACCEPTANCE AND APPROVAL OF THE 2023 RECREATION AND PARKS TEN YEAR MASTER PLAN AND STRATEGIC PLAN DEVELOPED IN CONCERT WITH KIMLEY-HORN CONSULTANTS WITH THE REPLACEMENT OF LANGUAGE OF SYNTHETIC FIELD CONSTRUCTION WITH NATURAL FIELD IMPLEMENTATION, AND TO NEUTRALIZE THE SPECIFIC MATERIAL TO BE USED TO REPLACE THE TURF FIELDS. AND FURTHER RECOMMENDS THE 2023 MASTER PLAN AND STRATEGIC PLAN BE MOVED TO THE NEXT MEETING OF THE COMMON COUNCIL FOR FINAL ADOPTION AT THE SEPTEMBER MEETING.**

**** THE MOTION AS AMENDED, PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

2. APPROVE THE USE OF CALF PASTURE BEACH AND IMMEDIATE SURROUNDING GROUNDS BY NORWALK HOSPITAL FOUNDATION FOR THEIR WHITTINGHAM CANCER CENTER WALK & RUN EVENT TO BE HELD ON SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 30, 2023, FROM 7:30 AM TO 12:00 PM. SET-UP FROM 6:00 AM WITH TEAR-DOWN BY 4:00 PM. APPROXIMATELY 1250 PEOPLE.

**** MR. GOLDSTEIN MOVED THE ITEM FOR DISCUSSION.**

A representative of the item was present to outline the item and field questions and comments. Mr. Stowers spoke in support of this annual event and recommends approval.

**** MR. GOLDSTEIN MOVED TO APPROVE THE USE OF CALF PASTURE BEACH AND IMMEDIATE SURROUNDING GROUNDS BY NORWALK HOSPITAL FOUNDATION FOR THEIR WHITTINGHAM CANCER CENTER WALK & RUN EVENT TO BE HELD ON**

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SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 30, 2023, FROM 7:30 AM TO 12:00 PM. SET-UP FROM 6:00 AM WITH TEAR-DOWN BY 4:00 PM. APPROXIMATELY 1250 PEOPLE.

** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

3. APPROVE THE USE OF CALF PASTURE BEACH AND IMMEDIATE SURROUNDING GROUNDS BY ALZHEIMER'S ASSOCIATION CONNECTICUT CHAPTER FOR THEIR WALK TO END ALZHEIMER EVENT TO BE HELD ON SUNDAY, OCTOBER 8, 2023, FROM 8:00 AM TO 12:00 PM. SET-UP AT 5:30 AM WITH TEAR-DOWN BY 1:00 PM. APPROXIMATELY 2400 PEOPLE.

** MS. SHANAHAN MOVED THE ITEM FOR DISCUSSION.

A representative of the item was present to outline the item and field questions and comments. Mr. Stowers spoke in support of this annual event and recommends approval.

** MS. SHANAHAN MOVED TO APPROVE THE USE OF CALF PASTURE BEACH AND IMMEDIATE SURROUNDING GROUNDS BY ALZHEIMER'S ASSOCIATION CONNECTICUT CHAPTER FOR THEIR WALK TO END ALZHEIMER EVENT TO BE HELD ON SUNDAY, OCTOBER 8, 2023, FROM 8:00 AM TO 12:00 PM. SET-UP AT 5:30 AM WITH TEAR-DOWN BY 1:00 PM. APPROXIMATELY 2400 PEOPLE.

** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

4. AUTHORIZE THE PURCHASING AGENT TO ISSUE A PURCHASE ORDER IN AN AMOUNT NOT TO EXCEED \$66,993.44 FOR THE PURCHASE OF 48 IN-GROUND GARBAGE RECEPTACLES FROM SYBERTECH WASTE REDUCTION, LTD., PROJECT # 4276 FROM ACCOUNT # 0923-6030-5796-C0832.

MS. AYERS MOVED THE ITEM FOR DISCUSSION.

Mr. Stowers spoke on the importance of this item that enables the staff to perform duties with waste removal and it saves time and improves efficiency with maintenance and enable them to use their time for other things necessary to complete the tasks.

** MS. AYERS MOVED TO AUTHORIZE THE PURCHASING AGENT TO ISSUE A PURCHASE ORDER IN AN AMOUNT NOT TO EXCEED \$66,993.44 FOR THE PURCHASE OF 48 IN-GROUND GARBAGE RECEPTACLES FROM SYBERTECH WASTE REDUCTION, LTD., PROJECT # 4276 FROM ACCOUNT # 0923-6030-5796-C0832.

** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

5. AUTHORIZE THE MAYOR, HARRY W. RILLING, TO ENTER INTO A CONTRACT WITH AQUALIS FOR THE INSTALLATION OF 48 IN-GROUND GARBAGE RECEPTACLES FOR AN AMOUNT NOT TO EXCEED \$71,181.10 FROM ACCOUNT # 0923-6030-5796-C0382.

5.A AUTHORIZE THE DIRECTOR OF RECREATION AND PARKS TO ISSUE CHANGE ORDER TO AQUALIS FOR THE INSTALLATION OF 48 IN-GROUND GARBAGE RECEPTACLES, IN AMOUNT NOT TO EXCEED \$14,236.22 FROM ACCOUNT # 0923-6030-5796-C0832.

**** MS. AYERS MOVED THE ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION.**

Mr. Stowers spoke on the importance of this item that is the same objective as the previous item to enable the staff to perform duties with waste removal and it saves time and improves efficiency with maintenance and enable them to use their time for other things necessary to complete the tasks.

**** MS. AYERS MOVED TO AUTHORIZE THE MAYOR, HARRY W. RILLING, TO ENTER INTO A CONTRACT WITH AQUALIS FOR THE INSTALLATION OF 48 IN-GROUND GARBAGE RECEPTACLES FOR AN AMOUNT NOT TO EXCEED \$71,181.10 FROM ACCOUNT # 0923-6030-5796-C0382.**

**** MS. AYERS MOVED TO AUTHORIZE THE DIRECTOR OF RECREATION AND PARKS TO ISSUE CHANGE ORDER TO AQUALIS FOR THE INSTALLATION OF 48 IN-GROUND GARBAGE RECEPTACLES, IN AMOUNT NOT TO EXCEED \$14,236.22 FROM ACCOUNT # 0923-6030-5796-C0832.**

**** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

6. AUTHORIZE THE PURCHASING AGENT TO ISSUE A PURCHASE ORDER FOR THE SOLE SOURCE PURCHASE AND INSTALLATION OF A NEW PLAYGROUND FOR CRANBURY PARK, IN AN AMOUNT NOT TO EXCEED \$192,291.50 OF THE OMNIA PARTNERS AGREEMENT FROM ACCOUNT # 0921-6030-5888-C0366.

6.A AUTHORIZE THE DIRECTOR OF RECREATION AND PARKS TO ISSUE A CHANGE ORDER IN AN AMOUNT NOT TO EXCEED \$18,815.00 FOR THE SOLE SOURCE PURCHASE AND INSTALLATION OF A NEW PLAYGROUND FOR CRANBURY PARK FROM ACCOUNT # 0921-6030-5777-C0366.

**** MR. GOLDSTEIN MOVED THE ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION.**

Mr. Stowers spoke on his support and importance of this item that is part of the capital budget.

**** MR. GOLDSTEIN MOVED TO AUTHORIZE THE PURCHASING AGENT TO ISSUE A PURCHASE ORDER FOR THE SOLE SOURCE PURCHASE AND INSTALLATION OF A NEW PLAYGROUND FOR CRANBURY PARK, IN AN AMOUNT NOT TO EXCEED \$192,291.50 OF THE OMNIA PARTNERS AGREEMENT FROM ACCOUNT # 0921-6030-5888-C0366.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

**** MR. GOLDSTEIN MOVED TO AUTHORIZE THE DIRECTOR OF RECREATION AND PARKS TO ISSUE A CHANGE ORDER IN AN AMOUNT NOT TO EXCEED \$18,815.00 FOR THE SOLE SOURCE PURCHASE AND INSTALLATION OF A NEW PLAYGROUND FOR CRANBURY PARK FROM ACCOUNT # 0921-6030-5777-C0366.**

**** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

7. AUTHORIZE THE PURCHASING AGENT TO ISSUE A PURCHASE ORDER FOR THE SOLE SOURCE PURCHASE OF A FREIGHTLINER M2 106 PLUS FROM FREIGHTLINER OF HARTFORD, OFF THE STATE OF CONNECTICUT

**DAS CONTRACT # 14PSX0239 IN AN AMOUNT NOT TO EXCEED \$192,206.20
FROM ACCOUNT # 0923-6030-6796-C0832.**

**7.A AUTHORIZE THE PURCHASING AGENT TO ISSUE A CHANGE OF ORDER FOR THE
SOLE SOURCE PURCHASE OF A FREIGHTLINER M2 106 PLUS FROM
FREIGHTLINER OF HARTFORD, OFF THE STATE OF CONNECTICUT DAS
CONTRACT # 14PSX0239 IN AN AMOUNT NOT TO EXCEED \$19,220.00 FROM
ACCOUNT # 0923-6030-6796-C0832.**

**** MR. GOLDSTEIN MOVED THE ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION.**

Mr. Stowers spoke on his support and importance of this item that is part of the department needs for equipment and vehicles. He added that the rationale meets the goals of efficiency to enable the staff to be more productive.

**** MS. AYERS MOVED TO AUTHORIZE THE PURCHASING AGENT TO ISSUE A
PURCHASE ORDER FOR THE SOLE SOURCE PURCHASE OF A FREIGHTLINER M2
106 PLUS FROM FREIGHTLINER OF HARTFORD, OFF THE STATE OF
CONNECTICUT DAS CONTRACT # 14PSX0239 IN AN AMOUNT NOT TO EXCEED
\$192,206.20 FROM ACCOUNT # 0923-6030-6796-C0832.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

**** MS. AYERS MOVED TO AUTHORIZE THE PURCHASING AGENT TO ISSUE A
CHANGE OF ORDER FOR THE SOLE SOURCE PURCHASE OF A FREIGHTLINER M2
106 PLUS FROM FREIGHTLINER OF HARTFORD, OFF THE STATE OF
CONNECTICUT DAS CONTRACT # 14PSX0239 IN AN AMOUNT NOT TO EXCEED
\$19,220.00 FROM ACCOUNT # 0923-6030-6796-C0832.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

Ms. Young spoke about what Mr. Stowers brought up about consistency with needs for signs and to make the parks more user friendly. Mr. Stowers noted that more events are coming up on the schedule and they will be brought to the Council for the September meeting.

Ms. Ayers brought up the issue that when events are brought to the Council and there is usually nothing to report that is not recommended for approval. She asked if there is a tracking to make sure events are in compliance. Mr. Stowers replied that the events are tracked and managed closely with a record of how the event was held in line with the approval.

There was further discussion on how many events are coming into the city parks, and it was noted that the Recreation & Parks Department staff does their due diligence with all applications prior to being added to the Council packet.

Mr. Stowers shared how projects are managed and the multiple issues are circumvented to avoid overrun costs, prevent damages, while maintaining the quality of operations of the parks. Ms. Young added that this is a very important question that has come up in the past and events have had some negative experiences, but she assured the Council that things are managed well.

VI. DISCUSSION

There was no discussion this evening.

ADJOURNMENT

**** MR. GOLDSTEIN MOVED TO ADJOURN**
**** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting was adjourned at 7:55 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Dilene Byrd