



CITY OF NORWALK
RECREATION, PARKS & CULTURAL AFFAIRS COUNCIL COMMITTEE
BY VIDEO CONFERENCE AND TELECONFERENCE
WEDNESDAY, JULY 10, 2024.
REGULAR MEETING
7:00PM.



Members of the public may call in to participate. Callers will not be able to see the meeting participants. All participants will be muted upon entering the meeting. To speak, dial *9 on the phone and you will be called on by the host of the meeting during the public comment section. All speakers must state their name and address. Comments must be on a topic on the agenda and are limited to three minutes. Anyone disrupting the orderly conduct of the meeting, including by using threatening, hateful, or sexually explicit language, will be removed. Please find the information using the link above.



Members of the public who wish to “view the meeting live” and/or “provide live comments” can 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. All speakers must state their name and address. Comments must be on a topic on the agenda and are limited to three minutes. Anyone disrupting the orderly conduct of the meeting, including by using threatening, hateful, or sexually explicit language, will be removed. Please find the information using the link above.



Members of the public who wish to provide public comments are encouraged to submit those via email in advance of the meeting. For these comments to be read into the record, they must be submitted by 12:00 p.m. the day of the meeting. Please email Dilene Byrd at dbyrd@norwalkct.gov with the subject line “Public Comment” to provide written public comment prior to the meeting.

ATTENDANCE: Darlene Young, Chair, Heather Dunn; Lisa Shanahan; Jenn McMurrer

ABSENT: Johan Lopez; Nicol Ayers

STAFF: Robert Stowers, Director, Recreation and Parks; Ken Hughes, Superintendent, Recreation and Parks; Sarah Cruz, Arborist / Horticulturist, Recreation and Parks

I. ROLL CALL

At roll call there were five (5) committee members present. A quorum was present.

Ms. Young called the meeting to order at 7:00PM.

II. MINUTES OF MAY 8, 2024

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

**** THE MOTION PASSED WITH ONE (1) ABSTENTION- MS. MCMURRER**

III PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Mr. Vero said he would like to speak on the pickleball pilot project. Ms. Young said that item is not on the agenda for this evening and suggested he reach out to Mr. Stowers directly to discuss.

IV. OLD BUSINESS

There was no old business discussed this evening.

V. NEW BUSINESS

1. AUTHORIZE THE MAYOR, HARRY. W. RILLING , TO ENTER INTO AN AGREEMENT AND SIGN ALL REQUIRED PAPERWORK WITH THE US FORESTRY SERVICE FOR THE INFLATION REDUCTION ACT, NORWALK IMPROVEMENTS TO INCREASE URBAN FORESTY GRANT # 24-DG-11094200-058, IN THE AMOUNT OF \$1,000,000.

Mr. Stowers said that a lot of folks were involved in getting this grant award and thanked Ms. Nigri and Ms. Cruz for their work on getting the grant submitted. He said they were approved for the grant and will be receiving \$1 million dollars for a program that is needed as the tree canopy needs addressing.

Mr. Cruz said staff in seeking authorization to move into the signatory and agreement process on this grant and the grant funds will be coming through the inflation reduction act and will be administered through the US Forest Service. She said the grant that was awarded involves almost \$500,000 for tree plantings within the city and will only be executed in areas that are federally recognized as environmental justice disadvantaged tracks with Norwalk which is primarily in South Norwalk and the hospital hill area. She said the proposal also includes hiring two folks to work on a tree stewardship crew to steward and water our young trees and some public outreach as well as a more formal volunteer organization as it pertains to our tree stewardship initiatives.

Ms. Shanahan said this is fantastic work and the council has been speaking for a long time on how to address the canopy especially in South Norwalk and hospital hill area and she is especially happy that they will be hiring some local people to begin to learn how to take care of trees because it is super important, and they could also be used to help out on Meadow Street.

Ms. Young agreed with Ms. Shanahan and said as a council and city we want to use that as an example it and could be a really good model on how we bring environmental justice to a community and an area that has been so left behind and not taken care of for so long, and she is excited about that and is also a huge opportunity to address these issues in other areas as well as she appreciates the work and the vision.

Ms. Dunn said one of her concerns is how to maintain the canopy that we have when there are parcels being purchased and clear-cut and asked if there is anything that can be done to educate people away from doing that or incentivizing them not to. Mr. Stowers said the grant will allow us to do a lot of community education. Ms. Cruz said the Tree Master Plan that is in progress will certainly address both public and private property but her understanding is that private property issues are primarily addressed through permitting by Planning and Zoning and Conservation.

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**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

- 2. AUTHORIZE THE MAYOR, HARRY. W. RILLING, TO EXECUTE A 5-YEAR LEASE EXTENSION WITH THE PASTIME SOCIAL AND ATHLETIC CLUB FOR THE USE OF A SMALL PORTION OF LAND ALONG SEAVIEW AVENUE. REMAINING TERMS OF THE AGREEMENT TO REMAIN UNCHANGED.**

Mr. Hughes said for many years the city has executed a lease agreement with the Pastime Athletic Club. He said there are a set of docks that are located across from, and they have to cross over 3' of city

sidewalk in order to access their docks and this agreement gives them permission to cross over that piece of city property to access their docks.

Ms. Young asked if there is any reason the agreement is not done for longer than five years. Mr. Hughes said it was originally a ten-year agreement but changed to five years for any changes to the council or mayor, but he is not averse to making a 10-year agreement. Ms. Young asked if he saw the situation ever changing. Mr. Hughes said “no” and that it is strictly a formality. Mr. Stowers said it is basically an easement agreement, but he thinks the 5-year agreement is good and doesn’t recommend going any longer than that as it should be reviewed periodically, and he has a few concerns with the agreement but not enough to not recommend it.

**** MS. MCMURRER MOVED TO AUTHORIZE THE MAYOR, HARRY. W. RILLING, TO EXECUTE A 5-YEAR LEASE EXTENSION WITH THE PASTIME SOCIAL AND ATHLETIC CLUB FOR THE USE OF A SMALL PORTION OF LAND ALONG SEAVIEW AVENUE. REMAINING TERMS OF THE AGREEMENT TO REMAIN UNCHANGED
** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

3. APPROVE THE USE OF CALF PASTURE AND IMMEDIATE SURROUNDING GROUNDS BY MOUNTAIN WORKSHOP FOR THEIR TEAM BUILDING & SCHOOL CLIMATE PROGRAMS TO BE HELD ON SEPTEMBER 9TH, SEPTEMBER 26TH, OCTOBER 7TH, AND OCTOBER 10TH FROM 7:00AM TO 4:00PM. APPROXIMATELY 120+ PEOPLE.

Mr. Tullo provided an overview of the event and said it has been held for the past 20 years and work with the schools across Connecticut on team building based programming and has always appreciated how beautiful Calf Pasture Beach is and it has worked very well for the programs. He said the program is typically for middle school aged children, and they do a series of activities and events on the fields with them and is only held during the week on school days.

Mr. Stowers said staff has not had any issues at all with the event and endorses it.

Ms. Dunn asked if the organization is non-profit. Mr. Tullo said “no” and they are a small operation that runs programs four months a year and is a program that he is passionate about.

**** MS. SHANAHAN MOVED TO APPROVE THE USE OF CALF PASTURE AND IMMEDIATE SURROUNDING GROUNDS BY MOUNTAIN WORKSHOP FOR THEIR TEAM BUILDING & SCHOOL CLIMATE PROGRAMS TO BE HELD ON SEPTEMBER 9TH, SEPTEMBER 26TH, OCTOBER 7TH, AND OCTOBER 10TH FROM 7:00AM TO 4:00PM. APPROXIMATELY 120+ PEOPLE.
** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

4. APPROVE THE USE OF WASHINGTON STREET PARK AND IMMEDIATE SURROUNDING GROUNDS BY GORDON FINE ARTS, LLC FOR THEIR SONO ARTS FESTIVAL TO BE HELD ON SATURDAY, AUGUST 3RD, AND SUNDAY, AUGUST 4TH 2024, FROM 10:00AM TO 5:00PM. SET-UP TIME BY 6:00AM SATURDAY WITH TEAR-DONE BY SUNDAY 7:00PM. APPROXIMATELY 1000 PEOPLE

Ms. Gorden provided an overview of the event and said the event has been held for over 50 years and is a free community arts event that takes place the first full weekend of each August and they include all the merchants to participate and invite artists from all over the country to participate. She said she would also like to invite and departments of Norwalk to participate in any manner at no cost as they appreciate all of the work and cooperation that they have received from the city over the years.

Ms. Gorden said that Ms. Dunn has been instrumental in the event for many years, and she wants to acknowledge her support.

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**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

5. APPROVE THE USE OF NATHANIEL ELY SCHOOL FIELD AND IMMEDIATE SURROUNDING GROUNDS BY PROJECT 9 FOUNDATION FOR THEIR COMMUNITY FUN DAY TO BE HELD ON SATURDAY, AUGUST 17H, FROM 1:00PM TO 7:00PM. SET-UP TIME BY 11:00AM SATURDAY WITH TEAR-DOWN BY SATURDAY 8:00PM. APPROXIMATELY 78 PEOPLE.

Mr. Stowers said this is an event that went very well last year, and they have completed all of the permitting and he sees no reason not to approve it.

**** MS. SHANAHAN MOVED TO APPROVE THE THE USE OF NATHANIEL ELY SCHOOL FIELD AND IMMEDIATE SURROUNDING GROUNDS BY PROJECT 9 FOUNDATION FOR THEIR COMMUNITY FUN DAY TO BE HELD ON SATURDAY, AUGUST 17H, FROM 1:00PM TO 7:00PM. SET-UP TIME BY 11:00AM SATURDAY WITH TEAR-DOWN BY SATURDAY 8:00PM. APPROXIMATELY 78 PEOPLE**
**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

VI. DISCUSSION

Mr. Stowers said we have received a draft on the fees and charges analysis, and he has briefed the Chief of Operations as well as the Chief of Staff and the consultant will present a briefing to the mayor and he Chief of Staff as well of the Chief of Operations and finance for any input they may have and finalize the proposal. He said the consultant will also present the proposal to the committee which he is hoping to have on next month's agenda.

Mr. Stowers said we have received all the funding for 98 South Main Street and have a final design and the mayor has approved to proceed with the bidding process for a construction company and will have a company on board by September or October, and construction should begin in November, and the expected opening date will be in the spring 2026. He said the budget also includes outfitting the

community center as well but will be needing a few staff positions, but it will be a very comprehensive community center. He thanked the committee for their part in this and it will be a highlight of Norwalk.

Ms. McMurrer thanked Mr. Stowers for the work that he has done on this as it will be a huge benefit to the City of Norwalk.

ADJOURNMENT

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

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting was adjourned at 7:35PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Dilene Byrd