

**CITY OF NORWALK
RECREATION, PARKS & CULTURAL AFFAIRS COUNCIL COMMITTEE
BY VIDEO CONFERENCE AND TELECONFERENCE
WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 12, 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; Thomas Keegan; John Kydes; Nicol Ayers; Josh Goldstein; Jen McMurrer; Lisa Shanahan; Diana Revulus

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

OTHERS: James Gerweck; Joy Brewster

I. ROLL CALL

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

II. MINUTES OF NOVEMBER 10, 2021

**** MS. AYERS MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF NOVEMBER 10, 2021, AS SUBMITTED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

III. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There was no public participation this evening.

IV. OLD BUSINESS

Ms. Young introduced Recreation and Parks staff member Sandy Korkatzis and said she is the Superintendent of Recreation, and she joined the department almost two years ago and she is doing a phenomenal job. Ms. Korkatzis said she has been in recreation for 22 years and her goal is the help cultivate a well-rounded recreation program for the City of Norwalk, and this is the third recreation department that she has been committed to. She said that Mr. Hughes leadership has been fantastic, and the community has been very supportive, and she is happy and to be part of the group for the master plan as well as the upcoming initiatives.

Mr. Stowers said since he has been here Ms. Korkatzis has run numerous successful events, but the Recreation and Parks Department needs the support of the Common Council to fill the gaps in the budget and he is looking into was to raise the level of staff support. Mr. Hughes agreed and said one of the things staff is finding is that the department is very thin and will be leaning on this committee specifically through the upcoming budget process.

Ms. Young said that Ms. Kortatzis really cares about young people and families which came through when some of the parents who had issues with the cost of some of our programs so being flexible is

something that helps, and she appreciates that. Ms. Kortatzis said we are looking for creative ways that work with our city budget to raise and supplement some of the programs, and will continue to put opportunities in place where people can help sponsor a scholarship for some of these programs.

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. 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 SILVERMINE SCHOOL AND IMMEDIATE SURROUNDING GROUNDS BY CLUB CONNECTICUT FOR THEIR BOSTON BUILDUP 25 K TO BE HELD ON SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 27, 2022 FROM 9:00 AM TO 11:00 AM. SET-UP TO BEGIN AT 8:30 AM WITH TEAR-DOWN NO LATER THAN 11:15. APPROXIMATE 125 PEOPLE.

Mr. Gerweck provided an overview of the event and said this is the 44th year that the event has been held and the race starts and ends at Silvermine School.

**** MS. SHANAHAN MOVED TO APPROVE THE USE OF SILVERMINE SCHOOL AND IMMEDIATE SURROUNDING GROUNDS BY CLUB CONNECTICUT FOR THEIR BOSTON BUILDUP 25 K TO BE HELD ON SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 27, 2022 FROM 9:00 AM TO 11:00 AM. SET-UP TO BEGIN AT 8:30 AM WITH TEAR-DOWN NO LATER THAN 11:15. APPROXIMATE 125 PEOPLE.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

2. AUTHORIZE THE MAYOR, HARRY W. RILLING, TO ENTER AN AGREEMENT WITH GREENWICH KENNEL CLUB/LONGSHORE SOUTHPORT KENNEL CLUB FOR THE USE OF TAYLOR FARM PARK AND IMMEDIATE SURROUNDING GROUNDS FOR THEIR 88TH GREENWICH KENNEL CLUB/LONGSHORE SOUTHPORT KENNEL CLUB AKC DOG SHOW, OBEDIENCE AND RALLY TO BE HELD ON SATURDAY, JUNE 11, 2022 FROM 8:30 AM TO 6:30 PM AND SUNDAY, JUNE 12, 2022 FROM 8:30 AM TO 6:30 PM. SET-UP TO BEGIN WEDNESDAY, JUNE 8TH, 2022 AT 6:00 AM WITH TEAR-DOWN NO LATER THAN MONDAY JUNE 13TH, 2022 AT 6:30 PM. APPROXIMATE ATTENDANCE 800 PEOPLE.

Ms. Brewster provided an overview of the event and said it is the 16th year that the event has been held in Norwalk. Ms. Young asked what the average attendance has been. Ms. Brewster said it has been reduced and the entries are down due to the pandemic but do have more than 1000 entries.

****MS. MCMURRER MOVED TO APPROVE TO AUTHORIZE THE MAYOR, HARRY W. RILLING, TO ENTER AN AGREEMENT WITH GREENWICH KENNEL CLUB/LONGSHORE SOUTHPORT KENNEL CLUB FOR THE USE OF TAYLOR FARM PARK AND IMMEDIATE SURROUNDING GROUNDS FOR THEIR 88TH GREENWICH KENNEL CLUB/LONGSHORE SOUTHPORT KENNEL CLUB AKC DOG SHOW, OBEDIENCE AND RALLY TO BE HELD ON SATURDAY, JUNE 11, 2022 FROM 8:30 AM TO 6:30 PM AND SUNDAY, JUNE 12, 2022 FROM 8:30 AM TO 6:30 PM. SET-UP TO BEGIN WEDNESDAY, JUNE 8TH, 2022 AT 6:00 AM WITH TEAR-DOWN NO LATER THAN MONDAY JUNE 13TH, 2022 AT 6:30 PM.**

APPROXIMATE ATTENDANCE 800 PEOPLE.

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

3. AUTHORIZE THE MAYOR, HARRY W. RILLING, TO ENTER INTO A CONTRACT WITH TYRONE MARTYLEWSKI FOR THE LEASE AGREEMENT FOR CARETAKER'S COTTAGE AT CRANBURY PARK FOR THE PERIOD OF JULY 1, 2021 TO JUNE 30, 2026.

Mr. Stowers said this is the renewal for the caretaker's agreement and have outlined the work he does in an addendum for an estimated value of \$4,256 and based on the tax assessor assessed the market rent of \$1,600 per month and gave him a credit for the work and added a 6% inflation over time so the rent will be \$1320 per month. Mr. Goldstein asked if there are any material changes to the agreement. Mr. Stowers said the agreement is similar to the one that has just expired but added the addendum to include the estimated value of the work he does and have him a credit. Mr. Hughes said this is the 30th year that Mr. Martylewski has lived on the property, and one of the stipulations to renew the lease is he has to be an employee of the Recreation and Parks Department and it is favorable for the city to have him there.

**** MS. SHANAHAN MOVED TO APPROVE TO AUTHORIZE THE MAYOR, HARRY W. RILLING, TO ENTER INTO A CONTRACT WITH TYRONE MARTYLEWSKI FOR THE LEASE AGREEMENT FOR CARETAKER'S COTTAGE AT CRANBURY PARK FOR THE PERIOD OF JULY 1, 2021 TO JUNE 30, 2026.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

4. APPROVE THE FOLLOWING RESOLUTION:

Whereas, pursuant to the Urban Act Program 4-66c, the Connecticut Department of Economic and Community Development is authorized to extend financial assistance for economic development projects; and

Whereas, it is desirable and in the public interest that the City of Norwalk make an application to the State for \$5 million, in order to undertake the Cranbury Park Renovations and to execute an Assistance Agreement.

Now, therefore, be it resolved by the Common Council of the City of Norwalk;

1. That it is cognizant of the conditions and prerequisites for the state financial assistance imposed by the State of Connecticut, Department of Economic and Community Development, Urban Act Program 4-66c; and
2. That the filing of an application for State financial assistance by the City of Norwalk in an amount not to exceed \$5 million is hereby approved;
3. That Harry W. Rilling, Mayor, City of Norwalk, is directed to execute and file such application with the Connecticut Department of Economic and Community Development, to provide such additional information, to execute such other documents as may be required, to execute an Assistance Agreement with the State of Connecticut for State financial assistance if such an agreement is offered, to execute any amendments, decisions, and revisions thereto, and to act as the authorized representative of the City of Norwalk.

Mr. Stowers said that Mr. Hughes has been working with the Purchasing Department on an RFQ to address this grant. Mr. Hughes said that the city did receive a \$5 million dollar grant through the Department of Economic and Community Development through Senator Duff's office. He said over the past 10 years we have been using capital funding on larger projects at the mansion but there is quite a bit of work that still needs to be done and Senator Duff knows the work that is involved at the mansion. He said the projects that we have in mind are moving forward is to upgrade the electrical system, upgrade the plumbing on the second floor, redesign the outside drainage which needs to be tied in correctly and waterproof the exterior of the building. He said we would also like to install a maintenance garage at Cranbury Park as well as some work on the trails. He said the intent is to get one architectural firm who will address all these issues and write a scope of work and handle the bid process for all of the contractors because the state is requiring the work to be done in three years and we just don't have the staff to handle this scope of work in that short period of time. Mr. Stowers said the grant is not just for the mansion but is also for the entire park.

Mr. Kydes asked if this means there will be no capital requests for the foreseeable future. Mr. Hughes said we just had a meeting with the CFO this afternoon and did have \$1.3 million include in the budget over the next four years requested in the capital funding and let him know that is no longer needed. Ms. Young asked if \$5 million dollars is enough funding for all of the projects. Mr. Hughes said we are hopeful and are hoping that costs begin to level out but will have a better understanding once there is an expert on board.

Ms. McMurrer asked if the grant will also include work at the playground. Mr. Stowers said it could, but all of the projects have not yet been developed.

Mr. Goldstein asked what the sequence of work will be following Common Council approval. Mr. Hughes said having the resolution approved is the first step to have the funds will be released to the city. He said the RFQ is almost ready to go out and he expects it to be published over the next two days and will have a pre-site meeting next week and following that the RFQ will be submitted to the city for any firm that wishes to submit. He said once we receive all of the RFQ's a small committee will be formed and will pick the top three firms and will interview them and make a selection. Once that firm is on board, we will start addressing the projects and that firm will be responsible for the design of the projects, the scope of work and putting them out to bid. He said he believes the work should begin slightly after July 1, 2022.

Mr. Keegan asked if there is any fine print that the state will require something of the city and the use of that property. Mr. Hughes said “no” and he had asked that same question and other than following the guidelines of historical properties and proper use of the funds. Ms. Young asked if there is any oversight that the Historical Commission should be involved in. Mr. Hughes said “no” because there will be no change to the space and are just updating what is currently there to current specifications.

**** MR. KYDES MOVED TO APPROVE THE RESOLUTION.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

5. APPROVE THE MEETING DATES FOR 2022 CALENDAR YEAR, JANUARY 12, FEBRUARY 9, MARCH 9, APRIL 13, MAY 11, JUNE 8, JULY 13, AUGUST 10, SEPTEMBER 14, OCTOBER 12, NOVEMBER 9, DECEMBER 14

**** MR. KEEGAN MOVED TO APPROVE THE MEETING DATES FOR 2022 CALENDAR YEAR, JANUARY 12, FEBRUARY 9, MARCH 9, APRIL 13, MAY 11, JUNE 8, JULY 13, AUGUST 10, SEPTEMBER 14, OCTOBER 12, NOVEMBER 9, DECEMBER 14**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

VI. DISCUSSION

1. Recreation and Parks Operating Budget presentation to CFO.

Mr. Stowers said our budget last fiscal year was \$4, 866, 368 and or budget request for fiscal year 2023 was 5, 010,206 and the projected revenue is \$852,312, and when we met with the CFO and asked for three laborer positions in which two would be used for a ball field crew to address some of the issues over the past few years with pre-game preparation and one utility person for \$154,000 which he cut out of the budget, as well and another \$40, 000 for wages so in total he did not allow for \$198,140 worth of wages due to a decrease in revenues for the swimming due to Covid-19 which will impact our temporary workers in aquatics. He said the bottom line is coming in \$50,000 less than what we had in 2022. He said that staff needs to the committee’s help in getting at least two of those positions because the ball fields need to be address, and there is also an big expense looming in the future for artificial turf because turf fields if maintained properly can last up to 15 years but we don’t have the staff to do that so the fields are showing signs of the wear and tear.

Ms. Young said that the committee agrees that the department has a lack of staff and will now need to be more vocal in the process moving forward.

Mr. Stowers said he knows that the ball field maintenance has been an issue and now would be a good time to address the union again to reintroduce the concept of letting the leagues do some of the maintenance which is being done in other cities. Mr. Keegan said for a number of years the baseball leagues have been willing to expend funds and help with the field maintenance, but it never took on the flavor we needed it to, and he would be happy to help to facilitate that going forward.

Ms. Shanahan spoke in support of the Recreation and Parks staff, and she knows how short staffed they have been for years and are relying on volunteers to a lot of the heavy lifting and that is not right, and we cannot depend upon that and however she can be supportive to ask for more funds from the city for the department goes without saying.

Mr. Goldstein said he agrees with what Ms. Shanahan stated and the parks are one of the most important ways people interact with the city and should work and try and fix the issue regarding the ball fields and do better. He requested the original budget that was submitted to the CFO be sent to the committee members to see where the cuts were made.

Ms. Mc Murrer said she is also in support of additional staff a lot of the issue is around safety because a lot of the parks are not safe in the condition, they are in so whatever we can do to support staff is important. She said that she and Ms. Ayers spoke earlier, and she did some research and found that Stamford has 30 employees in their Recreation and Parks Department, and we have 18 so she does not think that requesting three additional positions is a big ask and this is a department that she feels has been neglected in this area for many years so staff has her full support.

Ms. Ayers also gave her full support because those of us that are on the PTA are literally the ones picking up the garbage. She asked if the ball field employees will also take of the playgrounds because that is also an area that is heavily used outside of the hours of school and does not get cleaned. Mr. Hughes said the intent for the new positions was to request a ball field crew and another employee for general maintenance that could be used to pick litter at sites. Ms. Ayers asked if three people is sufficient. Mr. Hughes said "no", but it is a starting point. Mr. Kydes said if we want this to happen, we need to lobby the mayor. He asked Mr. Hughes when the last time the budget was increased. Mr. Hughes said it has been a while and he has actually lost staff over the years. Mr. Kydes said he will be lobbying the mayor for these positions, and he hopes the members of the committee do the same.

Ms. Ayers also said that staff had mentioned during the budget discussion that the biggest impact to the budget would be the aquatics program and asked how the cut would impact that particular program. Mr. Hughes said there was an impact to the revenue in the aquatics program due to Covid-19 and that is what was presented to the CFO and to our surprise he said in order to balance the projected loss of revenue we will be taking away \$40,00 from the swim instructor account and it should not be a one-to-one reduction and he argued that we give back any money in that account that is not used. Ms. Ayers said there will be a ripple effect which some people may not be aware of.

Mr. Stowers provided an update on the master plan and said staff has been meeting monthly with the consultant and they have outlined the calendar of dates and times that he will share with the committee. He said in order to get where the staff, public and stakeholder want the parks to look like a survey will be done and he went over the questions with them very thoroughly and revised them and he sent them to the mayor, the chief of staff and Mr. Carr yesterday and once he receives them back with the approval, he will share them with the committee through Ms. Young. He said that focus groups will also be held and would like organizations and groups to be included and will send the committee a list of topics and requested if the committee has any groups or organizations in mind, or any additional topics to add to get them to him as soon as possible. Ms. Young asked if the surveys will also be done online. Mr. Stowers said believes some of them will be, but he will need to clarify that.

Mr. Stowers provide an update on the certification from the National Parks & Recreation Association and said the mayor really wants Norwalk to be accredited and there are 154 standards that have to be met as well as 35 core standards, and he has put together a list of teams and is hoping to have five committees to help gather the information for the standards, and he will be meeting with Ms. King to see who should be selected from each department to be on the teams and that a member of the Common Council will also need to be chosen. Mr. Kydes volunteered to be on the team. He said it will be a lot of work but in the end will be worth it especially when applying for grants. Mr. Kydes said this was looked into in the past and that there is only one other small municipality in the state of Connecticut that has the accreditation and asked Mr. Stowers in his experience if the expense outweighs the benefit because there is a significant amount of money and time that will need to be put into this. Mr. Stowers said he thinks this accreditation will help the department. Mr. Kydes asked what the cost to not only get the accreditation but to maintain it. Mr. Stowers said the policies will need to be updated as well as the master plan which should be done anyway, and there is a review every five years and the cost would be the staff time.

Ms. Ayers said she thinks Mr. Kydes should be on the team being that he is senior on the committee. She also asked if there is a grant writer in the Recreation and Parks Department. Mr. Stowers said "no". Ms. Young said the city has hired a part-time grants writer but not every department has a grants writer.

ADJOURNMENT

**** MS. MC MURRER MOVED TO ADJOURN.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting adjourned at 8:32PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Dilene Byrd