

PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION MEETING
Minutes of the December 16, 2015
Regular Meeting and Public Hearing for Veterans Memorial Park

A meeting of the Parks and Recreation Commission was held on December 16, 2015, 2nd Floor Senior Center Auditorium, Stamford Government Center.

In attendance were:

Commissioners: Joe Andreana
 Dave Winston
 Beth Cooper
 Althea Brown

Staff: Laurie Albano
 Kevin Murray

Guests: Pat Tomlinson – Veterans Memorial Park
 Rep. Kieran Ryan – Veterans Memorial Park
 Rep. Jim Caterbone – Veterans Memorial Park
 Erin McKenna – Veterans Memorial Park
 Rick Redniss – Veterans Memorial Park
 Archie Elam – Veterans Memorial Park
 Daniel Rayner – Veterans Memorial Park
 Jack Halpert – Veterans Memorial Park
 Pat Sasser – Veterans Memorial Park
 Chris Munger – Veterans Memorial Park
 John Ruotolo – Veterans Memorial Park
 Randy Collins – Veterans Memorial Park

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 6:35 p.m. by Joe Andreana, Chair.

Ms. Ruijter did not attend the meeting.

Review of the November 18, 2015 Regular Meeting Minutes.

Mr. Winston made a motion to approve.

Seconded by Ms. Brown

Unanimously Approved

Public Hearing

Review of Master Plan for Veterans Memorial Park.

- Randy Collins, Landscape Architect with BETA Group presented the proposed Master Plan for Veterans Memorial Park to the Commission and the public.
- The process started with a number of meetings where they talked about the site, about the design ideas and desires, the different components that needed to be included in the design. Before developing any design ideas they focused on understanding the site, how it is used today and how it could be used in the future.
- A number of options were developed that were reviewed with the Committee as a way of testing those ideas and concerns and being able to come up with one design.
- The existing conditions have the circular Veteran's Memorial. There are a number of circular beds throughout with a number of other memorials, statues and a Flag Pole. The concept that was developed was a way of consolidating the memorials to make a representation of a timeline.

The Statue of Abraham Lincoln will be relocated up to the high ground of the hill side next to the bank, where the memorials that are within the circle and other memorials throughout the park will be located. The Committee wanted to make sure that the park in general was a park for Veterans Memorial Park as it's named, not just a park that happens to have Veteran's Memorials within it.

The concept was expanded out, to complete the circle, it is meant to be an extended area for memorials. There are five trees, five benches and five potentially smaller monuments there that represent the five branches of the military. They started to build on the idea of fives; there will be a star in the center of the plaza, and a series of stairs (five stairs).

- The center of the park can be used for events.
- The hillside will get re-grated and will introduce a number of retaining walls within the slope to provide outdoor seating for the events, making sure they can provide

outdoor areas for people to be able to be in the park and enjoy the park.

- They have maintained the Bus Stop on Atlantic Street providing new shelters. The shelters will look like the ones across the street at Old Town Hall.
- Looking at the intersection of Atlantic Street and Main Street, they are planning to make the relationship of the park and the public space tie together. The intersection level will be at the level of the sidewalk, making it a safer pedestrian connection as well as trying to draw some of the design techniques and characteristics within the proposed park out into the intersection and expanding the footprint in area of recognition of the park.
- Trying to balance between the concerns of the Veterans and the concerns of the abutting property owners, making sure they are able to facilitate pedestrian access from the Bus Stops and downtown into the office buildings and the mall. Making sure they have created a space in general that is comfortable and safe for people to be in and enjoy.
- Archie Elam, State Officer with the Veterans of Foreign Wars representing the Veteran's Council read a memorandum of support for the Veterans Memorial Park Project. The memorandum was developed jointly by the three representatives to the Veterans Park Advisory Council.
- Mr. Elam stated that the vision for the use of the space is for patriotic community type events, some would be musical, but there could be others. They would like the events to be consistent with decorum you would expect inside a Memorial.

The second category would be the parades and the other similar events that occur today. Currently the general location of the park is the stop point for the parades that run on Veteran's Day, Memorial Day, etc., this will not change, they expect that the design of the space will enhance the ability for participants and providers to put on worthwhile and high power events.

- Commissioners commended the group for the work that has been done with this project. Mr. Winston stated that he is proud of the accomplishments.
- Mr. Andreana asked Mr. Elam what his thoughts were on the sale/use of alcoholic beverages in the park. Mr. Elam responded that this will be something they would look at as they move into the detail planning phase of the project; they will come back to the Commission with a proposal. Mr. Andreana requested something in writing. Mr. Rick Redniss stated that they still have a lot of work to do and will not be ready to come back to the Commission next month, they need more time.
- Mr. Winston stated that the selection of the monuments and the placement of the monuments is a decision that will rest with the Veterans.

- For the record, Mr. Elam stated that no monuments are being removed from the park that currently exists and everything that is in the park will stay.
- Mr. Andreana stated that the Homer Wise Memorial is shown as being removed and stockpiled on the Master Plan. Rick Redniss and Randy Collins assured Mr. Andreana that the Homer Wise Memorial will not be removed; it will be relocated within the park. Mr. Andreana asked that it should be stated in the Master Plan if the Homer Wise Memorial is going to be put back in place. If it's going to be relocated, that should be part of the project.
- There will be room for future monuments. Mr. Chris Munger stated that generic monuments have been discussed.
- **Safety Prospective:** The park will have two points of access into the site. They are still working on the lighting part of the project, they will be creating a model to look at what the lighting would be like within the park and be able to evaluate that during the preliminary design process.

Tree canopies and planters have been discussed; they want to make sure the planters don't get too high to help with visibility into the park. They do not have any structures that would block visibility into the park.

Mr. John Ruotolo from the Downtown Special Services District (D.S.S.D.) stated that Chief Fontneau assigned Captain Sue Bretthauer to represent Stamford Police Department at the Committee meetings. After a walk through the park with Mr. Ruotolo, Captain Bretthauer sent an e-mail with her initial comments (copy of e-mail presented to the Commission).

Blue Light will be installed very soon.

- There are no plans to keep the Freedom Shrine in the park. A lot of money, time and effort have been spent to keep it up, but it has proven over the years not to be an outdoor project. There is also a concern of it being a sightline issue. There is already a Freedom Shrine on the 4th floor of the Government Center.

Mr. Andreana would like to know if there are any plans to relocate the Freedom Shrine. Mr. Rick Redniss responded that he does not know the condition of the Freedom Shrine and they did not budget for this. Mr. Andreana stated that the Exchange Club has donated the documents, the project should include the cost of relocating those documents, Mr. Redniss stated that they will add this to their agenda.

- Park will be ADA Accessible.
- Mr. Ruotolo stated that there is no intent to have Food Trucks in the park after the design is completed.

- Ms. Brown would like the areas of the park that are being beautified and expanded to have signage indicating that these areas are open to the public.
- Mr. Redniss stated that they will be meeting with the Mayor in a month to begin to discuss some ideas on how they can try to fund the project in a way that can be accelerated. The target line to complete the project is three years.
- Mr. Andreana wants to know who is going to maintain the park. Mr. Redniss responded that at the moment it is somewhat informal with predominantly the D.S.S.D. and Reckson providing funds to supplement the City, they are looking into it as well. At this point there is nothing concrete, but it is on their agenda. Mr. Ruotolo stated that he expects it to be the same layout it currently is, a shared combination of maintenance.
- Mr. Collins stated that they submitted the park planning process to the local chapter of ASLA (American Society of Landscape Architects) for an award. The design process and the design have won a Merit Award from the Rhode Island ASLA.

Special Events

No Special Events.

Tournaments

No Tournaments.

Old Business

Kevin Murray – Approval of Park Regulation Sign.

- Proposed sign wording for park signs was discussed.
- Under Fires:
 - Specify charcoal grill.
 - Do not use the word “no”, say “fires allowed in charcoal grills and only in the picnic areas. Say only what is allowed, not what is not allowed.

Under Pets:

- Indicate that pet waste needs to be cleaned up.
- No pets on the beach area including boardwalks.

Add:

- Ball playing in designated areas only.
- No flotation devices are allowed (if it is an Ordinance).
- Mr. Murray stated that the Park Regulations were generated by the Park Police. Signs will help them enforce the Park Regulations.

- Mr. Winston suggested a Kiosk for the signs instead of the entrance of the parks.
- Ms. Albano suggested adding to the bottom of the sign: “All City Park Ordinances Apply”.
- Mr. Murray will get the correct measurements of the sign to the Commission for the January meeting.

Staff Reports

Laurie Albano – Recreation.

- Rec Software worked well both on line and in office for winter program registration.
- Winter registration for Recreation is going well, a little over \$32,000 which is about average.
- Planning spring/summer now and focusing on growing revenue with new ideas. There is a possibility that Recreation may be getting the revolving account.
- Budget and Revenue Projection prep started for Recreation and Terry Conners Rink.
- Terry Conners Rink door project is underway, finally going forward.
- Terry Conners Rink roof and floor inspection while ice down in mid-April. Trying to get Facilities, Parks, Engineering and Legal together to try to get some resolution on the rink floor. Burt Rosenberg from the Law Department is working on an insurance settlement, as the company that renovated the rink went bankrupt. The claim will be for \$700,000. Ms. Albano would like to have an expert come and assess the floor while the ice is down for the roof project.
- ADA Assessment City wide (Recreation and Terry Conners Rink programs and Terry Conners Rink building).
- Re-writing Recreation’s Mission Statement to clearly state we are open inclusion for all.
- \$2 Sports Park Passes were approved by the Board of Representatives are being allowed to be charged this spring of 2016. This will generate additional revenue anticipated at \$5 to \$8K per year.
- List of events approved by the Parks & Recreation Internal Committee at the December 1, 2015 meeting:

Consent Agenda

No Consent Agenda.

Special Events

Sally Gehring – Glenbrook Fire Department – Annual Christmas Tree Lighting – Traffic Island on Hope Street – Saturday, December 5, 2015 from 6:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. – Set-Up Starts at 5:30 p.m. and Clean-Up Ends at 8:00 p.m. – 100 Adults and 75 Children.

Kevin Murray made a motion to approve request from Glenbrook Fire Department for Annual Christmas Tree Lighting – Traffic Island on Hope Street on Saturday, December 5, 2015 from 6:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. – In order to get Permit, fee must be paid.

Seconded by Kim Gerbert

Unanimously Approved

Rebecca Schulman – The Connecticut Chapter of the National MS Society – Walk MS 2016 – Cove Island Park – Saturday, April 30, 2016 from 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. – Set-Up Starts at 7:00 a.m. and Clean-Up Ends at 2:00 p.m. – 250 Adults and 110 Children.

- Due to questions from the Committee, the request will be tabled to the January 2016 meeting.

Tournaments

No Tournaments.

Kevin Murray – Parks.

- Czescik Park Estuary Clean-up held on Saturday, December 5th was a big success. Operations team from Parks and Facilities teamed up with volunteers and pulled out 2.5 tons of debris from the estuary. Also the following weekend volunteers pulled another additional 20 lawn bags of debris.
- **ADA Assessment** – City of Stamford will be working with the Institute for Human Centered Design to create a working survey as a tool to study all City buildings and open park space in regards to the 1990 Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). The obligation is to provide opportunities for equal participation for people with disabilities to all programs, services and activities offered by the City.
- **Current Projects in the Works** – As details arise all parties are informed that the Park Commission would need to approve all plans and see all details in regards to the following parks: Veteran's Parks, Lione Park, Cummings Park Phase 1, Master Plan for Boccuzzi Park, McKeithen Park and Courtland Avenue Park.
- Fall clean-ups are still being done in various parks by Parks staff as the weather has been moderate and will continue as long as the weather holds up.
- December 15th will be the last day for additional seasonal employees. Parks staff was able to hold onto 4 seasonal employees until December 15th to assist with

various tasks per the seasonal budget.

- Cove Island and Czescik Marina have officially closed for the season on November 29, 2015.
- Mr. Andreana mentioned that there were large excavation trucks at Chestnut Hill Park, and would like to know what is going on there. Mr. Murray believes it's being used as a staging area by Engineering, and will confirm with them. Mr. Murray will also remind the Engineering Department that he needs to be informed of this type of activity in the parks and that Commission approval is required.
- Mr. Winston asked Mr. Murray to keep the Commission updated on Scofieldtown Park.

Correspondence

Correspondence from Ernie Orgera, Director of Operations Regarding Heather Bernatchez of the Wildlife Center of Fairfield County – Update on the Status of Fundraising to Create Center in the Red Barn in Mianus River.

- The Commission acknowledged receiving an e-mail from Lisa Coggins regarding the illegal dumping at Cummings Park.

Mr. Andreana asked the Staff to come up with three major issues in the parks that can be presented to the Police Department before next spring.

The next Parks & Recreation Commission Meeting will take place on Wednesday, January 20, 2016.

Motion to adjourn the meeting by Mr. Winston

Seconded by Mrs. Cooper

The meeting adjourned at 8:40 p.m.

Respectfully submitted
Margarita Arenas
December 22, 2015