



**PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION
Minutes
February 14, 2023
Parks and Recreation Commission**

Commission Present: Duke, Johnson, Keech, Lantieri, Morrigan and Wiseberg

Staff Present: Wight, Comai and Putzier

The meeting was convened at 5:34 p.m. by Duke

Approval of Agenda

Motion to approve the agenda by Wiseberg, second by Keech, motion carried.

Approval of Consent Agenda

Motion to approve minutes from January 2023 Commission meeting by Wiseberg, second by Johnson, motion carried. Motion to approve the Wiseberg, second by Johnson, motion carried.

Keech asked question about permits and the question around number of people and toilets and if there was a required standard for vendor/applicant to provide port-o-lets.

Wight stated that is the type of question if known before the meeting she could get the answers ahead of time. Does not know at meeting but could ask staff and have for meeting or in general. In general Wight said if any questions come up for commissioners before the meeting it would be helpful to give them to herself in advance and she would do her best to get an answer by the meeting, also that it would be very helpful.

Keech asked about a religious group in the park and if that would be judged on a per request basis, and had not thought about religious activities having functions have ever been turned down and was told by Wight City is a public space and can't deny based on religion etc.

Urban Tree Update

Comai, City Arborist said been in job for 5 years this month and said technically the Commission serves as Tree Board and felt appropriate to give an update as to what team is doing and where going. Currently has four certified arborists, take care of all greenways, parks and cemeteries 13,000 trees city wide, maintain storm water gardens, about 47 currently. Very busy, over past several years have had ambition of increasing tree canopy, all managed trees are on inventory software system, public does have access to information, not all but much. Using information from that as well as urban tree canopy from UVM 3 years ago, have identified all viable planting sites throughout the city. Started targeting systematically where going to plant. Lowest canopy is in wards 2 and 3, downtown and old north end. Using information started in wards 2 AND 3 and identified and planted all, then moved to ward 8, by UVM, planted in open sites, some in 5 and 6 and moving to Wards 4 and 7. Last fall planted a large number of trees along North Avenue from Leddy to Starr Farm, more in the spring and most efforts in New North End. South east side of Plattsburg Avenue will be planting several. Policy is to try and replace any tree that had to be removed during a calendar year due to various reasons and to attrition. With that from 120 to over 400 plantings a year, will come to a point where can't keep that pace as will all be filled in. Stated have a very well-funded program. Conservation set a goal for the total land coverage to



be set for 50% canopy coverage. Said always looking for creative and fun ways to support, has long standing relationship with Branch out Burlington and maintain a tree nursery with them in South Burlington. Have also been able to get grant funds from National Arbor Day and \$10,000 this year and \$15,000 from VT Urban and , all monies help support canopy program and also generate funds through contract with BED trimming back trees from lines and generates \$125,000 a year.

Keech asked where the city is with Ash trees and the problem and Comai said 9.5% or 1100 trees, about 900 in trees and green belts and the others in cemeteries. Had chosen to take a proactive approach, can remove trees now, remove when infested or treat them every 2 to 3 years. Did not feel pesticide was a good option for Burlington, identified areas where could start planting new trees among existing, started by Appletree Park, 20% of ash were located there and adequate, planting diversity among, have completed most and today already planted replacement of about 68% of street side ash. Hope to get new tree started before having to take down so not so dramatic. When out taking care of currently will remove if they have issues as opposed to trying to save.

Keech stated likely be dip in coverage for city until all grow he asked and Comai said not sure that will be the case as so many medium sized trees currently, very dramatic the coverage from what had been very small trees a decade ago and since taking such good care of trees the growth is outweighing or at minimum maintaining.

Duke asked if Comai saw any issues coming in the future and Comai said potentially global warming, drought and potentially disease, many on the horizon. Diversification he felt is the key.

Morrigan asked if currently have only 4 arborists and was very impressed with that number and the amount doing. Asked if a homeowner is interested in the city planting a tree on their property how do they go about that and Comai said they should get in touch with him. He also said they prefer to plant on the side of the house but to have contact him directly.

Johnson echoed what Morrigan stated and thanked for all the hard work to keep the tree canopy safe.

Public Forum (Time Certain 6:00 PM)

Public forum opened at 6:02

Solveig Overby stated she was just viewing the meeting and was a DPW commissioner and wanted to observe and listen and would comment at a future meeting.

Public forum closed at 6:04pm

Commercial Use of Parks

Wight thanked O'Daniel for working through the process and explained how she is the one that does all the permits. Talked about what commercial uses might be missing and one was private weddings using an officiant. Have a number of, when over 20 you would need a permit under would not need. Park Partners are people doing programs in our parks but do not have exclusive use of parks, if wanting exclusive use can rent a shelter, field or court. The officiant park partners it would be called, would check in with CT office to see how they reach out to JP's and others that perform/officiant. Also added that a warning to those that promote venues also state a park permit may be needed.



Keech asked how photography and video is monitored in terms of use and Wight said people call O'Daniel and will reach out and ask, might be some missing, however unless for commercial use and not selling would not need to get permit.

Duke asked if could be a one-time version of the permit and Wight said spoke with O'Daniel and they said could potentially get a park permit, one-time fee. Wight would bring that back for consideration and Johnson stated that he agreed with the one-time charge and also reaching out to the Justice of the Peace when elected.

Lantieri suggested a misspelling on the word inclusive versus exclusive in the incorrect place, and Johnson suggested doing something for March election to JP's regarding.

Motion to approve the park Permit for one time or blanket for officiants with opportunity to just apply for permit Lantieri, second by Keech, motion carried.

Marina Approvals

Wight stated did not include commercial rates previously and went from 20 to 23 feet. Also stated under contract with the Spirit of Ethan Allen and those fees are set.

Wiseberg asked about what payments are at another marina and said he is paying much higher and asked about BPRW rates and Wight said rates lower as no significant improvements have been done and the only other way to be competitive is with rates significantly less than others. Wight stated that seasonal contracts have already been signed and will be hiring new Marina Manager and if interested in spending some time with them to discuss rates would be a great opportunity.

Keech looking at category enterprise and felt most of Burlingtonians can't afford a boat or boating and not just supporting the rich people coming for tourism.

Duke said Sailing Center has done a great job getting access to boating and would be interesting to look at boating on Lake Champlain and the dynamics.

Wight said the reason the Marina is in the enterprise district and when the slip takes space, it is an owner gets one slip and when looking at fees need to look at from two lenses and it takes money to maintain but don't want to price out the average Burlingtonian.

Lantieri asked why commercial rate of no change is highlighted, Wight said because forgot to do last year and it was not approved, but others were changed from past request.

Keech asked how the waiting list works and if Burlingtonians have more of a preference and was told that the list is very extensive and very heavy on the Burlington side of people on the list.

Motion to approve the fee increase as requested and look into further for other alternatives by Wiseberg, second by Johnson, motion carried.

Parking Changes, Chapter 22 and Appendix D

Wight stated that currently when someone appeals a ticket that BPD parking services does not have the authority to process and they are handling currently and was requested by attorney to give DPW the



authority to enforce parking lots. Wight could not say enough about the parking division, very responsive and have been helping with lots, servicing meters and once all through they can help enforce to make sure all are paying. Change is basically just the enforcement piece.

Lantieri said has been going on for a long time to get in one place and asked if this is the last piece of parking that is not in DPW control and Wight said may be private lots but believes last piece and when you get a seasonal sticker will likely ask for license plate number and vehicle that will be in system for pass. Wight hoping to see increase in revenue with the changes.

Motion to approve the recommendation as proposed by Wiseberg, second by Keech, motion carried.

Standing Item:

Report from Commission on Volunteer Hours

Report on PACC Dog Force

Wight said have a very active survey, the off leash group has survey looking at areas, went out on FPF, members of task force trying to notify NPA's and if anyone asks been some consternation regarding Roosevelt and just asked to remind to take the survey. The original language from over 20 years ago looked at where dogs are off leash and different times. Also working on calendar of educational campaign, picking up after in the winter, dogs in cars and other things of the like. Hope to wrap up with report in June. City Council task force, P&R is staff but not Task Force.

Keech said he had a hard time being in a group trying to release the dogs further. Wanted to know what the legal ramification of running loose and biting someone. Wight said dogs off leash all over and said people are doing now anyway and is there a way to direct to a better place. If a risk from City it is already happening. Keech said once the city says its ok is that on the owner or the City and Wight said that would be on the City that she was unable to answer.

Report on Parks Foundation

Duke said met two weeks ago, two items developing plans to raise money for; getting behind fundraising for FRAME and the foundation is showing support for embarking on 5 year campaign for playgrounds, about \$200,000 a year. Planning division did presentation on the highest need parks and all of the funding with eye toward accessibility and strong agreement and part that is forming separate committee, rep from Oakledge for all to guide.

Director's Items

Wight said hope all read report, had full year of detailed reports and when doing annual report very easy to report out. Highlights;

Event at Schmanska Park from Old East End Coalition, there party and nice diverse group of individuals that came out.

Had exciting Miller Registration and on Tuesday setting up emergency shelter for homeless, had crash of program for registrations. Spent Saturday Night at Miller Shelter and realized some of the brokenness of the system and was reading some left discharge papers and he had been beaten by a bat and realize he is out and not knowing where was and out not able to see and realized how fortunate was.

Encouraged all to get to FFL to see survivors display which is going to be up through the 18th, very interested and encouraged to go see.



Working with families to help get into some of the camps for those that are not as fortunate to get online right away.

Commissioner's Items

Lantieri had 1 extra hour with Champlain Street Park, commissioner item as winter progresses thinking about getting the work back going with the pocket park. Some activities to get going are clean-up day in beginning of April, some motion on playground and looks like May for public garden day. More info coming.

Keech said went to Winterlude event, great park, asked about ice rinks and said appears the two in south end are frames two in old north end are not but others are not but have goals. Wight explained that some are community driven.

Keech asked what is needed by citizens versus city for a rink to happen and Wight said need to see a list of volunteers and volunteers need to supply boards, plastic and goals, staff will help lay out and staff on hand lightly but maintenance is from volunteers. Battery, Starr Farm and Roosevelt is run by Staff.

Morrigan had 2 extra hours, said if you know her then you would know she is a civic nerd and wanted to put a brief write-up in FPF and other local venues regarding the meeting and wanted to make sure that it was appropriate with all other commissioners. All were in favor and offered to help. Said many concerns with City Hall Park and occurred to them the intersection of houselessness and substance use and wondered if any efforts with community support and feels opportunity with community building and solutions, feels offers 3 issues, finite space, easily accessible and people are using the park. Wanted put out that based on experience feels opportunity to consult with community partners.

Duke said the Park Rangers have been working in depth on this project and is exactly what they have been working on with partners and people in the park and all the other pieces along with coming into the spring season, not only at City Hall Park but all parks. Have done a lot of work that is being spoken to.

Wight said hoping to expand the program but really a COS and CLS process are really in charge of that at this point.

Johnson mentioned that his pronouns are he/him.

Duke had an additional 3 hours, went to Quebec City for winter carnival, request an ice skating track.

Adjournment

Motion to adjourn by Duke at 7:10 pm.