

Town Center Park Commission

Meeting Minutes

October 28, 2009

Time: 7pm

Location: Town Attorney's Conference Room, Government Center, 2750 Dixwell Ave.

Attendees: Matt Fitch, Anne Bell, Jaime Allesandrine, Berita Rowe-Lewis, and Jay Matthews

Staff: Julie E. Smith

The inaugural meeting of the Town Center Park Commission began with introductions around the table amongst the Commissioners. Matt Fitch announced that he will be acting as temporary chair of the commission.

The Commissioners introduced themselves and their qualifications as follows:

Ms. Allesandrine is a teacher and member of the Appalachian Trail Club.

Ms. Bell is a retired landscape designer and the former president of the Spring Glen Garden Club

Ms. Rowe-Lewis is a former Third District Representative to the Legislative Council and original member of the Town Center Park committee

Mr. Matthews is a member of the Hamden Fire Department and studied Urban Forestry

Mr. Fitch is currently the First District Representative to the Legislative Council and has been actively involved in the creation and continued development of Town Center Park

It was suggested that the regular meeting time of the commission be the 4th Wednesday of the month at 7pm in the Town Attorney's Conference Room. There were some concerns expressed for this date next month as it is the evening before Thanksgiving. Final decisions as to the official meeting date are TBA.

It was announced by Mr. Fitch that the Town is seeking the donation of a memorial tree to be planted in memory of Captain Benjamin Sklaver. There was discussion as to the type of tree that should be used. Ms. Bell and Mr. Matthews both suggested that it should be a native species. There was discussion as to the site of the planting, either within the perimeters of the Park or possibly near the Veteran's Memorial. If it were to be inside the Park, Mr. Matthews suggested the erection of a plaque to commemorate the tree.

It was decided that the Commissioners would need a copy of the Park plan as created by Ferrero Hixon Associates. This will be provided by Ms. Smith for the next meeting.

The next event to take place in TCP will be the Silver Bells Celebration on Saturday, December 5th.

There will be a number of activities, such as a carousel, hay rides, and the arrival of Santa on a fire truck.

Ms. Allesandrine questioned Mr. Fitch as to the overall “goal” of the Commission. A discussion followed and it was stated that the Commission will oversee the uses of the Park and will make suggestions to the Legislative Council as to the development of the Park.

Ms. Bell asked about the construction/renovation of the rectory barn and the role of P.L.A.C.E.'s multicultural center. It was stated that the Town will maintain the building once it is completed and PLACE, a non-profit organization will operate it as a children's museum/multicultural center. There is a possibility of a small Town of Hamden Welcome Center in the lobby of the building. Commissioners discussed the idea of inviting Debbie Chavoya, director of PLACE, to a future meeting of the Commission.

It was noted that the Hamden Housing Authority owns a “swath” of land that cuts through the Park, however there is an agreement between the Town and HA for use of the property.

Mr. Fitch will set the agenda for the next meeting.

Ms. Rowe-Lewis brought up the question of the property adjacent to the Middle School, 2625 Dixwell Ave., owned by Mr. Digiovannantonio. Ms. Smith will check into the status of the installation of a driveway which will hopefully speed the sale/revitalization of the property.

Town Center Park is approximately 80 acres.

Ms. Bell discussed the idea of creating a walking path lined by different native tree species throughout the park, possibly using crushed stone for ADA compatibility. The Commissioners all felt it important that there should be a small paved path to allow those who are handicapped to move throughout the park. Ms. Bell suggested that the path should be at least 44” wide. Ms. Allesandrine will speak with a friend who is handicapped to assess other possible amenities in the park.

There was also the suggestion of a bike lane added to the access road.

The meeting adjourned at 8:05 pm.