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# Parks & Recreation Commission

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## Policy, Rules, Guidelines & Vision for Stamford Parks

**Reviewed & Approved by Parks & Recreation Commission**

**July 1, 2019**

[With updates through July 17, 2019]

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Prepared by the Subcommittee of the Parks & Recreation Commission:

2016

David Winston and Lyda Ruijter

2017 - 2018

David Winston - Chairperson

Althea Brown - Commissioner

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## 1. Mission Statement

Provide public park facilities and public recreation programs for the effective, balanced utilization of such areas, facilities and equipment for active and passive recreation through the development of plans for the preservation and expansion of natural resources and passive recreation areas as well as the establishment of rules and regulations for the use and conduct within the parks and public recreation areas.

### 1.1 Goals

1. To provide affordable recreational and educational opportunities for all residents.
2. To encourage preservation of existing parkland and green space.
3. To consult and advise on the acquisition of additional green space.
4. To encourage conservation, sustainability and resiliency of our park resources.
5. To create an inventory of public parks, green spaces, and public access points.
6. To preserve the historical legacy of the Stamford public park system.
7. To support community interaction and city vibrancy by approving events where proper planning and regulations are documented and met so that varied groups of residents may participate in a safe and civil manner.
8. To aid in the development of plans to increase connectivity between parks, green spaces, public access areas and the surrounding neighborhoods.
9. To provide advocacy and balance on behalf of the public interest regarding the development, regulations and usage of public parks, recreation, and green space areas.



## 2. Document Purpose

The Mission Statement of the Parks and Recreation Commission now includes some features not previously significant in the decision making processes of the Parks & Recreation Commission. The Commissioners endeavor to create a “living document” of the policies, regulations and guidelines to be reviewed and amended as needed, avoiding the need for major reviews and rewrites while providing clarity and transparency to all stakeholders.

The Mission statement was modified as a result of continued urban development within the City of Stamford, our accelerated population growth and changing community perspectives on the role of public parks, recreation and green space.

This document seeks to describe only the most salient changes in viewpoints, guidelines and regulations that are inherent in the new Mission Statement. The Commissioners view this document to be a starting point from which the formulation and approval of new policies, regulations and procedures by the Parks and Recreation Commission can be baselined.

By examining the role of the Parks & Recreation Commission within our City government, the Commissioners wish to adopt policies to streamline the decision making process, increase citizen participation while providing transparency and accountability. Therefore after internal approval this document will be distributed, to all other boards, departments and commissions, which intersect with the Parks & Recreation Commission to promote understanding and further discussions.

This document is intended to record agreed upon guidelines for decision making by the Parks & Recreation Commission. These general guidelines and parameters are derived from a comprehensive, integrative view of parks, recreation and green spaces for the City, and shall be used to derive policies that safeguard and build the Stamford Parks & Recreation system for the continued enjoyment of our citizens.

This document is also intended to provide background and preparation for new Commissioners when they start their terms that they may fully and effectively participate in matters before the Parks & Recreation Commission. New Commissioners tend to come from a wide variety of backgrounds with diverse experiences and expertise. By formulating a shared framework of thinking based on decision making precedent, we endeavor to onboard them more quickly and increase the depth of discussion of the issues before us.

This document is intended to improve the communication of the role of the Parks & Recreation Commission with other agencies, boards, staff and elected officials in city government.

The policies in this document also form a set of instructions for the Internal Committee when deciding on items coming before them.

## 2.1. Policies Overview

### 2.1.1 Turning Policies into Action

Policies are only effective if they are implemented by the administration, boards and commissions, including the Parks & Recreation Commission itself, within City government.

This section briefly enumerates and highlights the components comprising the detailed policy chapters that follow. These Parks & Recreation Policies are significant for the decision making in the various sectors of city government as related to Stamford parks, recreation and green space areas and their support personnel.

Since the policy document is a continuous work-in-progress, this section will be updated as policy items are added, edited or deleted within in the document.

We appreciate that the implementation of policies is often a complex process. Applying the policies in real life circumstances, with ever changing context and structure may lead to re-formulating the policies themselves. This may necessitate new guidelines for implementation. After each municipal election, the interpretation of the policies in this document may be re-interpreted. Our goal is to create and support this feedback loop so the Parks and Recreation Commission policies and their implementation processes set forth within this document will continually evolve for the betterment of our community.

### 2.1.2 Dissemination of Information

The policies within this document can only be implemented if information from other segments of City government pertaining to the purview and policies of the Parks & Recreation Commission are continually and automatically shared with the Parks & Recreation Commission, and vice versa.

The policies in the following chapters touch on information and decisions developed by the following segments of City government: the Administration, Board of Representatives, Board of Finance, Land Use Bureau, Zoning Board, Planning Board, Police Department, Harbor Commission, GIS Department, Economic Development Office, Environmental Protection Board and Operations.

**Public Posting Policy:** Parks & Recreation Commission will post its policy document on the City of Stamford website.

**Annual Update Policy:** Parks & Recreation Commission will write a letter to all relevant officials, agencies and boards to alert them to the policy document on the website. In addition an annual letter will be sent to remind them of the policies, and to convey the updates made to the document.

**Notification of Issue Policy:** Parks & Recreation Commission requests that the Commissioners will be put on the email list for announcements of all meetings with any segment of City government that involves any issues involving a public park, recreation or green space area.

**Notification of Impact Policy:** Parks & Recreation Commission requests that all segments of government mentioned above will share any pertinent information, their calendar, decisions or deliberations that may be relevant to the Parks & Recreation system.

**Notification of Development Policy:** Parks & Recreation Commission will send a letter to the Land Use offices requesting to be included in all communications regarding establishment and maintenance of public access areas.

**Notification of Funding Policy:** Parks & Recreation Commission will send a letter to the Board of Finance requesting to be informed of and consulted about fund appropriation for capital projects in or affecting Stamford's parks.

**Park Police Relationship Policy:** Parks & Recreation Commission shall maintain an ongoing dialogue with the Park Police. The Park Police share information regarding incidents occurring in or in the area surrounding any of the public parks, recreation or green spaces. The Parks & Recreation Commission continues to advocate for an expanded Park Police force to deal with the Special Rules, Regulations and quality of life issues that are unique to a park environment.

### 2.1.3 Project Development and Planning

**Contracts & Leases Policy:** Parks & Recreation Commission will be copied on all information regarding leases, renewals, and contracts pertaining to the use of public parks or a function within a park.

**Notification & Communication Policy:** Parks & Recreation Commission requests to be included in all communications and made a partner in the discussions regarding all newly initiated projects in or affecting public parks.

- After the initial discussion of a tentative plan or project that affects a public park the Land Use Board or Legal Department will inform the Parks & Recreation Commission who will be included in the subject matter discussions thereafter.
- Parks & Recreation Commission requests to receive notice of public hearings to be held by the Planning Office, Planning Board and Zoning Board where issues pertaining to parks, recreation and green space areas are on the formal agenda.
- Parks & Recreation Commission requests to be copied on all public notice postings by the Planning Office, Planning Board and Zoning Board.
- Parks & Recreation Commission will be copied on all communication regarding RFPs affecting City parks, recreation and green space areas.

## 2.2 Interdepartmental Calendar

The policies of this document can only be successfully applied and implemented if the Parks & Recreation Commissioners have visibility into the dates other agencies and departments of City government have meetings, develop plans and budgets, and hold public hearings that pertain to the duties of the Parks & Recreation Commission.

**General Calendar Development:** Parks & Recreation Commission will work with the Mayor and the Information Technology group to develop and have access to a calendar that provides an overview of the dates other segments of government meet to publicly discuss City business so they have the opportunity to provide input on relevant agenda items.

**Parks & Recreation Calendar:** Parks & Recreation Commission will develop an annual calendar that contains recurring meetings, events and hearings that are relevant to the mission of the Commission. See Appendix 10.1

### 3. Terminology and Process

This section outlines the definitions and processes the Parks & Recreation Commission operates under by City Charter.

#### 3.1 Rules, Regulations, Ordinances and Code of Behavior

Please see Appendix 10.2 for Resolution No. 3431 Parks & Recreation Facility Regulations

#### 3.2 City Charter and the Parks & Recreation Commission

The City Charter outlines the role of the Parks & Recreation Commission as follows:

**“Sec. C6-120-2. Powers and Duties of the Parks & Recreation Commission.**

**The Parks & Recreation Commission shall have the following powers and duties:**

**(1) Subject to the approval of the Mayor and except as may be otherwise determined by the Board of Representatives by ordinance, to establish policies and procedures for providing public park facilities and public recreation programs for the effective, balance utilization of such areas, facilities and equipment for active and passive recreation;**

**(2) To develop such plans as it deems necessary and useful for the preservation and expansion of natural resources and passive recreation areas in the City;**

**(3) To make all rules and regulations for the use and conduct of all parks and all public recreation areas.”**

The policies and vision expressed in this document are within the boundaries conveyed by these paragraphs of the Charter and can be regarded as a continuation, exemplification and interpretation of the Charter.

#### **Parks & Recreation and the Operations Department**

The Charter also defines the relationship of the Parks & Recreation Commission with the Operations Department. It states the *Superintendent of Parks & Recreation* appointed by the Mayor, under the advice, instruction and direction of the Director of Operations, shall be responsible for the following functions:

Sec. **C5-30-5.** - Park and Recreation Functions.<sup>[41]</sup>

**Within the Office of Operations, there shall be a Superintendent of Parks & Recreation appointed by the Mayor according to the provisions of this Charter, who, under the advice, instruction and direction of the Director of Operations, shall be responsible for the following Parks & Recreation functions:**

1. The establishment, construction, maintenance and operation of all parks, public recreation areas, public beaches and any structures and monuments thereon;
2. Providing areas and facilities for passive recreation;
3. Supervising all public recreation programs for the City;
4. The control, direction and supervision of all public activities at parks and public recreation areas, and whenever the Board of Education consents thereto, school playgrounds, stadia, and school buildings and grounds;
5. Providing for the care and control of all trees and shrubs within the limits of any public road; <sup>[42]</sup>
6. Organizing operating divisions with supervisors and necessary assistants within the appropriation therefor to administer and enforce City policies, rules and regulations; <sup>[43]</sup>
7. Performing any other duties imposed by law, ordinance, or the Parks & Recreation Commission; <sup>[44]</sup>
8. The maintenance and operation of the E. Gaynor Brennan Sr. Municipal Golf Course and any other golf course under the jurisdiction of the Golf Commission. <sup>[45]</sup>
9. The maintenance and operation of the Terry Conners Rink.

(Referendum 11-8-1977; Referendum 11-3-1987; Referendum 11-7-1995; Referendum 11-2-2004; Referendum 11-6-2012)

Currently positions exist for a Superintendent of Recreation and a Parks & Facilities Manager as specified in the City Charter. The functions of Superintendent of Parks & Recreation under the Director of Operations as prescribed in the City Charter are presently being performed by the Superintendent of Recreation and the Parks and Facilities Manager. The Superintendent of Parks position is open. The Director of Operations is the acting Superintendent of Parks. This document is a first attempt to address any confusion in the organization chart over roles and responsibilities and governance discrepancies with the City Charter.

This situation is not something that the Parks & Recreation Commission should overlook. If the present situation is acceptable to the Mayor and the Board of Representatives as a permanent structure, the Charter should be changed. The Parks & Recreation Commission should be involved in discussions to resolve this matter at the appropriate time.

### **3.3 Role of Parks & Recreation within City Government**

#### **3.3.1 Rules and Procedures**

- The Parks & Recreation Commission is subject to the rules and procedures laid out by the City Charter, Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), Robert's Rules of Meetings and other applicable legal documents. These legal documents specify the number of positions on the Commission, how they are filled, when members are replaced, methods of record keeping, the length of the terms of the Commissioners, what constitutes a quorum and when and how public hearings are to be held.

- No documentation could be found that describes the internal organization of the Commission, how and when officers within the Parks & Recreation Commission are elected, or how and when changes to the positions of the officers can occur. It is a policy recommendation to create and codify Bylaws for the Parks & Recreation Commission.

### 3.3.2 Advisory Role

The City Charter describes the role of the Parks & Recreation Commission as being *advisory* in nature; as a result the decisions of the Commission may be overruled. More specifically any appeal of a Parks & Recreation Commission decision would be taken to the Parks & Recreation Committee of the Board of Representatives.

An Advisory Commission has two defining attributes that affect its impact on the decision-making within City government: its dedicated *expertise*, and its role in speaking on behalf of the *public*. Both of these features are described here.

#### 1. Expertise

Advisory Boards and Commissions play a crucial role in City government by providing *expertise* and background information on the issues concerning green space, parks, and recreation. No other entity in City government is solely concerned with these issues. Therefore, the decisions and deliberations in the Parks & Recreation Commission regarding these issues need to be taken very seriously and carry great weight when moved towards other governmental bodies.

#### 2. The Public Voice

Advisory Boards and Commissions also perform an important role in the *democratic* process of City government by "marshalling and channeling the resources of expertise and insight available in the community to complement the judgment of representatives and staff."<sup>1</sup> The Parks & Recreation Commission needs to ensure that this public component will be strengthened, which can be accomplished in several ways.

- The Parks & Recreation Commission needs to provide ample opportunities for the public to address the Commission. The public is allowed to attend all regular meetings of the Parks & Recreation Commission, just like all other governmental meetings are open to the public. In addition, the Parks & Recreation Commission will accommodate any resident who wants to address the Commission without prior arrangements by allowing them to speak on any agenda issue during each regular meeting.

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<sup>1</sup> See footnote 1.

- The public's role during each meeting will be subject to the following guidelines:
  - The member(s) of the public who wish to address the Parks & Recreation Commission will sign in with name and contact information.
  - Each member of the public may address the Parks & Recreation Commission for a total of 3 minutes at most. The Chair may consider a motion to allot extra time to the issue at hand.
  - There will be no discussion with the Commission at this time.
  - Continued discussion of the item introduced by the public may be moved to the agenda of the following meeting.
  
- The Parks & Recreation Commission can call for a special public hearing when an issue, proposal or project requires wide-spread public input. The basic protocol regarding all public hearings including the ones requested by the Parks & Recreation Commission are formally described in the FOIA requirements document.
  
- As the types and role of the media changes continually, the methodologies the City of Stamford uses to communicate with the public will be examined and adjusted regularly. The Parks & Recreation Commission supports and wishes to participate in any initiatives to increase its presence on digital media. A strengthened GIS capability as described in Section 8 of this document would also facilitate information dissemination.

### **3.4 Parks & Recreation Commission and Parks & Recreation *Committee***

The Parks & Recreation Committee is a Committee within the Board of Representatives. It is important that the relationship between the Commission and Committee be clearly defined and understood.

According to the Parks & Recreation Committee webpage: *'The Parks & Recreation Committee has primary responsibility for monitoring activities that fall under the Director of Parks & Recreation'*.

Since the position of Director of Parks & Recreation currently does not exist in the City Charter, it appears the Committee would be monitoring activities through the Director of Operations. This may need to be (by law) or should be clarified and codified (for better understanding).

The role of the Parks & Recreation Committee *overlaps* to a significant degree with the role of the Parks & Recreation Commission. Their webpage continues stating: "The Parks & Recreation Committee considers and makes recommendations to the full Board of Representatives on:

- Maintenance and improvement projects at all parks and beaches;
- Recommended Parks & Recreation Commission policies and fees;
- City policies regarding use of City and Board of Education playing fields;
- Fees at beaches, parks, golf course, ice rink, marinas and city recreation programs (subsidized and self-sustaining);
- Fiscal appropriations relating to parks and other recreational-related expenditures (as secondary committee).

The Parks & Recreation Committee also oversees and monitors:

- Activities of the Harbor Management Commission;
- Activities of the E. Gaynor Brennan Golf Course.

It is the hope of the Parks & Recreation Commission that submitting this policy document will aid the Parks & Recreation Committee when it makes its recommendations to the full Board of Representatives.

## 3.5 Stakeholders

### 3.5.1 Definitions

A simple definition of stakeholder is anyone with an interest in a particular project, event, or development within the Stamford Parks & Recreation system. What helps to define a set of stakeholders and what role they are to play differs depending on whether the issues are defined from the proposed project's leadership or from the general public's perspective.

- A person, group or organization that has an interest or concern in a park project. Stakeholders can be affected in a positive or negative way by the project.
- It is the responsibility of the Parks & Recreation Commission to balance the positive effects of the project with any negative effect to the park.
- The Parks & Recreation Commission seeks to hear from the most diversified and representative groups of stakeholders affected by the proposed projects.

## 3.6 Green Space

### 3.6.1 Definitions:

The terms *parks*, *open space* and *green space* are often used interchangeably. For this document, and for the policies stated herein, it's important to clarify the distinction between the terms.

- The term *Park* is the broadest, least specific term. A *Park* refers to a space that is open to the public that contains trees, brush, grass, and other natural vegetation, may include streams, ponds, beaches and coastlines, but may also contain non-natural and man-made elements such as impermeable and semi-permeable areas and built structures. Pavilions, permanent buildings, asphalt parking lots, roads and paths, and impermeable and semi-permeable surfaces may all exist within a park area (A listing of all Stamford Parks is listed in the Appendix). Note: Not all Parks have a Park zoning designation at this time. This oversight has been raised with the Director of Operations and corrective action is under review and development.
- *Open Space* refers to any piece of land open to the public, open to the air, and without buildings or built structures on it. An *Open Space* area may or may not include natural vegetation. *Open Spaces* may include vacant lots, public seating areas, urban plazas and playgrounds. Cemeteries, golf courses, wetlands, beaches, hiking and biking trails may all be part of the city's inventory of open space areas.



- *Green Space* refers to a narrower definition than *Open Space*. *Green Space* is the area covered by vegetation, trees, and shrubs, excluding any areas with impermeable or semi-impermeable surfaces, such as concrete steps, tombstones, ball fields, tennis courts and artificial turf fields. Green Spaces may be open to the public, but don't need to be. Conservation priorities may necessitate restricted access to sensitive *green space* areas.

An inventory of all three (3) types of areas helps City planners determine the ecosystem and services available for a healthy municipal community. For an ecosystem to thrive all sections of ecosystem matter; the small areas as well as the large ones. Viewing *Park, Open and Green Space* as one ecosystem requires us to view the pieces separately and at the same time as a comprehensive, integrative whole (See Section 7.3 on Conservation).

## 4. Partnerships with the Community

### 4.1 Introduction

The Parks & Recreation Commission will maintain various types of partnerships with community groups. Groups are broadly defined as:

- Volunteer Community Groups (VCGs).
- Not-for Profit Private Businesses (NPBs)
- Private/Public Partnerships (PPPs)
  - Special Tax Districts (STDs)
- Incidental usage cases of parks and facilities which may involve fundraising
- Vendors within the parks system

### 4.2 General Guidelines for All Groups

The Parks & Recreation Commission, in conjunction with the Master Plans for each of the parks, will determine various pre-set functions for each of the Parks. Examples of park functions are: a conservation area, a quiet reflective area, a family entertainment space, a sports-oriented field, a community events area, etc... The pre-set function designation for a park is one of the factors that are used to determine whether a proposed contribution of any kind by any community entity for a park area will be entertained by the Parks & Recreation Commission. For instance, no projects involving non-natural non-degradable materials will be accepted in conservation areas; playground equipment will not be accepted in quiet areas, etc. See Appendix 10.2 for the list of parks and their functions.

Commercial activities and signage in general are highly regulated and evaluated on a case-by-case basis. Cases will be reviewed for commercial contribution and commercial recognition balance. The Parks & Recreation Commission's policies are to strike that balance.

The Parks & Recreation Commission will also maintain a list of parks ranked by priority in terms of their needs for improvements and contributions. Decisions by the Parks & Recreation Commission to accept a project or gift by any private group take this priority list into account. See Appendix 10.12 for the priority list of Parks.

Parks & Recreation Commission is supportive of a City-wide endeavor to create a Geographic Information System (GIS) map. This map will provide integrated information for all of the green and park areas in the City. These areas will include all of the City parks, public or private, cemeteries, golf courses, educational sports fields, etc. The function and priority ranking of the City park will be accessible as separate layers. (See Chapter 8 for more GIS detail).

### **4.3 Volunteer Community Groups (VCGs)**

The Parks & Recreation Commission will ensure the public has plentiful access to parks and green space for health, enjoyment and recreation, while protecting the safety, cleanliness and well-being of the park system. The Parks & Recreation Commission endeavors to balance the use of parks by residents against the need for the parks to remain in a good state of repair, maintenance and growth.

Volunteer Community Groups (VCGs) contribute volunteers to the clean-up, maintenance and beautification of the parks. Their efforts provide legitimacy and advocacy to the wider community on behalf of the park system. The VCGs are run by volunteers, have no paid staff, and do limited fundraising. Their contributions consist mostly of physical labor and efforts and small in-kind donations.

- The Parks & Recreation Commission recognizes the crucial role that the VCGs play in maintaining, preserving and beautifying the parks, and shall do its utmost to support their efforts and initiatives.
- The Parks & Recreation Commission recognizes that the VCGs play an important role for community and neighborhood vitality and cohesion above and beyond their contribution to the parks per se.
- Any new VCG shall come before the Parks & Recreation Commission, or to a Subcommittee thereof, to share their views, objectives and vision. During this meeting, the Parks & Recreation Commission, or Subcommittee, shall explain to the VCG the ramifications of this current document for their organization.
- The Parks & Recreation Commission needs to adhere to a uniform set of guidelines and policies when interacting with the various VCGs that are active on behalf of the park system.
- The missions and goals of all VCGs need to be in harmony with the mission statement of the Parks & Recreation Commission.
- The allocation of time and resources by the Operations Department to a VCG needs to be in balance with the fair and equitable share of available resources for other municipal tasks and for needs in other parks of the City.

- The VCG needs to be conscious of the fact that some segments of the population may not express their views and wishes as readily as some other groups. For instance, while the elderly, or parent(s) with infants, may not have time and/or the ability to participate in volunteer groups or attend public hearings, parks are just as important for their well-being as for any other group. Therefore, the Parks & Recreation Commission needs to monitor that VCGs include, execute and record an ongoing community outreach program.
- The goals of the VCG need to be reflective of the interests and wishes of the community or neighborhood as a whole.
- VCGs are encouraged by the Parks & Recreation Commission to incorporate into a legal structure such as a 501(c)3. However, since it takes time for Friends of the Park Groups to develop and build loyalty and continuity, it is unrealistic to require such a legal structure initially. The Parks & Recreation Commission needs to balance the need for oversight with avoiding the frustration that can occur with requiring too much red tape. The enthusiasm of a new group needs to be nurtured, while the planning for a robust organization is encouraged.
- VCGs need to present an Action Plan to the Parks & Recreation Commission upon formation of the group, and on a bi-annual basis. This Action Plan projects goals, and strategies on how to reach these goals. The Action Plan will include the following components:
  - A VCG's Action Plan will describe the group's long-term goals and vision as they are aligned with the long-term vision of the Parks & Recreation Commission, as formulated in this document.
  - The Action Plan will outline how the efforts by the VCG will engage in ongoing community outreach, targeting all of the various resident groups that have an interest in the parks.
  - The Action Plan will address the need for a succession plan for its leadership in case circumstances change.
  - The Action Plan needs to contain the preparations that will be made in case the VCG needs to dissolve. The city parks department needs to be notified 30 days prior to dissolution.
- The Parks & Recreation Commission encourage the various VCGs in the City to coordinate and collaborate by sharing resources and knowledge. It reduces the learning curve for new VCGs, and it would encourage a unified, consistent and comprehensive approach to park projects.
- The long-term goal for the Parks & Recreation Commission is to establish a City-wide, over-arching umbrella group for volunteer activities for the parks tentatively called the *Stamford Parks Foundation (see Section 7.9)* to facilitate sharing and coordinating of VCGs. New or small VCGs not incorporated in a legal entity can be subsumed under the legal entity of the Stamford Parks Foundation *and benefit from its non-profit status.*
- If a VCG is not abiding by the guidelines and policies stated in this document, the Parks & Recreation Commission may revoke the VCG's privilege of working, beautifying and changing any aspect of the park.
- All Volunteers must sign a release waiver before participating in any project in the park system.

#### 4.4 Not for Profit Businesses (NPBs)

*Not for Profit Businesses* (NPBs) differ from the Volunteer Community Groups discussed above, in that they have paid staff, are governed by a formal legal entity, and their involvement is likely to be more substantial and long-lasting.

The NPBs are to be credited with bringing new vitality to major parts of the park system. The Parks & Recreation Commission appreciates NPBs for bringing in resources beyond that which the city could provide and for providing a focus and targeted dedication that city departments cannot offer.

The NPBs' role in the park system has changed in many ways over the last few decades, and the policies of the Parks & Recreation Commission need to keep abreast of their changing characteristics

Some of the new characteristics of the NPBs are:

- The amount of funds raised by NPBs has grown dramatically.
- The number of new NPBs participating in the public arena has more than doubled during the last few decades.
- NPBs have become more like regular for-profit businesses in their structure and organization, often prioritizing amounts of money raised, and evaluating their success in terms of efficiency and effectiveness.
- The ratio of the money going to the cause versus going to overhead is closely monitored by outside organizations
- NPBs are employing public relations and marketing techniques for their fundraising efforts as well as for promoting their projects and plans to our city, which often makes the structure and workings of the NPBs less transparent.
- The leadership of NPBs frequently consists of highly trained career professionals in full-time paid positions.
- The NPB primary function is the success of their goals and objectives. These are not necessarily in conflict with those of the Parks & Recreation Commission. However, it is the responsibility of the Parks & Recreation Commission to assure a healthy balance between the NPB goals and community expectations. While the NPBs operate as a not-for profit entity, the not-for-profit moniker frequently no longer applies literally: The financial benefits ('profits') for the NPBs are substantial in the form of wages, whereas the money doesn't necessarily all derive from private sources, but often derive from public funds in the form of tax benefits and public grants, i.e. money available via the tax payers.

The growth, size, professionalization and commercialization of the NPBs require that the Parks & Recreation Commission adjust its role to these changes. The Parks & Recreation Commission needs to develop new policies to take its role as guardian and overseer of the public interest more seriously. Values like equitable access to the public space and democratic decision-making, previously taken for granted, need to be advanced and protected by the Commission.

The following policies are formulated to strengthen the role of the Parks & Recreation Commission in light of these new developments regarding NPBs.

### General Policies:

- Any project proposed by NPBs needs to be in accordance with the mission statement and policies of the Parks & Recreation Commission.
- All applicable policies discussed under "Partnership with VCGs" in the previous section apply.
- It's up to the Parks & Recreation Commission to extend the *privilege* to a NPB to conduct business or hold a project in one or more of the public parks.
- Any project by a NPB will be monitored and evaluated. The evaluation will include neighborhood and community feedback and satisfaction, the time-line of the proposed projects, and projected future plans.
- NPBs that are in are 'in good philanthropic standing', as indicated by either a listing on *the Charity Navigator*, and/or an "adequate" or higher ranking on *Give.org/charity*, or another generally accepted way of evaluating charities, are preferred to enter into a business transaction with the Parks & Recreation Commission and the City of Stamford.
- The Parks & Recreation Commission will prefer partnerships with NPBs where the majority of the Board Members are residents of Stamford.
- The NPB has a succession plan in place in case the leadership changes.
- The privilege to conduct a project in a public park may be revoked if any of the policies stated in this document are violated, if the time-line of the project is not sufficiently held-up (barring extenuating circumstances), or if the neighborhood expresses wide-spread and continued objections and complaints to the project.

### Stakeholder Policies:

Please note the description of 'Stakeholder' in Section 3.4. Terminology and Process.

It is the task of the Parks & Recreation Commission to ensure that the public receives adequate notice of pending plans on capital expense projects in a park, and that they have ample opportunity to provide input and feedback.

- The Parks & Recreation Commission has the task to oversee that any project in the park, whether conducted by the City, a Volunteer Community Group, a NPB , or Private Public Partnership, will elicit input and feedback from a reasonable representation of the general public such as at an annual meeting or through social media.
- The Parks & Recreation Commission needs to ensure that the NPB will keep the stakeholders involved and informed during all phases of the project and whenever a major decision occurs.
- The stakeholders will be notified and invited to any Parks & Recreation Commission meeting when the agenda contains an item related to the NPBs capital project in the park.

- Any capital project by a NPB coming before the Parks & Recreation Commission will have disseminated the information regarding the use of a park beforehand by announcements in the newspaper, to neighborhood associations, and via not less than 20 postings on stakes in the neighborhoods surrounding the park, covering a 1.5 mile periphery of the park.
- All neighbors directly adjacent to the park will be notified by mail. All neighbors are invited to attend and speak at the Parks & Recreation Commission meetings.
- The Parks & Recreation Commission needs to work with the legal department to ensure that the private interests are fairly balanced against the public interest as contained in the language of leases, contracts, business plans and financial solvency.

#### **Lease Policies:**

- The Parks & Recreation Commission will review any lease, drawn up by the city legal department that refers to the use of any part of public park space by an NPB.
- The terms of the lease will be clearly defined, such that privileges of the use of the park(s) can be revoked on a short-term basis if the conditions are not met, or requirements are violated.
- The lease will include a clearly defined plot plan of the area to be used by the NPB.
- The lease will include a statement that privileges of the use of the park by the NPB can be revoked if the NPBs utilize a plot of land larger than as described, after having been given appropriate notice.
- The lease will define explicitly which functions the plot will serve.
- The lease will include a statement that the privileges of the use of the park by the NPB can be revoked if the plot is used for functions not specified, and without proper request by the NPB to change or add functions.
- No space within 200 ft. of the residence of any neighbor can be occupied by a NPB project, unless determined otherwise.
- No project run by any NPB shall use more than a 25% of the total park acreage, park acreage being defined here as the area which does not include any water area.
- The Parks & Recreation Commission will be copied in on leasing status in Parks

#### **Equitability Policies:**

- Projects proposed by NPBs dedicated to a park on the Priority List will get preferred approval (see appendix).
- The Parks & Recreation Commission will encourage a NPB to provide a contribution to the *Stamford Park Foundation* once established to help initiate, or to contribute to projects in neglected parks.

#### **Parks Director Policies:**

- The Parks & Recreation Commission will continue its advocacy on behalf of recruiting an official Parks & Recreation Director who will be best equipped to work on a continuous basis with the full-time leadership of the NPB.

- In lieu of a Director, the Parks & Recreation Commission may need to request professional advice or legal counsel to aid the Commission in fairly evaluating the ramifications and short-term and long-term impact of the NPB's projects.

#### **4.5 Private/Public Partnerships (PPPs)**

In the last few decades, the costs of creating and/or maintaining parks and open space have risen steadily while the public funds available have diminished. Stamford has followed the example of many other cities in creating new legal entities, in order to bring more funds to the public parks system.

While these new legal entities (TIFs<sup>2</sup> and BIDs<sup>3</sup>), have succeeded in increasing the flow of money from private sources towards the public spaces, the cities relinquish some of the control and management of these projects to private entities.

Although all PPPs are different, what they have in common is that the role of the Parks & Recreation Commission is changed. These new relationships need greater clarity on role and responsibilities of the relationship as it affects the park land and communities involved. The Parks & Recreation Commission policy is to ensure the legal department clearly delineates the role of the Parks & Recreation Commission in this new relationship and clearly defines the status of the underlying Parkland.

#### **General Policies:**

The Parks & Recreation Commission re-asserts that there needs to be a comprehensive, integrative vision and set of policies for all of the parks, green, open space and recreational facilities for the city. The Parks & Recreation Commission is the governmental body defined in the City Charter to perform that role.

- The Parks & Recreation Commission needs to be included in the decision-making processes regarding all public parks.
- The Parks & Recreation Commission advocates for re-formulating all private-public partnerships such that an adequate role for the Parks & Recreation Commission is included.

#### **Incidental Use of Parks for Fundraising**

One of the core functions of the parks encouraged by the Parks & Recreation Commission is to bring neighborhoods and communities together. Permitting fundraising events that bring out a cross-section of the community while raising funds on behalf of a group or organization within the City is entirely within this core function of the park system.

- The Parks & Recreation Commission supports the use of parks for fundraising events organized by volunteers, or by volunteer organizations drawing on a wide range of residents of the City, where the funds raised benefit a local cause.

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<sup>2</sup> TIF - Tax Increment Financing.

<sup>3</sup> BID - Business Improvement District, mostly used in NYC, and soon to be applied in Stamford in Harbor Point is not discussed in this document.

- The Parks & Recreation Commission shall not permit any fundraising events held by for-profit businesses, unless the event is sponsored by a Volunteer Community Group (VCG) or a Not-for-Profit Business (NPB) or in the case of downtown parks the DSSD.

Not-for Profit Businesses vary in their scope, and their organizational and financial structure. The changed role of NPBs in general is described in the section above. In this section, the focus is on short-term, *incidental use* of parks by NPBs, with specific focus on fundraising. The Parks & Recreation Commission policies described above regarding NPBs are relevant for the approval process for *incidental use* of the parks as well. These policies are briefly summarized below:

- The Parks & Recreation Commission supports the use of parks for fundraising events if the NPB is primarily a Stamford based entity, i.e.
  - its headquarters are located in Stamford
  - the majority of the Board members are local residents
  - the majority of funds raised in this relationship will contribute at least 51% of the revenues raised to the event sponsors and
  - the sponsors mission is to benefit largely local causes and
- The Parks & Recreation Commission support the use of parks for fundraising events if the NPB is in 'good philanthropic standing' as described in the NPB policy section above.

The not-for-profits organizations that organize fundraising events also come in all types and sizes. Some are not-for-profits specifically set up to benefit a clearly defined local cause. Other not-for-profits are established on behalf of one particular public park. These types of not-for-profits only recruit volunteers to organize their events. In these cases, the Parks & Recreation Commission whole-heartedly support and encourage the events.

Parks & Recreation Commission needs to determine the criteria to evaluate the cost and benefits of these types of fundraising events for the public and for the parks.

### **PPP Potential Benefits**

An obvious benefit of the growing scale of the events is that the resulting size of the funds raised for worthwhile causes has risen dramatically.

An additional benefit of the increased size of these fundraising events could be the growing community participation; these events draw ever larger groups of residents to either participate in the activity or to volunteer in the organization of the event. The Parks & Recreation Commission in general will support active community involvement in parks since it aids urban vitality.

### **PPP Potential Drawbacks**

There are also drawbacks to these large fundraising events for the public good. While some part of the community may participate as organizers, volunteers or participants, and some may benefit as contractors, other parts of the community may lose out. Whole or large parts of the public space may need to be closed off for long periods of time during set-up and during the event as well as for the clean-up afterwards, with the result that some groups of residents are inconvenienced.



The task of the Park and Recreation Commission is to be an advocate for equitable use of the parks and encourages fundraising events that allow a wide cross-section of the population to participate in and strike a balance between the benefits and drawbacks.

### **Corporate Sponsorship**

The large professionalized not-for profit organizations commonly solicit corporate sponsorship to maximize their fundraising capacity.

Corporations provide important contributions to the social and public well-being of the city including the parks. Corporate involvement with the community through funds and other programs is an essential component of a thriving city.

Contributions to the community are worthwhile for the community as well as for the corporation itself. Corporations evaluate whether the cost of its contribution to the community is commensurate to the benefit to the company itself, which is its bottom-line.

It's the task of the Parks & Recreation Commission to evaluate whether the benefits to the local cause outweigh or are on a par with the costs of the event to the public good.

Short- term, incidental events lend themselves particularly well to such corporate sponsorship, since the corporation can adjust its contribution annually based on marketing potential, without any long-term commitment to the cause or to the community.

- The Parks & Recreation Commission will request a basic business plan in which the financial contributions and the financial expenditures involving the corporations are transparent.
- The Parks & Recreation Commission shall request from sponsoring corporations of incidental events in the parks that a contribution be made to a cause related to the parks commensurate to the extent of their sponsorship to the not-for profit organization.
- The Parks & Recreation Commission may require a reimbursement fee for city services to be paid by the sponsoring corporation for use of the parks for incidental events.

### **Downtown Special Services District - DSSD**

The DSSD formed in 1993 as a special Tax District. DSSD is also a not for profit organization that is responsible for the management of the downtown district. The revenue stream from the district along with City contributions and events stimulate the vitality of our downtown area.

The DSSD also encompasses five (5) of our City parks: Veterans Memorial Park, Columbus Park, Latham Park, Heritage Park and Kiwanis Park. Events include but are not limited to Art in Public Places, Alive@Five, Wednesday Nite Live, Bark in the Park, Arts and Crafts, Farmers Market, Brews and Wine Fest and several place making events such as free exercise classes, chess lessons and movies in various parks in the downtown district.

The DSSD is given a high degree of latitude and autonomy to produce and manage these events in the downtown area.

The DSSD currently schedule an active calendar for Columbus Park and will be the schedulers of record for the newly renovated Veterans Memorial Park. Veterans organizations will be the schedulers of record for the selection and installation of Veterans Memorials in Veterans Park. The common area of Veterans Park will remain as unobstructed as possible to facilitate the efforts of event programmers. Specific event programming for Memorial Day and Veterans Day will be overseen by the DSSD in close consultation with City veteran's organizations.

### **Mill River Collaborative – MRC**

The Parks & Recreation Commission will maintain a very broad oversight of the Mill River Park and entrusts the day to day management of the park to the Mill River Collaborative. The Mill River Collaborative is a Special Tax District (STD/TIF) established for the purpose of creating and sustaining the Mill River Park and its Greenway.

The Collaborative consists of civic, governmental and business interests. The Park has become the showpiece for the transformation of downtown Stamford, and has greatly improved vistas, scenery, ambiance and activities around the urban center. The project is ongoing with further developmental activities planned.

A special Tax Incentive Financing (TIF) District was formed to spell out the legal and financial obligations of the city and the MRC. The MRC with a duly elected board of directors is responsible for the development and scheduling of events, soliciting memberships and commercial activities within the park. Additionally, Mill River Park operates under its own set of guidelines as opposed to city-wide Park Regulations. The MRC board is not required to consult with the Parks & Recreation Commission on these matters.

It is the policy of the Parks & Recreation Commission to maintain a solid and positive working relationship with the MRC in general and its board of directors. We seek to participate in and facilitate any future development of this parkland for the citizens of Stamford.

## **4.6 Vendors in Parks**

### **General Policies:**

- Vendors in parks are subject to the ordinances contained in sections 154 and 179 of the City Charter.
- A committee consisting of representatives of the Office of Cashiering and Permitting, the Police Department and the Health Department regularly reviews the permitting process for vendors.
- The Parks & Recreation Commission will present the considerations and guidelines contained in this section to the Committee to be included in their review process.

The policies described below need to inform the formulation of the RFPs for food vendors and for the selection process of the bids.

## **Food Vendor Definitions**

City Ordinance 179-31 (amended as of 3/2/17) defines a "Mobile Food Vendor": as "any person, whether principal or agent, who operates a licensed, motorized vehicle, truck or trailer, which is temporarily parked on premises, to vend, sell, offer for sale, solicit orders, display or otherwise serve food for human consumption to the public as authorized or regulated in this Part."

This ordinance applies to vendors in the city in general as well as to vendors in parks.

This ordinance applies also to holders of concession stands at recreational fields. Concession stands must be managed by volunteers associated with the recreational sports at play, with all funds raised committed to the affiliated league. [5/17/2017]<sup>4</sup>

Section 179-39 describes the restrictions on vending in city parks, which states first that "mobile vending in a city park shall conform to all regulations adopted by the Parks & Recreation Commission.

The Board of Representatives (BOR) has designated a Food Truck Committee (FTC) to oversee the permitting process for food trucks (Section 179-33).

In order for the policies of the Parks & Recreation Commission to be incorporated in the permitting process, this chapter will be sent annually or when amended, to the members of the FTC.

For the purposes of the Parks & Recreation Commission, vendors provide 'hospitality services', which includes not only the selling of food and beverages, but also providing attractive ambiance and surroundings within their vending area.

## **General Policies:**

- The fees for park vendors will be the same as the fees for City vendors.
- The Parks & Recreation Commission will give preference to vendors that are locally based.
- The selection of vendors needs to reflect the preferences across the range of city population.
- The Parks & Recreation Commission will be copied in on the contractual agreements between the city and the vendors in parks.
- The guidelines from the Parks & Recreation Commission apply to the vendor as well as to any subcontracting vendors.
- The Parks & Recreation Commission will be notified when deliberations regarding termination of a vendor will occur.

## **Preservation and Conservation Policies:**

In accordance with one of the main pillars of the mission of the Parks & Recreation Commission, an important criterion for selecting vendors is their commitment to environmentally conscious business practices.

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<sup>4</sup> Indicates an amendment approved at a later date, which is indicated at the end of the amendment.

- Vendors operating in the park system also need to be evaluated on environmentally sound practices in food preparation, handling, and cleaning.

One important feature of the conservation policy is to reduce the impermeable surfaces in the parks, as well as the city as a whole. Using existing structures to the fullest extent, rather than building new permanent facilities, is in conformance with the conservation goals.

- The Parks & Recreation Commission prioritizes the exploitation, adaptation and updating of existing structures for vending purposes.

### **Equitability Policies:**

Our city consists of various neighborhoods that are diverse in the ethnic and socio-economic make-up of their residents. Attracting various resident groups to the parks to encourage interaction and mingling is a key component of building urban vitality.

- Vendors need to offer food and drinks options that fit a range of budgets at all locations.
- Vendors are encouraged to include healthy and ethnically diverse menu options.

### **Food Trucks Policies:**

Food trucks have become the favored choice by the Parks & Recreation Commission for providing food and drink vending services in our public parks over the past ten years. Food trucks comply with the preservation requirement not to add impervious surface areas. The Parks & Recreation Commission will encourage healthy, ethnically diverse, hospitality services for a range of budgets, while creating an ambiance that appeals to various groups of park users.

There are however drawbacks to an overreliance on food trucks.

Environmental standards need to be particularly stringent for food trucks in the parks because the trucks are not as environmentally superior as often assumed<sup>5</sup>. They rely on generators (unless they are solar-powered), use only disposable utensils and napkins and they consume gas to travel to and from the location.

- The Parks & Recreation Commission will support the development of city-wide environmental standards for food trucks.
- The Parks & Recreation Commission will urge the vendor selection process to include improved environmental standards.
- The Health Department determines the oversight protocol to ensure compliance with sanitary and hygiene standards.
- Ordering and consuming food at the truck site may be cumbersome for the elderly, the disabled, and for parents with young children. A lack of bathrooms<sup>6</sup> near the food trucks limits the relaxed consumption at food trucks by some groups of users. It has been suggested that porta-johns in public parks may constitute a gender bias<sup>7</sup>.

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.citylab.com/design/2013/02/are-food-trucks-worse-environment-storefronts/4538/>

<sup>6</sup> Port-a-johns may be available, but they are not attractive to many people. There may be a gender bias. <https://www.osha.gov/doc/accsh/haswicformal.html#sanitaryfacilities>.

<sup>7</sup> [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/mike-miley/so-much-for-the-food-truc\\_b\\_653387.html?ir=Food](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/mike-miley/so-much-for-the-food-truc_b_653387.html?ir=Food)

- Food trucks do not offer seating options for people to gather, mingle, interact, sit and read, or just spend time. Therefore, only a limited social function of parks is achieved.
- Permanent structures will continue to be included as options for food services in order to promote inclusivity for all visitors.

In sum, the Parks & Recreation Commission will need to take a fresh look at the full range of available vending options.

- The Parks & Recreation Commission will support diversity and variety of vending options for the public parks.
- The Parks & Recreation Commission will allow for a balance between mobile food services and permanent structures with adequate seating.
- The actual location of a food vendor in a particular park must be approved by the parks facilities manager.

#### **Incidental Use Policies:**

Parks can provide opportunities for economic development for beginning entrepreneurs who want to pursue food services via food trucks.

- The Parks & Recreation Commission will promote special permitting for food trucks to provide food services at events that have been approved for the incidental use of a park.

#### **Social Function of Parks**

One of the core functions of parks is to provide places for the community to gather, spend time alone among others, or to socialize and build connections. This social function of the parks system is an important ingredient for urban vitality. The Parks & Recreation Commission needs to monitor and support the social function of parks while ensuring that the other functions such as sports, exercise, and solitude can co-exist harmoniously.

- The Parks & Recreation Commission will support the social function of parks.

### **4.7 Gifts and Naming**

The everlasting nature of natural resources would appear to be fitting places for honoring and memorializing persons, events, or institutions (hereafter referred to as 'entities') that have made a lasting impression and contribution.

#### **General Policies:**

- The Parks & Recreation Commission will favorably consider any donation of open land or green space to the city as a tribute to the legacy of an important person or event. This land may be named after the entity if requested.
- The Parks & Recreation Commission will favorably consider any donation towards upkeep, replacement or acquisition of traditional amenities in the park system as a tribute or to honor an important entity. An inscription according to the regular guidelines and regulations for signage and inscriptions on the donated or improved amenity in tribute to the entity will be considered.

### **Park Bench Donation Policies:**

- The Parks & Recreation Commission will allow citizens or groups of citizens to purchase park benches in the name of an entity to be memorialized or honored. A standard name tag with standard inscription according to the guideline and regulations for signage and inscriptions may be attached to the bench. The Parks & Recreation Commission sets the guidelines and prioritizes which park(s) are in need of a bench, and which locations within those parks would be appropriate.

### **City Wall or Walkway of Honor Policy**

- The Parks & Recreation Commission favor the establishment of a wall or walkway of honor at a location within the urban area of the city to consolidate and centralize the honoring and legacy of significant entities. Such an urban place for memorializing and honoring the legacies would alleviate the pressure to memorialize in public park space.

### **Public Art Donation Policies:**

- The Parks & Recreation Commission will consider a donation of public art for a public park. Said donation would be juried and approved by a local Arts Council in accordance with the zoning guidelines for display of permanent public art in the City.
- Temporary displays of art must be approved by the Parks & Recreation Commission. A request for memorializing by means of a permanent display of a piece of art is subject to the Gifts and Naming policies.
- Donations of public art will become the property of the City.
- If applicants are looking for alternate ways to memorialize an entity by using a park, the Parks & Recreation Commission will evaluate each such request separately on its own merits.

### **Memorializing in Parks Policies**

Green space and open space represent an exceedingly precious commodity and it is the task of the Parks & Recreation Commission to monitor whether the legacy of an entity to be memorialized is of sufficient stature to warrant impinging on the scarce resource.

Conservation goals of the Parks & Recreation Commission run counter to any intrusion or removal of permeable green or open space in general. Therefore, any request to use the parks or green space for memorializing will have to meet some substantial criteria.

These criteria include the following:

- The significance of the entity to be honored will outlast a few generations.
- The application for the commemoration of a deceased person or a significant event will only be considered by the Parks & Recreation Commission after at least five (5) years have lapsed since the honoree death or the occurrence of the event.
- If the entity to be honored is a person, the person to be commemorated will have contributed specifically to the parks, youth sports and/or recreational activities in the city.
- The significance of the entity to be honored applies to the city as a whole.

- The manner in which the memorializing occurs will provide a benefit to the park where it is located by providing historical context and appreciation and/or by choosing an object for the tribute that benefits green space and its preferred uses (e.g. trees, bridges, pathways etc.).

If the significance of the honored entity meets these criteria and qualifies for a plaque or sign in a park, the size of a plaque will have the dimensions of 10x12 inches and will be made of an approved material such as metal or stone. Any commemorative plaque will be flush with the ground; no boulders or tombstones are permitted.

#### **4.8 Stamford Park Foundation Policies:**

- The Parks & Recreation Commission is a proponent of a city-wide *Stamford Parks Foundation*, to encourage cooperation and collaboration between all community groups involved in projects in parks, including VCGs, NPBs, and PPPs.
- This *Parks Foundation* would develop into its own NPB to be a functional ally and counterpart of specific project-oriented NPBs.
- The *Parks Foundation* would share resources, and would facilitate the necessary stakeholder input discussed above
- The *Park Foundation* would facilitate a City-wide comprehensive integrative approach to park planning, design, connectivity and management.

## 5. Sports and Recreation

### 5.1 Introduction

As outlined in Chapter 3 of this document per the City Charter ... subject to the Mayor, the Parks & Recreation Commission shall establish policies and procedures for Park facilities and public recreation programs for effective utilization of such areas, facilities and equipment for active and passive recreation.

The policies of the Parks & Recreation Commission need to strike a balance between active and passive recreational opportunities in light of demographic, geographical, conservational and ecological factors. The needs and requests of all segments of the populations need to be equally addressed. The distribution and spread of the various recreational opportunities shall be reviewed within each park separately as well as across the whole of the Stamford Parks System.

Stamford is a very diverse community and the various sports our citizens enjoy are reflective of that diversity. Baseball, Tennis, Basketball, Soccer, Cricket and Ice Hockey are some of the most popular sports incorporated in our Parks system. These recreational interests are overseen by a Superintendent of Recreation. In some cases the Recreation Department organizes the sports leagues and in many cases sanctions partnerships with not-for-profit program administrators.

Stamford has a long history of partnerships with various user groups. Recreational services can be provided by outside partners providing administrative costs are covered by the partners.

### 5.2 Active and Passive Recreation

Active recreation is generally any recreational activity that requires significant infrastructure for the purposes of active sports or organized events. It is about engaging in outdoor games in a team or individual manner and or outdoor adventure sports. An active park refers to structured recreational activities which require specialized parkland development and management which may restrict the general use of the parkland or facility while such activities are taking place.

Active recreation, such as team sports, typically involves intensive management, maintenance, and therefore higher costs due to the need to provide substantial space to congregate.

Passive recreation areas are generally an undeveloped space or environmentally sensitive area that requires minimal development. Emphasis is placed on preservation of wildlife and the environment. Passive park use refers to less structured recreational activities which require little or no specialized parkland development and management, and therefore can be provided at a lower cost to communities. It involves casual activities and pursuit of hobbies with minimal to moderate impact on the natural habitat. Passive recreation can take place indoors as well as outdoors. Non-consumptive uses such as hiking, walking or biking outdoors or indoor activities such as senior citizen activities, educational and training classes and after school youth services are activity areas considered passive but on par with active in delivering valuable services to the community.



## Recreation Services

The Superintendent of Recreation oversees five (5) Recreational Services Programs, the Terry Conner's Ice Rink and two (2) programs at the E. Gaynor Brennan Golf facility<sup>8</sup>.

### Recreational Service Programs:

1. Administrative Programs - provides general administrative support to the sanctioned Recreational Service. Services include clerical services and supplies, accounting and fiscal controls and reconciliation, allocation and direction of staff, short and long range planning and the coordination of services with other units of government.
2. Aquatics Programs – provides certified lifeguards to Stamford's four (4) beaches and two (2) pools and coordinates the use of public facilities for swimming instructional classes and recreational swimming. The Aquatics program staff hires, trains and supervises a year-round lifeguard staff, youth and adult swim lessons and a public "open swim" programs
3. Subsidized Programs – These programs are defined as events and services that do not bring back significant revenue back to the general fund yet provide positive quality of life local experiences for children, families and senior citizens to enjoy. Examples include the Tram Drivers at Cove Island (summer), the Halloween event (autumn), Hay Ride with Santa (winter), Easter event (spring) as well as other parades and events where costumed characters entertain.
4. Fee Supported Programs – These programs offer safe and quality summer day camps and playgrounds, vacation camps, pre-school, after school and enrichment programs for Stamford youth. This program provides for the organization, supervision and coordination of partially fee- supported youth programs. Revenue collected for these programs does not cover the entire direct and indirect costs of operation. These types of programs include all summer playground and day camps, winter and spring vacation camps, open gyms, ski trips, enrichment (craft, computer, fitness, dance etc...) classes as well as pre-school, special needs classes.
5. Self-Sustaining Programs – revenue from these types of programs completely cover all the direct costs and expenses of operating them. This program provides the organization and supervision of adult sports leagues, programs and trips. Examples of these types of programs are adult sports leagues (flag football, kickball, dodgeball, basketball, indoor soccer, beach and indoor volleyball, and softball. Each adult sport in this program which provides local businesses, corporations and residents with organized recreation is covered 100% by user fees.

### Terry Conner's Ice Rink Programs:

Provide residents of Stamford and the surrounding area a quality year round skating facility for recreational, figure and hockey skaters alike. The rink mission is to deliver a quality skating experience in a clean and safe environment at reasonable prices. The facility offers a variety of classes, leagues and camps as well as hosting local high school hockey games, the FCIAC playoffs and other large scale skating events.

### E. Gaynor Brennan Golf Programs:

1. Administrative Program – establishes the public rate structure for all revenue generation. The goal is to have an excellent well maintained physical layout while keeping the rate structure reasonable for Stamford residents and still reflect a small budget surplus.

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<sup>8</sup> The E. Gaynor Brennan Golf Course and Programs are administered by the Golf Commission.

2. Maintenance Program – the mission here is to develop and maintain facilities that are designed to fulfill the needs of the golfing public with the best turf-grass playing and operational conditions at minimal cost.

### 5.2.1 Active Recreation

The Parks & Recreation Committee considers the following examples of Active Recreation activities:

- Ball fields
- Ice Hockey rinks
- Basketball courts
- Tennis courts
- Volleyball courts
- Bocce courts
- Skateboard parks
- Indoor recreation centers
- Handball courts
- Public pools
- Boat launch facilities
- Marinas, and support systems for boating
- Social Events (within or not within Parks system)

Organized sports covers service a wide variety of Stamford residents. Users include Baseball, Hockey Soccer, Volleyball and Tennis to name a few. Oftentimes resident leagues are formed and overseen by Recreation services. Leagues for all ages exist in many sports from beginner to adult. Youth leagues tend to be organized under the umbrella of a National organization such as Little League or Babe Ruth. Adult leagues tend to be partnerships with the Recreation Services. A Field Policy Manual has been created to clarify the rules by which these organizations must abide to maintain a sanctioned status within their respective programs. This Field Policy Manual as approved by the Parks & Recreation Commission is included in the Appendix 10.10. Issues of conflict arising on Parks fields by sanctioned user groups may come before the Parks & Recreation for resolution.

Parks fields are highly sought after particularly in prime time periods. Scheduling is handled by the Recreation Department and permits are given for use of many parks fields. Permits use is enforced by Park regulations.

Most active uses of the Parks require permitting by Recreation Services. The Parks & Recreation is very aware of the demand by other user groups to gain access to Parks fields however the only way this can be accommodated is if the Recreation services and any permitted user can adjust an existing permit to accommodate a change in the field schedule. The Parks & Recreation Commission will continue to advocate for additional park land. The opportunities to create additional sports fields to satisfy demand will only occur if we succeed at acquiring more green space.

Other Recreational activities provided include boating. Two of Stamford's Parks provide boat ramps and marinas to service this activity. Stamford is fortunate to border Long Island Sound and a few of our parks are either located on Long Island Sound or the Mill River which feeds into the Sound. As a waterfront community our recreational opportunities are increased and the Parks & Recreation Commission must be aware of the additional responsibilities involved. Marinas require supervision; uses are restricted to resident owners of properly registered boats. Marinas often provide electricity and water which requires maintenance. Beaches require lifeguards during peak seasons. Public access to the waterfront is always highly desired in any new planning opportunity. Educational opportunities have been created by a partnership with SoundWaters.

### **5.2.2 Passive Recreation**

The Parks & Recreation Commission considers the following examples of Passive Recreation activities:

- Hiking & Walking Trails
- Nature Preserves & Sanctuaries
- Pavilion Permitting
- Picnic areas
- Swimming Pools & Beaches
- Open space for kite flying
- Outdoor recreation pavilions
- Fishing Piers, e.g. Cummings Park
- Fishing Areas, e.g. Mianus Park
- Social Events (within or not within Park system)

Parks & Recreation Commission continues to promote passive recreation. Many new developments in Stamford do not provide significant green space. As a result more Stamford residents seek opportunities in our Park system to reconnect to our green environment. These opportunities are hopefully within a ten minute walk from one's home and can be of any size. New park and green space acquisitions will be necessary as Stamford continues to grow. Since passive recreation requires no organized management other than minor maintenance it will probably play a larger role in our future as maintenance costs for parks in general increases. As operating budgets continue to shrink the Parks & Recreation Commission should always be aware of the balance and the potential to sacrifice passive maintenance in favor of active.

### **5.2.3 Compliance**

The Parks & Recreation Commission will continue to review and support efforts brought to its attention addressing ADA compliance in either passive or active recreation areas within the City.

The Parks & Recreation Commission will continue to review and support efforts brought to its attention to ensure a proper number of park benches are available with our parks. The Parks & Recreation Commission supports an audit within our Parks to document the number, placement and condition of park benches and picnic tables within each of our City parks. In addition, the Parks & Recreation Commission seeks to ensure that lesser used parks are also recipients of donor largesse. As bench

placement is usually a part of a larger master design plan, the Commission should have access to any of those plans and participate in the decisions about future bench location priorities. The Parks & Recreation Commission seeks to support developing concrete data so that our citizens have places to rest and recharge while enjoying Stamford park services with special emphasis on the needs of our elderly, special needs and families with young children. The Parks & Recreation Commission supports and encourages the donation of memorial park benches and picnic tables that are ADA compliant and enhance the aesthetic quality of our parks. Also see Section 4.9 for Donation Policies.

### **5.3 Park Assets Brochure**

See addendum Section X.X

## 6. City Government

### 6.1 Planning and Zoning

#### Introduction

As a non-elected representative body, the Parks & Recreation Commission acts as a bridge between the communities of Stamford citizens and their elected officials on issues relevant to parks, recreational activities within the parks, open and green space allocations and The Operations Department. Often with a vibrant and growing community like Stamford the Parks & Recreation Commission finds itself also interacting with the Planning and Zoning Boards and Commissions when neighborhood development and renewal projects impact the metrics and ratios the City tries to maintain in relation to park land, recreation programs, open space and green space. The policy of the Parks & Recreation Commission is to maintain good relationships and communications with the Planning and Zoning Operations of the City to address, communicate and represent community viewpoints when negotiating with development groups.

#### Planning and Natural Environment

The Parks & Recreation Commission policy is to protect, preserve and improve the natural environment within each of the neighborhood communities in the City of Stamford. When necessary the Parks & Recreation Commission will facilitate public hearings and town hall type meetings to assess the impact proposed projects will have when they will impact or re-shape the natural environment in a significant manner.

#### Economics and Nature

The policy of the Parks & Recreation Commission is to make sure the natural environment and its effects on the health and well-being of the citizens in its surrounding area is represented in economic discussions and negotiations between land and real estate developers and the City of Stamford's representatives.

#### National Guidelines

The Parks & Recreation Commission policy is to review, debate and conform as best as is possible to National Guidelines and Federal Mandates for Parks & Recreation programs. Items for review and debate could include metrics as average distance in terms of transportation time by various segments of the citizenry to parks and park services. For example, while issues like distance to the beaches may not be modifiable per se, transportation time can perhaps be organized if the demand is there and proven.

#### Timeline

It is the Parks & Recreation Commission's policy to continue working with Planning and Zoning to ensure all Parks are designated as Parks vs. the current situation that has parkland listed under neighborhood zoning codes. The Parks & Recreation Commission also support a broadening view of what a Park designation means into sub-categories. For example, some Parks could be zoned to have dining or operational and maintenance facilities within their borders. The Parks & Recreation Commission supports and is currently involved in these discussions with Planning and Zoning, Land Use and The Operations Department.

## Land Swaps

The Parks & Recreation Commission is committed to enforcing a policy that yields no more parkland to urban development without offsetting Land Swaps. Additionally, whenever possible the Land Swap shall take place in the same general area as the easement for development so that the effected community does not see any additional loss or hardship in finding Parks & Recreation services.

## Codes and Regulations

[Click here](#) – Link to City Charter

## GIS

The Parks & Recreation Commission supports the City of Stamford investing in and the development of Geographic Information System Mapping Technology (GIS). As part of the system, in addition to mapping hard infrastructure like sewer, water and gas lines, we would advocate for an overlay designating parks, green space and open space. Additionally, we would like to see a granular layer that could search and highlight the facilities and services as a drill down into the data. See Section 8 and Appendix 10.15.

## 6.2 Enforcement

### Introduction

The Parks & Recreation Commission support a substantial increase in Parks Police manpower. We believe the City has a unique opportunity to increase fully trained and vetted permanent, part-time personnel from the ranks of retiring Stamford Police Department (SPD) officers. We support any and all efforts to increase communication and joint interactions with the SPD to make our Parks and City a safe and peaceful place.

### Parks Police

Public safety within our Park System is an overriding priority for all the recreational services and installed equipment. We believe public safety within the Parks is enhanced when Park Police are present to interact with the individuals of the community and address any quality of life or regulatory issues that arise before they escalate into criminal activity. A copy of the Parks Rules and Regulations is provided in Appendix 10.2

An Ambassador Program may be an excellent opportunity to enhance security in our parks and be a force multiplier for the Parks Police and SPD. However, these Ambassador Programs should not be implemented at the expense of a well-established Parks Police component.

### Community Policing

The Parks & Recreation Commission support any and all efforts by the SPD to address quality of life issues relating to code and ordinance warnings as well as criminal investigation and arrest activity in our City parklands. We support interaction with the community to teach understanding of the laws and ordinances and why compliance benefits everyone in the community. We seek and support developing a proactive partnership within the community to proactively identify and address issues and solve problems.

## Design

The Parks & Recreation Commission supports a Parks Police system that uses officers at visible locations within the Parks.

Design should focus on increased visibility, improved sight lines, and adequate lighting in dark areas.

The Parks & Recreation Commission seeks to be an integral part of the Master Planning and re-design efforts of our City Parks. Design considerations from SPD and Parks Police should regularly be encouraged to understand how a Park's present design helps or hinders adequate enforcement. For example, while policing from a drive by patrol might be considered best from an economic or security point of view, another group might advocate that it is precisely the planting in Parks that makes them special and worth going to visit. The Parks & Recreation Commission seeks to participate in striking a balance between clear cutting for better lines of site and creating low visibility areas that make policing difficult.

## Data

The Parks & Recreation Commission supports the collection and reporting to the Commission of all incident reports involving Police activity within the Parks system. As the parks & Recreation Commission researches and investigates the requirements for collecting this data a reporting schedule will be developed that does not impose undue hardship on the providers of this data. The goal of collecting this data is to develop metrics that will allow the Commission to make recommendations to the Parks & Recreation Committee of the Board of Representatives for potential improvements.

## Parks & Recreation Commission Role

[Click here - Link to City Charter](#)

## Superintendent of Parks & Recreation

[Click here - Link to City Charter Organization Chart](#)

## 6.3 Health Department

### Introduction

An adequate and well-maintained supply of parks, green space, and recreational services benefits the health of the residents in many ways. The larger the supply of parks and green space, the better the overall health of the population, and the higher the quality of life.<sup>9</sup>

During the last few years, awareness of the importance of parks, green space and recreation services [hereafter *PGSRS*] for the health of the population and the overall quality of life has increased considerably. The Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in conjunction with the National Park Service has developed tools for quantifying how design of cities, including parks and green space

impact health outcomes.<sup>10</sup> The Surgeon General and leading universities have also started to emphasize and examine how the PGSRS can contribute to public health and reduce disease.<sup>11,12</sup> Given the current insights in the importance of PGSRS for public health, the relationship between the Health Department and the Parks & Recreation Commission needs to be defined.

- The Parks & Recreation Commission has a role to play in ensuring that projects and plans for Parks & Recreational areas include health impact as a consideration in its design.

Until now, the Parks & Recreation Commission and the Health Department have only communicated sporadically, as applicable issues arose. The increased awareness of the role of PGSRS's for overall public health requires more consistent in-depth communication.

- The Parks & Recreation Commission will seek more frequent and regular communication with the Health Department.
- The Parks & Recreation Commission will consider the Health Department a partner in advocacy on behalf of the quality and quantity of parks, green space and recreational services in the city.
- The Parks & Recreation Commission needs to partner with the Health Department to create policies to maximize health benefits of PGSRS.
- The Parks & Recreation Commission continues to support compliance with Federal ADA regulations wherever feasible.

### Urban Living

As the trend towards increased urbanization continues, the need for 'un-urbanized' space becomes ever more critical.

While urban living scores higher than rural living on the sustainability index<sup>13</sup>, it comes with a cost for individual human health. Poor sleep quality, environmental contaminants, heat islands in summer, and lack of physical and social activity tend to be byproducts of urban living. As cities keep getting denser, Parkland can become sacrificial and the need for PGSRS to safeguard and improve human health becomes ever more crucial.

- The Parks & Recreation Commission would like to partner with the Health Department in advocating for the acquisition of additional park and green space.

Various characteristics of PGSRS affect public health. These factors work together in complex and intricate ways. It is not clear whether health benefits derive from parks and green space through increased physical activity, the absence of urban noise, the cleanliness of the air, or the break from a work routine. The benefits accrue through a combination of these factors.

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<sup>10</sup> <http://www.cdc.gov/healthyplaces/hia.htm>

<sup>11</sup> <http://www.nrpa.org/blog/what-the-surgeon-general's-call-to-action-on-walking-means-for-parks-and-recreation/>

<sup>12</sup> <http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.459.9829&rep=rep1&type=pdf>.

<sup>13</sup> <http://www.greenbuildingadvisor.com/articles/dept/musings/can-rural-living-be-green-urban-living>



## General Health

PGSRS induce residents to be more physically active which is associated with improved health indicators such as longer life expectancy, lower levels of disease, and improved immune function.<sup>14</sup>

The extent to which and the precise manner in which the presence of nature affects health is still being discovered. For instance, research quoted above that phyto-chemicals secreted by trees and plants might have a beneficial influence on the immune and central nervous systems. Clearly, the Parks & Recreation Commission, together with The Health Department, should stay abreast of this type of research, since it will offer powerful arguments for adequate spending on green space and more diversified planting opportunities.

The amount of green space available matters as well. The larger the availability of parks and green space and the shorter the distance to the parks the greater the benefits for overall health as measured by the occurrence of asthma, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, diabetes, and coronary heart disease.<sup>15</sup>

Current research suggests that green space may also influence maternal and child health, with positive or protective benefits for birth weight, risk of pre-term birth, and the potential for post-partum depression [59, 60].

The relationship between the Parks & Recreation Commission and the Health Department is mutually beneficial: just as the Health Department can partner with the Parks & Recreation Commission on advocacy for parks, green space and recreational services, so the Parks & Recreation Commission can support the policies of the Health Department by encouraging the implementation of them as they pertain to the Parks & Recreational system. For example, last year, the Parks & Recreation Commission adopted a no-smoking policy as recommended by the Health Department. The Parks & Recreation Commission also adopted the guidelines by the CDC “HEADS UP Concussion in Youth Sports” initiative regarding concussion prevention during all athletic games and sports.

## Mental Health

Urban built space with its associated noise, density, and lack of open vistas requires complementary space for quiet, tranquility and unblocked views. Research has shown that even a few minutes in a crowded city can cause memory loss and mental fatigue and that spending time in a calm green space restores the mental balance.<sup>16</sup>

There is a direct relationship between the quantity of accessible green space and mental health. One study found that for any 1% additional green spaces, there is a reduction of stress and anxiety symptoms by 4%.<sup>17</sup> The symptoms of ADHD in children are significantly reduced if they engage in plentiful playtime in green areas.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> [http://www.chgeharvard.org/sites/default/files/resources/Paper-NaturalEnvironmentsInitiative\\_0.pdf](http://www.chgeharvard.org/sites/default/files/resources/Paper-NaturalEnvironmentsInitiative_0.pdf)

<sup>15</sup> [http://www.chgeharvard.org/sites/default/files/resources/Paper-NaturalEnvironmentsInitiative\\_0.pdf](http://www.chgeharvard.org/sites/default/files/resources/Paper-NaturalEnvironmentsInitiative_0.pdf)

<sup>16</sup> [https://depts.washington.edu/hhwb/Thm\\_Mental.html](https://depts.washington.edu/hhwb/Thm_Mental.html)

<sup>17</sup> [http://www.chgeharvard.org/sites/default/files/resources/Paper-NaturalEnvironmentsInitiative\\_0.pdf](http://www.chgeharvard.org/sites/default/files/resources/Paper-NaturalEnvironmentsInitiative_0.pdf)

<sup>18</sup> [https://depts.washington.edu/hhwb/Thm\\_Mental.html](https://depts.washington.edu/hhwb/Thm_Mental.html)

In general, spending time in nature has been found to lower the levels of the stress hormone cortisol in the body.<sup>19</sup> High levels of cortisol in the body expresses itself not only through mental stress and depression, but also by general health symptoms among others such as obesity, sleep problems, memory loss, kidney disease, and immune disorders.

- The Parks & Recreation Commission wants to be an advocate for the role natural resources play in the mental health of the population.
- The Parks & Recreation Commission wants to build a partnership with the HD for the purpose of advocating for additional green space and parks on behalf of the mental health of the residents.

### **Environmental Health**

Parks and green space in the cities are key links to ecological balance. They can also help alleviate some of the environmental damage to human health. Parks and green space, including streams and floodplains, act as buffers to pollution, protect hazardous areas from inappropriate development, and mitigate urban heat islands.

Tree canopies in parks and throughout the city absorb carbon dioxide and pollutants and cool the atmosphere.

- The Parks & Recreation Commission is in favor of establishing a task force with the Health Department and other relevant City agencies and departments such as the Environmental Protection Board, and the Harbor Management Commission, to develop policies for sustainability of our environment and public health.

A direct implication of the discussion above is the Parks & Recreation Commission policy on artificial turf for recreational fields. Environmental concerns and implications for public health were the overriding arguments for the Parks & Recreation Commission to vote unanimously in 2014 against the use of artificial turf fields in the City of Stamford. See Section on Conservation 7.3 for details.

- The Parks & Recreation Commission feels there needs to be much more supportive information to counter the personal health, environmental and economic questions that presently exist before it can permit the installation of any additional artificial turf in Stamford's Parks. The discussion of artificial turf installation should occur in as neutral an environment as possible. Products, public opinion, aesthetics, economics all change, and more importantly scientific research as to product safety continues to evolve with new products. A well informed public and their input at a public hearing will most certainly be part of the discussion with regard to any future applications for the use of artificial turf.

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<sup>19</sup> Eva M. Selhub, MD and Alan C. Logan, ND, 2014. Your Brain on Nature.

## **Social Interaction**

Urban settings impede social interactions for many of its residents. Lack of social interaction creates poor health outcomes: loneliness increases mortality rates.<sup>20</sup> Parks and green space encourage function as informal gathering places and invite shared activities, thereby building social connections and social cohesion.

## **Economic Benefits**

It is economically worthwhile for a city to invest in their parks because of the direct and indirect economic benefits to the city by improved public health.

The economic savings through improved public health are substantial, although the precise calculation is complex and goes beyond the scope of this document. In general, the economic benefits do not just pertain to reduced medical expenditures by diseases prevented or deferred but also include the net gain through increased labor participation and productivity. In addition, the cost of public assistance to families will be reduced if a bread winner stays employed. Moreover, healthy individuals are more likely to actively spend money on public and cultural activities which will not only benefit the vitality of the city but will also accrue some financial benefits to the city.

The allocation of funds for parks and green space suffers when the municipal budget is under strain as it has been for the last number of years. The Parks & Recreation Commission can collaborate with the Health Department during the budget process to advocate for increased spending on parks as an investment for improved public health and help develop metrics to measure any economic value that it will yield.

The Parks & Recreation Commission needs to communicate the economic value of green space and parks to the Economic Development Office.

- The Parks & Recreation Commission needs to communicate the economic benefits of green space and parks on behalf of increased budget requests for acquisition, maintenance and design in parks.

## **Access and Connectivity**

The benefits of PGSRS to public health are directly related to the accessibility and connectivity of parks. Policies by the Parks & Recreation Commission in conjunction with the Health Department need to advocate for improving access to parks by minimizing the distance from neighborhoods to parks, improving safety and appeal for walking and biking access routes.

- The Parks & Recreation Commission would like to partner with the Health Department to advocate for equal access to parks, green space and recreational services.
- The Parks & Recreation Commission would like to partner with the Health Department to advocate for connectivity between the various parks and between neighborhoods and parks.

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<sup>20</sup> <http://www.ibtimes.com/loneliness-social-isolation-can-shorten-life-span-conditions-are-similar-obesity-1845040>

## Design

The Parks & Recreation Commission needs to be a partner with the Health Department in recommending specific design features for parks and projects to positively influence healthy outcomes.

## 6.4 Recreation Department Operations

### Introduction

The Recreation Department currently functions under the direction of a Superintendent of Recreation.

The Superintendent of Recreation acts as a member of staff at all Parks & Recreation Commission meetings

The Stamford Recreation Services is open Monday through Friday from 8:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m. at the Government Center, 888 Washington Blvd., 1st Floor, Stamford, CT 06901.

Registration for Recreation programs may be completed in person at the Government Center or online at [StamfordRecreation.com](http://StamfordRecreation.com). For more information about programs, leagues and employment opportunities please visit our website at [StamfordRecreation.com](http://StamfordRecreation.com).

- Stamford Recreation Star Center: 1170 Shippan Avenue, Stamford CT 06902
- [E. Gaynor Brennan Golf Course](#): 451 Stillwater Avenue, Stamford CT 06902
- [Terry Conners Ice Rink](#): 1125 Cove Road, Stamford, CT 06902

[Click here](#) - Link to Brochure of Parks & Recreational Services.

## 6.5 Parks Department Operations

### Introduction

The Director of Operations is currently the head of the Department of Operations and is responsible for the administration, supervision and performance of all municipal functions related to, but not necessarily limited to, public works, traffic, Parks & Recreation, planning, zoning and environmental protection.

The Department of Operations deals with public works functions such as parks maintenance, the planning and development of Stamford's solid waste collection and disposal, management and upkeep of City vehicles and municipal buildings, management of the sewers and sewage waste treatment.

The Office of Operations is open Monday through Friday from 8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. at the Government Center, 888 Washington Blvd., 10th Floor, Stamford, CT 06901.

The Manager of Parks and Facilities acts as a member of staff at all Parks & Recreation Commission meetings.

## 7. Advocacy

Historically, the *Public Trust Doctrine*<sup>21</sup> guaranteed the public would have access to all of the shoreline. Presently, due to building and development on or near the water, the public now has limited access to the shoreline in Connecticut -- some 80% of the shoreline in Connecticut is privately owned.

- The Parks & Recreation Commission supports policies needed to identify, acquire, secure and safeguard the availability of public lands, including coastline, for the general public.
- Parks & Recreation Commissioners over their appointed terms of service need to become familiar with the workings of other Boards and Commissions on both the State and local levels. The Commission needs to be aware of and involved in the discussions that impact and influence the designation of additional public access areas.

### 7.1 Acquisition and Preservation

The Parks & Recreation Commission will advocate for an increase in green spaces and additional public access areas. With the continued growth of Stamford's population, the need and benefit to the citizenry of public land for recreational and ecological services is ever more pressing. Currently, there is limited coordinated structural representation in our City government on behalf of these public needs.

### 7.2 Public Access

Public Access areas are small segments of land that have been set aside for the benefit of the public. Public Access areas can originate at either the state or local level of government. Locally, a variety of government entities participate in the decisions to establish Public Access areas and to set the guidelines for Public Access areas.

One type of Public Access area is granted and established at the state level for **conservational** purposes. Many of these conservational areas are designated accessible to the public. For details, please refer to Appendix 10.14 (Public Access Areas). While these areas are inventoried by state agencies, often the existence of these resources is not generally known by the public.

A second type of Public Access area is established through specific adaptations to the general zoning code, often known as **incentive zoning**. Incentive Zoning can consist of Public Access areas for the benefit of the public. Examples of Incentive Zoning are public plazas, interior courtyards and community meeting rooms.<sup>22 23</sup>

The third type of Public Access, **coastal access**, comes about through the zoning application process when building rights at or near the coastline is granted to a private owner or developer with the condition that the public continues to have access to some part of that *coastal* area.

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<sup>21</sup> <http://seagrant.uconn.edu/publications/coastalres/access.pdf>

<sup>22</sup> <https://www.cga.ct.gov/2000/rpt/2000-R-0900.htm>

<sup>23</sup> Other public amenities established as a trade-off for special development privileges include community rooms free of charge to the general public, day-care facilities in the building project, etc. After making several phone calls regarding the supposedly freely available community rooms, and being met with disconnected numbers and surprise and disbelief, it became evident that (some of) these public rewards were short-lived.

There is no uniform set of guidelines that determine the parameters of Public Access areas or that ensure oversight and enforcement of these guidelines for future generations. It is difficult to track where all of these areas are located, how they are maintained, and how substantial utilization by the public is ensured for the long-term. In accordance with its mission and purview, the Parks & Recreation Commission can play a role to fill this void.

- The Parks & Recreation Commission needs to play a role in ensuring that the public utilization of Public Access areas will be guaranteed in perpetuity.
- The Parks & Recreation Commission policy is to establish a consolidated inventory of all public access areas, established at both the state and/or city level.
- The Parks & Recreation Commission policy is to establish communication links so that the general public may access this inventory of information.

The Master Plan of 2015 specifically states as one of its goals (p. 116) to "Maximize the potential of public plazas and open spaces Downtown and in the South End. [to] Enhance the quality, visibility and use of public plazas and open spaces with both passive and active activity".

- For the public to make full use of the Public Access areas; easy access and awareness of the locations of the Public Access areas is required. While the Public Access areas are generally established to last in perpetuity, in reality, the public is rarely aware of the location of the access areas. After the original owners have transferred ownership to new owners the awareness of the rights of the public may get lost.
- The Parks & Recreation Commission is in favor of establishing a unified and complete repository of all of the Public Access areas in the city.
- The Parks & Recreation Commission will assume responsibility and maintenance of the repository of the Public Access areas.
- The Parks & Recreation Commission will put an audit of the inventory and condition of the Public Access areas on its annual calendar.
- The Parks & Recreation Commission encourages increased GIS capability for the mapping of the park, green and open spaces; whereby the Public Access areas will be one separate layer to be accessed.
- The Parks & Recreation Commission advocates for having all Public Access areas marked on Google maps and any other maps of the City.

#### **Creation of Public Access Areas.**

- The Parks & Recreation Commission shall request an opportunity to contribute its opinion when deliberations include Public Access during the Planning Board, Zoning Board, Zoning Board of Appeals or Harbor Commission meetings.
- A representative of the Parks & Recreation Commission, as either a sub-committee or appointed member, shall appear before Boards and Commissions to provide input and insight into Parks & Recreation Commission Policies about Public Access areas.
  - Public Access areas need to be selected such that its location, dimension, size, accessibility will be optimal for the general public.

- Public Access areas will be selected to provide both easy physical access as well as attractive, unimpeded visual views of the coastline.
- The Parks & Recreation Commission needs to ensure that the quality of life of the private owner and the surrounding neighbors is not unduly impacted by the Public Access.
- The hours of Public Access will conform to the hours of use of other public parks unless determined otherwise.
- The establishment of a Public Access area needs to mention the exact location, as well as ensure that optimal access will be preserved for the future<sup>24</sup>.

### **Maintenance**

Public Access areas can only be rightfully considered a public asset if the areas are fully accessible, safe and well-maintained.

- A representative of the Parks & Recreation Commission or Public Access subcommittee will periodically visit to ensure that the Public Access areas are well maintained.
- Public Access areas need to be clearly marked. Uniformed signage will indicate the location of the Public Access area, as well as the connecting paths or trails that lead towards the public access areas.
- The Parks & Recreation Commission shall explore the design of uniform signage with the Land Use Bureau and begin the process of installing such signs.

The Parks & Recreation Commission is in a unique position as the guardian of the public interest in park, open and green space to oversee the establishment, inventory, use, protection, and maintenance of the Public Access areas.

### **Conclusion.**

The policies listed above are in line with the recommendation stated in the Master Plan of 2014,

"Non-water dependent uses of waterfront property should only be permitted where they

1. Provide meaningful general public access to the waterfront" .5C.4:

The recommendation that the Public Access should be 'meaningful' is not on a par with reality. Currently, many of the Public Access areas are invisible, poorly maintained, lack signage and there is a lack of awareness by the general public that there are areas on the coastline available to be enjoyed.

- The Parks & Recreation Commission needs to play a role in ensuring that the recommendation in the Master Plan of 2014 that Public Access areas shall provide meaningful public access for the public in perpetuity is fulfilled.

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<sup>24</sup> Observations of several Public Access areas reveal that the areas are boarded off by fences etc. allowing only a small coastal piece to be preserved for the public.

### 7.3 Conservation

It is the policy of the Parks & Recreation Commission to conserve and grow total square acres Stamford parks, open and green spaces. The metrics we advocate using with the Mayors, Board of Representatives and Zoning Boards as guidelines are found at The Trust for Public Land. [Click here.](#)

- The Parks & Recreation Commission broadly advocates for the metrics of Park Acres within City Limits to be on par with other cities of our size (acreage and population).
- The Parks & Recreation Commission broadly advocates for Walkable Park Access for a high percentage of residents with Walkable defined no more than ½ mile.
- The Parks & Recreation Commission will continue its work with the Operations Department, the Land Use and Zoning Offices to ensure that every park, open and green space (PARKLAND) designated on our City's maps is zoned as a park.
- The Parks & Recreation Commission will advocate and insist that any PARKLAND removed for development and enhancement or any other reason is replaced within the system.
- The Parks & Recreation Commission will advocate for any replacement PARKLAND to be located within the effected neighborhood to maintain walkability and availability for those citizens whenever feasible.
- In addition to the overall maintenance and growth of PARKLAND, The Parks & Recreation Commission advocates for the conservation of the assets with each particular park, open and green space. Our rivers, streams, ponds and beaches as well as our trees and recreation equipment are to be invested in wisely and properly maintained to ensure the maximum useful life for our taxpayer dollars.

### 7.4 Connectivity and Accessibility

Policies regarding parks, open and green space need to address the Park System as an integrative whole. A connected system of Public Access areas, parks, open and green spaces contributes to the quality of public life for the City's residents.

The Public Access areas can play an important role with respect to connectivity. While each of the Public Access areas may sometimes be hard to locate and small in terms of area when looked at individually, when they are considered as part of a 'system' of connected Public Parks & Recreation Areas their value as part of the comprehensive green space system (PARKLAND) in the city becomes apparent. The term Connectivity can refer to the Public Access areas at a single location but can also refer to the connectivity between public parks, open and green space. In a connected system encouraging the public users to run/walk/stroll from multiple Public Access points to the next lets the residents explore and enjoy all these areas more fully, without putting undue strain on the residents of the neighborhoods where Public Access entry and exit points are located. A system of connected Public Access areas and the Stamford Public Park System can contribute to improved public health and urban vitality.

- The Parks & Recreation Commission shall encourage the connectivity of Public Access areas with our parks, open and green spaces.
- Whenever new impervious surface is granted in a public park or green space, an **offset** to include developing or extending a path or trail to or from a public access area should be considered.



- The Parks & Recreation Commission would like to see an accounting of pervious and impervious surfaces within our PARKLAND. This would help in the development of proper ratios and metrics that could be further analyzed. Connectivity using pervious materials could help balance losses to development requiring impervious materials within the PARKLAND.

## 7.5 Economic Development

The continued economic development that supports making Stamford a premier city to work, play, live and learn puts pressure on leisure and recreational municipal services. Developing key performance indicators (KPIs) can help us measure how we stack up against cities with similar demographics and growth ratios. KPIs could include metrics like baseball diamonds, basketball hoops, off leash dog parks, senior centers, swimming pools, beaches, golf courses, tennis courts and nature centers per 10,000 residents as examples.

- The Parks & Recreation Commission advocates beginning the data collection and analysis by working with the Mayor and the Parks & Recreation Committee of the Board of Representative to establish the proper benchmarks for the City to define and begin this KPI comparison process.

## 7.6 Budget

For the Parks & Recreation Commission to adequately fulfill the mandated duties as stipulated in the City Charter, it needs to have adequate opportunities to provide input in the budget process.

The Parks & Recreation Commission supports performing a review of the current budget expenditures on Parks & Recreation by cities of similar residential population and cost of living as provided in The Trust for Public Land analysis [link](#) above.

The necessity for the Parks & Recreation Commission to be partner and participant in the development of the budget process is intensified due to the absence of a Superintendent of Parks, a position in City Government required by the City Charter.

The Parks & Recreation Commission can weigh in on the budget process by coordinating and collaborating with the Operations Department and Land Use Department. A subcommittee with specific attention to the budget may be very useful to monitor PARKLAND operating expenses and provide outside insights for the balance between Parks & Recreation maintenance, capital project priorities, ongoing capital projects and future budget proposals to the Board of Representatives.

## Parks & Recreation Commission and the Budget Process

- The Parks & Recreation Commission needs to ensure that its policies are reflected in the projects proposed in the annual budget proposals.
- The Parks & Recreation Commission needs to ensure that new capital projects in parks will only be approved if projects for which previously money was appropriated have been successfully terminated, unless agreement was reached within the Parks & Recreation Commission that the priority should be changed.

- The Parks & Recreation Commission will meet with the Board of Finance to present the importance of appropriating funds for certain projects in the parks system during their regularly scheduled meetings.
- It would benefit the Parks & Recreation Commission to become more aware of the issues coming before other Commissions and Committees by reviewing public notices.
- The Parks & Recreation Commission needs to collaborate with the Economic Development, Health Departments and Land Use to advocate for adequate funding for the parks system.

### **7.7 Park & Recreation Bureau Chief**

The Parks & Recreation Commission supports the hiring of a Parks & Recreation Bureau Chief who reports into the Director of Operations complimenting the Recreation & Leisure Services Director and the Facilities & Parks Maintenance Director positions.

Important responsibilities and duties may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Assume management responsibility for all services and activities of the Parks & Recreation Department.
- Assume management responsibility for the maintenance of all parks and related facilities.
- Participate in the negotiation, development, planning, design and implementation of related City Capital Improvement Projects as well as capital improvements to existing facilities.
- Continuously monitor and evaluate the efficiency and effectiveness of Department methods, procedures and programs; assess and monitor workload; identify and implement opportunities for improvement; review with Operations Director where appropriate.
- Re-negotiate and facilitate use of all City and Board of Education’s athletic resources to community sports organizations; supervise operations of all City and School District athletic facilities.
- Provide staff support to the Stamford’s Parks & Recreation Commission.
- Develop and provide staff support to a City’s Sports Advisory Committee.

### **7.8 Equitability**

All citizens should have equal access to the City’s Parks & Recreational Services. This equitability is measured not only by fee structures but also by walkability, travel distance and transportation services to the various types of amenities our City offers its residents.

### **7.9 Park Foundation**

The Parks & Recreation Commission supports the formation of a 501(c3) foundation whereby generous commercial and residential donors can contribute to a general fund earmarked for the betterment of our city PARKLAND. The Commission would seek to assist in the prioritization of projects and oversee the distribution of funds to suppliers for additional PARKLAND purchases as well as the health and maintenance of the assets within the system beyond what the Facilities and Parks Maintenance Departments can provide.

## 8. Geographical Information System (GIS)

### 8.1 Introduction

The Parks & Recreation Commission recommends improved GIS functionality in the City to enable the Parks & Recreation Commission and the public to survey more easily the impact of a project on the City-wide park and green space system. A Geographical Information System (GIS) is a digital tool to organize, compare, and analyze a wide range of geographic data as one coherent system. A GIS possesses powerful capabilities to visualize large and varied data sets into one integrated digital map, thereby allowing the combined analysis of social, economic, historic, political, planning, and other factors.

A well-equipped and properly maintained GIS has a myriad of applications for the government of the city in general, and would be enormously beneficial for the implementation of the mission, goals and policies of the Parks & Recreation Commission. Particularly if constructed with layers specific to our needs. In several sections within this document it was mentioned that a functional GIS map with rich layers of data would be valuable for carrying out a certain set of policies. The most salient advantages of a GIS system for the city in general and for the Parks & Recreation Commission in particular are described below.

All capital projects will be entered on the GIS map to allow for increased accountability and to facilitate citizens' oversight.

### 8.2 Democracy

A GIS map can be a powerful tool for democracy by increasing transparency and accountability. It allows the public easy access to proposals, expenditures and work flows. By prioritizing easy access to information about city government, the decisions and the decision-making process by the leadership gain in legitimacy. Citizens who are knowledgeable about budget process, who understand how budgetary spending benefits various groups of residents are more likely to become active participants in the decision making process. GIS data can aid their involvement by facilitating research, journalism, and volunteerism in government and community work. Specifically, the learning curve for new Commissioners on the various volunteer Boards and Commissions, including on the Parks & Recreation Commission can be dramatically shortened, making them more effective and more likely to continue to serve on behalf of the City.

### 8.3 Budget

While the process of setting up an adequate GIS requires an investment in time and resources, in the long run it makes governing more effective and efficient, possibly yielding considerable cost-savings.

The GIS tool can cut costs and time by allowing for data-sharing between various parts of City government thereby avoiding duplication of data and data analysis, streamlining the work flow, and promoting cooperation.

Cost savings can also be derived through the integration of the GIS data at the various governmental levels. If projects require data beyond the city boundaries to include regional, state and/or federal information, an integrated data system is crucial for the execution of the project, but also for facilitating drawing on regional, state and/or federal funding sources.

Capital projects in the city can be shown as a separate layer on the GIS map, whether they originate in the traffic department, are part of a park renovation project, or involve any other city development. The visualization of the project across a time line supports increased accountability and aids the Parks & Recreation Commission and other elected or nominated officials in providing proper oversight of the process and shows at a glance how the expenditures at a certain phase compare to the projected costs.

## 8.4 Land Use

The Parks & Recreation Commission is to be a valued partner at any land use discussion involving land adjacent to parks and green space. By visualizing the availability, proximity and quality of land plots a GIS map can give the Parks & Recreation Commission a more meaningful role during these discussions with land use officers and boards considering land acquisitions, land swaps, variances, and/or the establishment of public access areas.

Visualization of the allocation of capital projects and expenditures across the various parks, showing the distribution of green space across the city, and displaying accessibility of parks and green space to segments of the public make the GIS an important tool for the Parks & Recreation Commission in determining the priority of parks.

## 8.5 Conservation

A functional GIS for the city will help strengthen the role of the Parks & Recreation Commission in playing a role in supporting environmentally sound choices.

GIS allows for citywide modeling incorporating a wide range of variables as well as projecting the environmental impact of certain choices over a period of time, thereby allowing for better informed decision making.

The description of the many decisions that affect the environment either directly or indirectly goes beyond the scale of this document. The permeability index<sup>25</sup> of a city may serve as one way to illustrate how the Parks & Recreation Commission and GIS may play a role in environmentally sound decision-making.

The Parks & Recreation Commission, in line with federal guidelines, have adopted the goal to decrease the total inventory of impermeable surface areas. Increasing permeability is particularly relevant for parks and green space because of the strong intrinsic implication for the ecological system. A functional GIS can show the inventory of permeable, impermeable and semi-impermeable areas as separate layers, thereby making this objective more attainable. The visual overview of the current inventory and distribution of (im)-permeability makes it feasible for any new project to model how it impacts permeability throughout the city in general and throughout the park system in particular.

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<sup>25</sup> [http://digimap.edina.ac.uk/webhelp/geology/data\\_information/bgs\\_products\\_available/permeability.htm](http://digimap.edina.ac.uk/webhelp/geology/data_information/bgs_products_available/permeability.htm)

## 8.6 Equitability

GIS can visualize how the various ethnic, geographic and socio-economic groups of the population currently have access to the various parks. It can also model the optimal use and access by the various parts of the population in the future.

By adding the capital projects on the GIS map, it can be glanced easily how funds are being spent across the various neighborhoods, allowing for equitability to be visually explicit.

GIS modeling can combine health and demographic data to create park equity maps showing connections between good health and access to parks.<sup>26</sup>

It is important to note that increasing the role of GIS in city government comes with an important drawback. It potentially widens the gap in government participation between the digitally savvy and the digitally impaired, where the digitally impaired are more often found in the economically disadvantaged segments of the population. Since, it will be impossible to stave off the development of the increased use of technology in civic life; the Parks & Recreation Commission urges the city to spend sufficient resources on training city staff as well as the public in the understanding and use of the GIS.

## 8.7 Connectivity

Connectivity is one of the primary goals stated within the Mission Statement of the Parks & Recreation Commission. Connectivity refers here to the geographical linkage between open, green and parkland spaces on behalf of the ecological system, as well as to the trails and lanes system that allow people to live and lead their daily lives without the need for an automobile. The connectivity in the latter sense directly benefits the connectivity in the former sense: the lesser the need for road ways and parking lots, the stronger the benefits for the ecological system, for human health, and urban vitality.

Stamford ranks low on the walkability index, receiving just 53 out of 100, which is considered 'somewhat walkable' (in comparison, Hartford gets 71 out of 100 and is considered 'very walkable').<sup>27</sup> The walkability index can be viewed as an indicator of the health of the community and of urban vitality. The Parks & Recreation Commission can play an important role in increasing this score. A functional GIS map is crucial to visualize the current inventory and distribution of green space and the lanes, path and trails that provide easy, safe connections. This map can also aid in locating the easiest most cost-effective new corridors and connections to build an integrative citywide connected system. The GIS maps would thereby facilitate incorporating connectivity as a key feature in future planning projects.

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<sup>26</sup> Heng Lam Foong, Breece Robertson, and Milton Ospina, Trust for Public Land: "Park Equity Mapping Supports Advocacy for Parks and Healthier Communities". <http://www.esri.com/news/arcnews/spring09articles/trust-for-public-land.html>

<sup>27</sup> [www.walkscore.com](http://www.walkscore.com)

## **8.8 Advocacy**

The visualization of the inventory of all natural and recreational resources, and the relationships with a multitude of other features in the city, will aid the Parks & Recreation Commission in advocating on behalf of its mission and its goals at other government entities whose goals and objectives may have overlooked the importance of adequate open, green and park lands and recreational resources. Effective advocacy can lead to positive momentum towards implementation of the goals.

## **8.9 Conclusion**

An increased GIS capability can play a role in the effective management, planning and implementation of most any topic that comes before the Parks & Recreation Commission. In addition, a good GIS capability increases accountability, insight, and democratic functioning. Therefore, the Parks & Recreation Commission advocates urgently for increased funds for the GIS department, to improve the cooperation with many departments as well as the public.

## 9. Charter Revisions

### 9.1 Introduction

The Parks & Recreation Commission shall create additional subcommittees comprised of a minimum of two Commissioners charged with keeping abreast of the City of Stamford Charter Revision schedule and changes affecting Parks & Recreation, the creation and submission of the Parks & Recreation Commission's By-Laws and the documentation of the interactive process between the Parks & Recreation Commission and the Operations Department Internal Committee to carry out policy. After proper vetting, these newly documented policies and procedures may be submitted for addition into the City Charter.

Generally, these subcommittees will maintain a repository/library of Charter Revisions that the then current Commission supports. These items will include additions, changes and deletions to the roles and responsibilities of the Parks & Recreation Commission to clarify, support and strengthen the Parks & Recreation Commission role in our City government. The Parks & Recreation Commission will then be prepared to present the agreed upon proposed revisions to the Charter Revision Committee of the Board of Representatives at the appropriate time.

### 9.2 Current Status

The Parks & Recreation Commission is currently represented in the City Charter in the following ways:

[Click here: See Subdivision E Sections C5-30 Subsections 5 in MuniCode](#)

[Click here: See Subdivision E Sections C6-120 Subsections 1-4 in MuniCode](#)

[Click here: See Subdivision E Sections C8-20 Subsections 1 in MuniCode](#)

## **10. Appendices**

### **10.1 Parks & Recreation Calendar**

TBD

### **10.2 Parks & Recreation Regulations**

[Click here](#) – last update April 2, 2018

### **10.3 Volunteer Community Groups (VCGs)**

TBD

### **10.4 Resources for VCGs**

TBD

### **10.5 Sample VCG Evaluation Form**

TBD

### **10.6 Not for Profit Businesses (NPBs) Ongoing/Continuous Projects/Programs**

TBD

### **10.7 Current Leases with NPBs**

TBD

### **10.8 Private Public Partnership (PPP) Listing**

TBD

### **10.9 Ordinance 179 - Peddlers, Street Vendors and Solicitors**

[Click here](#) – last update June 19, 2018

### **10.10 Sanctioned Sports Leagues and Field Policy**

[Click here](#) – last update December 20, 2017

### **10.11 Regular Incidental Uses by NPBs**

TBD

### **10.12 Priority List of Parks**

TBD

### **10.13 Enforcement Policy**

TBD



### **10.14 Public Access Areas**

[Click here](#) – last updated September 10<sup>th</sup>, 2018

### **10.15 GIS Layers**

[Click here](#) – last updated September 10<sup>th</sup>, 2018

### **10.16 Best Practices as per Office of Operations**

TBD

### **10.17 Listing of Addenda to this Policy Document for Annual Review**

TBD