

**21ST CENTURY PARKS COMMITTEE
REGULAR MEETING
WEDNESDAY, MAY 11, 2016
TIME: 5:45 P.M.
MUNICIPAL BUILDING
ROOM 208
MIDDLETOWN CONNECTICUT**

MEMBERS PRESENT: Councilman Gene Nocera
Councilman Carl Chisem
Councilman Frank Marchese
Councilwoman Amy Vaillancourt
Councilman Joseph Bibisi
Councilwoman Maria Holzberg
Councilwoman Louise Augeri
Councilwoman Deborah Petruzzello

STAFF PRESENT: William Russo, Director of Public Works
Christopher Holden, Deputy Director of Public Works
Daniel T. Drew, Mayor, City of Middletown

OTHERS: Vince McDermott, Senior Vice President, Millone & MacBroom
Mike Doherty, Landscape Architect, Millone & MacBroom
Joan Liska, Middletown Resident
Rebecca McLaughlin, 35 Clover Street
Kate Miller, Boston Road
Krishna Winston, President of the Jonas Center for Earth and Art
Christine Solimini-Swift, Voices for Families Community Project
Artha Slade, Voices for Families Community Project
Sharon Hunt, Voices for Families Community Project
Lurette Hanson, Voices for Families Community Project

ABSENT: Councilwoman Sheila Daniels
Councilman Philip Pessina

Mayor Daniel T. Drew opened the 21st Century Parks Committee meeting at 5:45 PM. He elaborated how excited and thankful he is towards creating new public spaces to improve the lives for generations to come. He then had each committee member raise their right hand, state their name, and read the oath to the committee. The committee unanimously swore upon oath and became an official 21st Century Parks Committee member.

Chair Nocera called the meeting to order. He then asked for each member of the committee to state their names and to give a summary on their community involvements.

Frank Marchese, former City Assessor and also involved in Middletown Youth soccer for thirty five years. Lousie Augeri, native in Middletown for almost eighty years and also a Newtown Street resident. She has retired from Weekly Reader Publications where she was employed for over twenty five years and now volunteers at Middlesex Hospital. Maria Holzberg stated her involvement in the Middletown Garden Club and

is also the Juvenile Public Defender soon to be retired. Christopher Holden, Deputy Director of Public Works, staff to the Committee and Middletown resident. William Russo, Director of Public Works and Middletown Resident. Gene Nocera, lifelong Middletown resident and involved in Middletown businesses and the Chair of the Middletown Board of Education for two terms. Carl Chisem, native Middletown resident and beginning his second term on the Council. He works for the Department of Transportation and elected Vice President of his union along with service in various committees for the City. Joseph Bibisi, retired Deputy Chief of Police, twelve years on the Common Council and six years as the Deputy Mayor. Vince McDermott, Senior Vice President of Millone & MacBroom. Mike Doherty, Landscape Architect of Millone & MacBroom and has been employed for ten years with them. Deborah Petruzzello is a retired teacher in the Middletown school system and is a coach for sports programs at the Woodrow Wilson Middle School. Amy Vaillancourt is a resident of Middletown for over twenty years and is a licensed environmental professional with Tighe and Bond. She is also on the Complete Streets committee for Middletown.

PUBLIC COMMENT ON AGENDA ITEMS:

Joan Liska, Middletown resident and member of the Conservation Commission. Joan wanted to compliment the Common Council for listening to them last year to redirect attention away from artificial turf and towards organic turf. She wants to encourage this committee to not only put in organic fields, but to treat them organically moving forward. This is for the health of all children and for the environment. She recommended reaching out to other communities that are currently using organic fields and treatments.

Rebecca McLaughlin, 35 Clover Street, reinstated Joan's prior opinion in wanting the children of Middletown to be healthy and to have the sports fields be constructed and maintained without using toxic chemicals and pesticides. After speaking with other residents in the town, close to three hundred signatures were received towards supporting the organic fields' construction and maintenance.

Kate Miller, Boston Road, wanted to follow up on Rebecca's comments. The Environmental Collective Impact Network (ECIN), is asking the community for their participation in a field trip to Branford to see how the organic fields are maintained. The two projects should be pilot projects for organically established and maintained properties. There are some questions as to how it works in terms of procurement and the contractor.

Krishna Winston, President of the Jonas Center for Earth and Art, spoke on behalf of the Environmental Collective Impact Network. She complimented all of the members of the committee and stated its importance for future generations. She wants to know more about the roll that Millone & MacBroom will be playing throughout the whole process. The consulting and design firm was instrumental in doing the survey of the City parks and playing fields and produced a very extensive report which had a major emphasis on the use of synthetic turf. Krishna stated that they are not in favor of the use of synthetic turf and in fact the voters of the City rejected that notion. The design shall be completed to the very best standards so that they will hold up over the years.

Director Russo stated that Christine Solimini-Swift came to him a couple months ago in regards to a sensory playground. Christine thanked the committee for allowing them to speak at the meeting. She turned the floor over to Artha Slade whom will introduce the team members for the Voices for Families Community Project. Artha thanked the commission for allowing them to attend the meeting. She introduced Sharon Hunt and Luette Hanson as well. She stated that they facilitate an advocate for those that cannot speak for themselves due to physical, sensory and developmental disabilities. These

disabilities include Children and Adults with Sensory Integration Disorder (SID), and Sensory Processing Disorder (SPD).

The Voices for Families Community Project team will also be going to the capitol to advocate on important issues in our community. The ultimate goal is for a well inclusive designed community playground for adults and children of these disabilities to enhance their lives. This will allow them to explore and experience the wonders of the outdoors in a sensory park setting. Part of the mission and vision is to raise awareness and gain community involvement towards recognition of these types of parks.

These playgrounds should be wheelchair accessible and should target all dysfunctions. Information about SPD/SID should be on display for the general public at the playground; the area should be fenced in to prevent wandering due to overstimulation. Impact-ready surfaces should be installed so that children with autism can have a safer environment where their falls can be softened due to their tendency to take riskier paths. Quiet areas of refuge such as a grassy area or playhouse should be included for quiet time due to overstimulation. Games that a child can play by themselves such as labyrinth, chimes, mirror, etc. should be included along with a sensory garden to appeal to the touch, see, hear, smell and discovery senses.

CORRESPONDENCE:

None.

NEW BUSINESS:

- a. Priority List / Parks Budget for Park Bond – Chair Nocera stated that the committee should have a copy of the priority list and the parks budget. As developed by the Public Works and Facilities Commission, they have met and revised the plan several times. It was then approved in April 2016 at the Common Council meeting.

Director Russo stated that there were two handouts given. One is the resolution that the Common Council passed establishing this building committee. It includes the guidelines for the committee with a breakdown of sixteen projects total. Based on the ordinance, eight projects are under \$500,000.00 which the Public Works & Facilities Commission will oversee. The other eight projects that were prioritized by the Mayor and the Public Works and Facilities Commission will be under the responsibility of this committee. Public Works was given direction regarding Pat Kidney Field and Woodrow Wilson Track due to their lack in updates. These are two large projects that Millone & MacBroom will explain further.

Director Russo stated that there was no building committee assigned and Millone & MacBroom was given direction based on Public Works. They were given the direction of synthetic turf. The voters spoke, hence, it is not in the resolution. He complimented the firm on the challenge they took on in such a short period of time.

Chair Nocera stated that phase one for the Parks Committee is Pat Kidney, Woodrow Wilson stadium and the tennis courts; this is not part of the \$33,000,000.00. Phase two would be for perhaps another committee on new grass fields on Country Club Road. Public Works will be working on projects under \$500,000.00, which the Parks Committee will be a part of as far as discussions go. These projects include Harbor Park, Palmer Field, Wesley School, Lawrence School, Spear Park, McCarthy Park, Butternut Hollow and Donovan Park.

- b. Presentation from Millone & MacBroom on Pat Kidney Field & WWMS Track – Vince McDermott gave the committee a brief overview on the Millone & MacBroom firm and gave some examples on types of work that they do and have done in the past which do include the use of natural grass.

Mike Doherty gave some further background on the master plan process. Woodrow Wilson and Pat Kidney being so close in proximity; they were treated as one large park. There were a number of things on site that were made priority for the firm such as bleachers not being up to code. Things of this matter were relayed to the City for them to address. He believes the size of the park will serve the most community members which made it a priority location for enhancement. Fence repairs, turf repairs and ADA compliant parking spaces were discussed. The master plan was based on aerial photography and GIS mapping. Millone & MacBroom will need a detailed survey which will inform a lot of what takes place on the site. They do not foresee drastic changes unless the committee would like a different orientation or type of field. They will get a lot more information out of a detailed survey and other items will address in scope which any firm moving forward should have.

The basic layout was a new track that meets current standards at Woodrow Wilson. It also allows for a multi-purpose field in its center for soccer, football and lacrosse. A new grandstand bleacher and concession building with some parking immediately adjacent to the track itself which currently does not exist. The tennis courts are currently towards the back of the track and are hidden, therefore not used. The courts are not currently part of the Pat Kidney and Woodrow Wilson project, but are currently going through a bid process now. Millone & MacBroom are preparing the bid documents and will be turned over to the City in about a week. The six court system will be built prior to the renovations of the track and Pat Kidney Field. It will be coming in front of the committee within the next week or so.

The Pat Kidney Field improvements will include enhanced parking which dedicates one hundred four spaces off-street and another thirty one additional parallel spaces along Farm Hill Road. Another concession, restroom and storage building will be added along with bleachers for the large baseball fields and a three hundred foot outfield softball field. These two fields backing each other allow for a three hundred sixty by two hundred overlay field. A moveable outfield fence can also be considered if selected. Expansion to the basketball courts will also occur. They will be made into a three court basketball system. A small playground can also be added for age's five to twelve. A trail will be constructed that will follow along the whole perimeter of the premises. Soil testing will be done to see if and how the soils will be amended. Under soil drainage may be needed to allow soils to be used more intensively with an irrigation system. The preliminary design can change depending on the test results. The layout shows preliminary grading and drainage, site utilities, lighting and security, materials and equipment. There will be one state permit required since there is over four acres of land that will have work being conducted on.

Deputy Director Holden stated that he has done some work with Planning & Zoning and Wetlands to get all of the approvals. The design work will take into consideration with some rain gardens and underground drainage to make sure there will be no impact to the new tennis courts.

Chair Nocera stated that he is looking for a motion from someone of the committee to allow the tennis court project to go out to bid. One of the commissioners asked how this committee is involved if the tennis court project is not part of this bond. Director Russo stated that because the project is over \$500,000.00, a building committee was needed based on our ordinances. The

Common Council voted to add the tennis courts project to this committee. There was an appropriation done for the tennis courts and the track, but he believes the \$750,000.00 for this project is close to the bidding threshold. Other than Wesleyan University, these are the only tennis courts in town. Chair Nocera made a motion to allow the tennis court project to go out to bid. Motion was seconded by Councilman Chisem and approved unanimously.

Mike Doherty shared a survey that was completed by Millone & MacBroom. The site gently slopes to the wetlands and looking at the grades, the center area will need to be filled to bridge over the soils that are there. The track will be an open lawn area with a wooded edge along the wetlands. It is still a six court system as shown in the concept with post-tension concrete. The City is taking on the initiative of removing the existing four courts. There will be a small net increase since the courts are going from a four court system to a six court system. The courts themselves drain off towards the wetlands and into the ground so that it will not run off into the stream.

Chair Nocera stated that the meeting time is coming to an end and he does not want the committee to feel as if they have to rush into something, so he gave the option of moving forward with a motion or having a special meeting take place in two weeks to have a further discussion. A brief discussion was held and the committee chose to have a special meeting in two weeks to have a further discussion on the tennis courts along with a discussion under an action item on how the committee will want to move in terms of a consultant for Woodrow Wilson and Pat Kidney Field. A date and time will be figured out post meeting and the committee will be notified of the date.

OLD BUSINESS:

None.

OTHER:

Chair Nocera mentioned earlier in the meeting that he would like the committee to take a field trip which Rebecca McLaughlin has set up in advance. This field trip will give education towards the maintenance of organic fields. A tentative discussion may be held during the upcoming special meeting.

PUBLIC COMMENT ON NON-AGENDA ITEMS:

None.

As there was no further discussion, the 21st Century Parks Committee meeting adjourned at 6:58 P.M.