



Parks & Recreation Committee - Board of Representatives

Dennis Mahoney, Co-Chair Marion McGarry, Co-Chair

Committee Report

Date: Wednesday, May 23, 2018

Time: 7:00 p.m.

Place: Republican Caucus Room, 4th Floor, Government Center,
888 Washington Boulevard

The Parks & Recreation Committee met as indicated above. In attendance were Co-Chair Mahoney and Committee Member Reps. de la Cruz, Giordano, Saftic, Wallace and Watkins. Absent or excused were Co-Chair McGarry and Committee Member Reps. Aquila, Matherne, Pratt, and Stella. Also present were Reps. Figueroa, McMullen, Michelson and Sherwood, Chief Fontneau and Assistant Chiefs Wuennemann and Matheny, Stamford Police Department, Tim Abbazia, Stamford Police Commission; Kevin Murray, Facilities Manager; Kathryn Emmett, Corporation Counsel; Ted Jankowski, Director of Public Safety, Health and Welfare; and David Winston, Parks and Recreation Commission.

Co-Chair Mahoney called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m.

Item No.	Description	Committee Action
1. PR30.006	REVIEW; Status of Parks Police presence in City Parks and the Role of the Parks Police in the Safety of our Residents in these Parks. 03/10/18 – Submitted by Reps. Watkins, Sherwood and Michelson 03/20/18 – Report Made and Held in Committee 04/17/18 – Report Made & Held in Committee	Report Made

Mr. Abbazia, Chief Fontneau, Chief Wuennemann, Chief Matheny and Mr. Jankowski discussed this item with the Committee as follows:

- Mr. Abbazia stated that the Police Commission's concern is a chain of command that reports up to the Police Chief in order to manage resources efficiently. The Commission wants Park Police, but want reporting up to the Police Chief.
- Chief Fontneau agreed. He noted that in response to an advertisement last year, only 2 people applied to be Parks Police but then withdrew their applications for personal reasons.
- The Park Police report to the District 3 Captain, but the SPD does not control their schedules.
- Parks Police are needed more in the summer.

- The SPD should be able to control scheduling.
- Because the scheduling and management of the Parks Police fall under Kevin Murray, there is a concern about the Parks Police having 2 bosses
- The 2 positions advertised were Seasonal Part Time – the main concern is to provide additional support from May through September.
- There should be an understanding of when Parks Police are needed in the different parks and the qualifications of Parks Police officers
- The perception that the parks are not safe, regardless of the statistics, creates a problem
- The concentrated enforcement at Lione Park is used for multiple issues. It was used in Cummings Park, Lione Park and Cove Park at the end of the season. Given its success, they used it this year at Lione Park earlier. It is an effective show, but is only available on a limited basis.
- The City has 18 patrol officers assigned on a regular day for the entire City. The City has approximately 50 parks.
- There are qualifications needed to be a police officer, including a parks police officer
- Because of an FBI audit in 2008, which criticized the management of special police, there has been an attempt to bring Park Police back under the Police Department which is currently in negotiations
- The Police Department needs stronger supervision over the Parks Police, including their scheduling and overtime
- The City is not receiving many complaints about the Parks. There were 8000 patrols in the parks this past calendar year.
- Parks police officers need to be certified law enforcement officers; many retired officers are on disability retirement and retired officers want to be retired; new officers would need to be trained; the City needs to find the money to hire new officers
- The City is taking advantage of technology to help residents feel safe in parks, such as blue lights, which include 360 degree cameras; the footage is transmitted back to the 911 center
- The City has 274 effective police officers and 5 will be retiring July 1
- They get many responses when they advertise for full time police officers, but it is very difficult to hire part time officers; even when an officer is hired, it takes 10 months for them to get out into the field
- Prior to 1986, a parks police officer did not need the same training as a regular officer; officers who are currently retired did not have the same training as officers coming in now; there is 6 months of training now; the current parks police officers were hired under a system that no longer exists; standards also changed as of January, including for retired officers
- The money to hire parks police officers is in Operations
- Constituents generally don't want law enforcement cameras in public spaces
- There are concerns about safety at Cummings and Carwin Parks
- The dispatcher is often rude when residents call
- There is no intent to pull Parks Police officers under SPD to be used in other areas of the City unless there was an emergency (Parks Police now do help out in emergencies outside of parks)
- The police department is responsible for figuring out how to address this situation, but there is very little money available

- The Board of Finance put money in contingency which could be used for parks police
- Action plan items include:
 - resolving control issues between Operations and SPD and secure funding for Parks Police
 - SPD will submit to the BOR the job postings from a few years ago which yielded a SPD officer becoming a Park Police Officer and the job posting recently which yielded no new hires
 - Director Jankowski will take back to the Mayor's office the request that the SPD and the mayor's office come up with an action plan they can present to the BOR as soon as possible
 - Director Jankowski requested the BOR review the limitations on cameras, specifically as it relates to the parks.

¹2. PR30.011 REVIEW; Review of Woodway Park and Mill River Report Made
 Park model as alternative to the City maintaining the
 parks.
 05/08/18 – Submitted by Rep. McMullen

Rep. McMullen stated that he brought this up as a possible way to save funds on management of parks.

Ms. Emmett, Mr. Murray and Mr. Winston discussed this item with the Committee as follows:

- The Woodway Park structure is unique because of the club's need to have a tee box next to City property; so the decision was that it was beneficial to the City to have the Club maintain the open space in consideration for the leasing the tee box; this doesn't address law enforcement issues in the park and the park is still subject to City park rules
- The Mill River Park structure is based on a contract with the Mill River Collaborative under which the Collaborative has been authorized to manage and develop the Mill River; this is in connection with the TIF surrounding the park, with the expectation that the development of the park would increase the value of the properties around the park. There are specific requirements in the agreement regarding the rules of the park; the Mill River has separate rules. The Mill River has an ambassador program of people present in the park who are not park police. The Collaborative is required to spend \$500,000 per year on park maintenance and has raised and spent millions on development of the park.
- Other municipalities do have active public/private partnerships for parks, such as New York City and this model is used effectively
- The Mill River gets what is budgeted by the City but does get the right to income it earns from certain activities in the park, otherwise it gets no consideration
- Woodway Park is a natural wooded park with paths and there are dirt bike paths; there were issues last year with a tree stand and debris, which have been addressed; Mr. Murray has set up an annual meeting with the groundskeeper every June. The park is being maintained better now.
- The City does help with some maintenance issues in the Mill River if the City's expertise is needed

¹ Video Time Stamp Pt. 1 01:20:20

- The City has entered into other agreements with private entities for specific activities in parks, e.g. the restoration of a building at Cove Island Park by Soundwaters or the repair at Boccuzzi Park by Soundwaters
- The Parks Commission has explored the Parks Foundation concept, but there is a concern about whether this will result in budget cuts if an entity is bringing money into the parks
- A volunteer relationship is also an option
- How would this affect lesser used parks; would they lose out on funding or attention
- The Mill River Park does not fall under the jurisdiction of the Parks & Rec Commission
- A public/private partnership would give the entity more control over what happens in the parks
- The Board approved the agreement with the Mill River; the terms depend upon what the Board would authorize
- The South End Park, which is run by BLT, also requires Board approval of concessions, etc.
- Civic organizations, corporations and school groups often volunteer their time in parks; in NY, these are organized through Partnership for the Parks
- There used to be a “Keep Stamford Beautiful” program with a paid position
- Naming facilities is subject to Board approval (the Mill River has the authority to name subject to Board rejection)
- There is a backlog of unmet capital needs for the parks of approximately \$20-25 million

Co-Chair Mahoney adjourned the meeting at 9:24 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Dennis Mahoney, Co-Chair

This meeting is on video ([Pt. 1](#) & [Pt. 2](#))