Board of Park Commissioners

Regular Meeting

~ Meeting Minutes ~

Tuesday, July 7, 2020 | **9:00 A.M.** | **RWP Dalrymple Boathouse**

This meeting was called to order at 9:18 a.m.

PRESENT: Chairman Jorge O. Elorza; Commissioner Nicholas Narducci; Commissioner Elizabeth Gordon-Martin; Commissioner Sara McConnell; Commissioner Marilyn Cepeda-Andujar; Commissioner Elli Panichas – 6.

ABSENT: Commissioner John J. Igliozzi - 1.

Also present were Wendy Nilsson, Parks Superintendent; Brian Byrnes, Deputy Superintendent; Katherine Berroa, Assistant to the Superintendent; Etie Schaub, Associate City Solicitor; and 25 members of the public as attendees.

APPROVAL OF JUNE 2, 2020 MEETING MINUTES

On motion of Commissioner Narducci, seconded by Commissioner Cepeda-Andujar; it is voted to approve the June 2, 2020 meeting minutes.

RESULT:	**APPROVED (VOTE) [UNANIMOUS]**
MOVER:	Commissioner Narducci
SECONDER:	Commissioner Cepeda-Andujar
AYES:	Chairman Elorza, Commissioner Narducci, Commissioner Panichas, Commissioner Gordon-Martin, Commissioner McConnell, Commissioner Cepeda-Andujar, – 6.
ABSENT:	Commissioner John J. Igliozzi, – 1.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Joey Gizzarelli: Mr. Gizzarelli addressed the board and commented that he was the Italian American who started the change.org petition to relocate the Columbus Statue to a museum and stated the following. "The final atrocities committed on the indigenous people as well as put an end to the unhealthy glorification of white supremacy and colonization by the Italian American community many whom still carry historical shame of Italian American immigrant and refugee roots. So, I have two specific questions, first directed at the entire Board of Park Commissioners, I would like you to publicly commit to following as closely as possible as best of your abilities the advice of the Special Committee to review Commemorative Works as it pertains to the relocation of the Columbus Statue. So yes or no. Do you make that commitment? My second question is directed at Mayor Elorza, do you think the City of Providence should establish a special committee comprised of City Council member's and indigenous representatives to address the needs and concerns of Rhode Island's indigenous communities, yes or no, and why. So that's my statements."

Chairman Elorza explained that this being a time for public comment all questions will be addressed in its proper time by matter of the agenda, therefore, the meeting proceeded with the next attendee.

Jenny Sparks: Jenny Sparks explains that she works at an Industrial Arts non-profit in Providence called the Steel-Yard and they have discussed the issue of the Columbus Statue with Loren Spears who is the Executive Director of the Tomaquoq Museum. They would like to provide an alternative proposal for what to do with the statue and they would like the board to consider melting down the statue and working with indigenous artists to create a new piece from the bronze. They would appreciate it if the board kept this option in mind.

Sharon Steele: Sharon Steele asked if she would have the opportunity to reserve her comments on the Pedestrian Bridge when the agenda item is addressed during the course of the meeting. Chairman Elorza explained that as each item is discussed members of the public will have the opportunity to ask questions and make comments once the initial discussion is made.

Tracy Miller: Preferred to submit a written comment.

David Talan: Former member of the Board of Park Commissioners for 12 yrs., and President of the Reservoir Triangle Neighborhood Association explained that the Reservoir Ave. Assoc. would like to see the Columbus statue returned to its previous location for it has special meaning to the Reservoir Ave. neighborhood. He explained that the Reservoir Ave. Triangle is also the gateway between Reservoir, Cranston and Elmwood Avenue. The Gorham Manufacturing plant was basically what started the Reservoir Triangle in 1890s. He explains that this statue actually means something to this neighborhood and would like to see it placed where it belongs. As a former Commissioner of the Board of Parks, he explains that it is a great thing to deal with matters that make people happy and he urges the board to "avoid removing things, names from things, just to concentrate on building new parks and new things to make people happy."

Crow Grando: Ms. Grando is from the indigenous community in Providence, she is a supporter of the Providence defense against the Dakota Access Pipeline. She identifies both for her indigenous and colonial settler heritage and explains that Christopher Columbus was responsible for the genocide of hundredths of thousands of native peoples, adding that "there has not been enough attention given to the fact that there is a sizable thriving native community here in Providence and all of Rhode Island and our neighboring states we know who we are. You all don't seem to know who we are, you know about the museums you know about pow-wows, things that are visible. But imagine being an indigenous person or a person who shares that heritage and seeing a genocidal person who is known to have allowed his crew to rape and pillage our people commemorated publicly and celebrated. So, what I am urging you to do is to make sure that any panels that you have that discuss what is to be done with this statue include people from the communities who are most egregiously affected by its presence. You know, if a statue like this is to be placed in public it needs to be placed in context with the actual history as it happens, not as it was rewritten to be palatable by the public who does not know their history."

Ellen Z: Ms. Z addressed the board regarding the Columbus statue. She explains that it is no longer appropriate to have monuments in the City celebrating genocide and she believes that the statute should be replaced.

AUTHORIZATION TO NEGOTIATE THE EXCHANGE OF APPROXIMATELY 7,500 S.F. OF LINCOLN SCHOOL PROPERTY, PLAT 4, LOT 196 WITH A LIKE PARCEL OF APPROXIMATELY 7,500 S.F. OF PROVIDENCE PARKS DEPARTMENT PROPERTY PLAT 4, LOT 142. Wendy Nilsson, Parks Superintendent. Discussion and Vote.

Superintendent Nilsson requested to have the language of agenda item v. amended and corrected to show the accurate plot and lot numbers. Commissioner Narducci suggested to amend the agenda formally and to have a vote held in which the corrected language shows as ***Exhibit-A***.

Chairman Elorza agreed to pass a motion to have the language in agenda item v. amended and presented as ***Exhibit-A*** in which the new language reads as follows:

AUTHORIZATION TO NEGOTIAGE THE EXCHANGE OF APPROXIMATELY 7,500 S.F. OF LINCOLN SCHOOL PROPERTY, PLAT 41, LOT 196 WITH A LIKE PARCEL OF PARCEL OF APPROXIMATELY 7,500 S.F. OF PROVIDENCE PARKS DEPARTMENT PROPERTY PLAT 41, LOT 143. Now entered as ***Exhibit-A.***

Chairman Elorza entertains a motion to have Exhibit-A approved. On motion by Commissioner Narducci and seconded by Commissioner Gordon-Martin. Motion passes.

Discussion was held relative to the foregoing matter.

CHAIRMAN ELORZA: Entertains a motion to approve Exhibit-A.

COMMISSIONER NARDUCCI: So, moved.

COMMISSIONER MCCONNELL: Seconded.

CHAIRMAN ELORZA: All those in favor say aye.

COMMITTEE: Aye.

CHAIRMAN ELORZA: All those opposed, none. The motion carries.

RESULT:	**APPROVED (VOTE) [UNANIMOUS]**
MOVER:	Commissioner Narducci
SECONDER:	Commissioner McConnell
AYES:	Chairman Elorza, Commissioner Panichas, Commissioner Narducci, Commissioner Gordon-Martin, Commissioner McConnell, Commissioner Cepeda-Andujar, – 6.
ABSENT:	Commissioner John J. Igliozzi – 1.

AUTHORIZATION TO ACCEPT THE MICHAEL VAN LEESTEN PEDESTRIAN BRIDGE AS A CITY OF PROVIDENCE PUBLIC PARK. Wendy Nilsson, Parks Superintendent. Discussion and Vote.

Discussion was held relative to the foregoing matter.

CHAIRMAN ELORZA: Entertains a motion to approve item number vi.

COMMISSIONER NARDUCCI: So, moved.

COMMISSIONER CEPEDA-ANDUJAR: Seconded.

CHAIRMAN ELORZA: All those in favor say aye.

COMMITTEE: Aye.

CHAIRMAN ELORZA: All those opposed, none. The motion carries.

RESULT:	**APPROVED (VOTE) [UNANIMOUS]**
MOVER:	Commissioner Narducci
SECONDER:	Commissioner Cepeda-Andujar
AYES:	Chairman Elorza, Commissioner Panichas, Commissioner Narducci, Commissioner Gordon-Martin, Commissioner McConnell, Commissioner Cepeda-Andujar, – 6.
ABSENT:	Commissioner John J. Igliozzi – 1.

UPDATE ON STATUS OF CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS STATUE. Wendy Nilsson, Parks Superintendent. Discussion.

Discussion was held relative to the foregoing matter.

UPDATE ON WORKSHARE PROGRAM. Wendy Nilsson, Parks Superintendent. Discussion.

Discussion was held relative to the foregoing matter.

ADJOURNMENT:

On motion of Commissioner Narducci, Seconded by Commissioner McConnell, it is voted to adjourn the meeting at 10:28 o'clock a.m.

RESULT:	**APPROVED (VOTE) [UNANIMOUS]**
MOVER:	Commissioner Narducci
SECONDER:	Commissioner McConnell
AYES:	Commissioner Narducci; Commissioner Gordon-Martin, Commissioner McConnell, Commissioner Cepeda-Andujar, – 4.
ABSENT:	Chairman Elorza, Commissioner Panichas, Commissioner John J. Igliozzi– 3.

Click on the below link to view an electronic version of this meeting with supporting documentation, minutes and audio:

http://providenceri.iqm2.com/Citizens/SplitView.aspx?Mode=Video&MeetingID=12563&Format=Agenda

https://zoom.us/rec/play/vpUof7yp-243HoGdsgSDAfBxW428J62s0SgYqKYJyx6yW3JSM1WlbrRHZ7TgejCzGQKFkoG7_nG3HdGd?startTime=1594127912000