

Town of Hamden
Town Center Park Commission
Via Zoom/Telephonically
Minutes of a Special Meeting
Tuesday, September 22nd, 2020
4:45 p.m.

A regular meeting of the Hamden Town Center Park Commission took place on Tuesday, September 22nd, 2020, via Zoom/telephonically.

In attendance: Matt Fitch, Chair; Gerry Tobin, Victor Mitchell, Jessica Hazen **Absent:** Michael D'Andrea
Also in Attendance: Patrick Donnelly; Adam Matlock; Liana Paglia, Commission Clerk

1. **Call to Order:** Chairman Matt Fitch called the meeting to order at 4:47pm
2. **Attendance:** As noted above.
3. **Approval of September 1st, 2020 (Regular Meeting) Minutes**

Ms. Tobin requested a motion to approve the minutes. Mr. Fitch motioned to approve the minutes. Mr. Mitchell seconded the motion. All were in favor.

4. **Chairman's Report**

In an effort to accommodate the new clerk, the meeting time for the Town Center Park Commission has permanently changed to 4:45 pm. The future meetings will continue to take place on the fourth Monday of each month, as was previously done.

Bob Fortuna, a longtime Hamden concert performer, passed away. On behalf of the commission, Mr. Fitch ordered a memorial brick to be placed in front of the pavilion.

5. **Update from Administration:** Patrick Donnelly from the Mayor's Office

The administration launched its first of four (4) drive-in movie nights on Thursday, September 17th, 2020. Mr. Donnelly proclaimed the night to be a raging success. About 50 cars parked for the movie, which means between 100-150 people attended. Mr. Donnelly noted that the event attracted a wide range of attendees- families, teenagers, and senior citizens. There are three more drive in nights currently scheduled, with movies primarily targeted towards kids and families. If there is public interest, the administration is

considering two additional drive in nights: a couples' night and a Halloween night. The administration is even considering hosting two Halloween movie nights; one targeted towards children and one towards adults.

Mr. Fitch requested clarification on the couples' drive in night. Mr. Donnelly explained that it simply meant the movie selection would be tailored towards adult couples.

Mr. Donnelly thanked the TCP Commission for their ongoing support of the Summer Movie Series. He stated that he will continue to update the commission as the movie series continues to evolve.

6. Guest Speaker: Adam Matlock- Food Forest Project

Mr. Matlock explained that the Food Forest Project serves a dual purpose: aesthetic and function. Plants and trees are thoughtfully selected based on several key factors including, but not limited to: topography, sunlight levels, direction, etc. The project's main objective is to curate plants and trees that are low impact and require low input, while providing the associated benefit of food, shade, windbreak, carbon dioxide offsetting, etc. The ultimate goal is to make this initial food forest a model, for residents, but also for future pilot sites. Mr. Matlock envisions pilot sites across Hamden, which would also serve educational purposes and involve the public in the actual planting. Funding for the project would be made possible through the combined efforts of Mr. Matlock and his associates; and the fund matching program, Sustainable CT.

Mr. Matlock commented that he has visited the TCP community garden. While he was not able to peruse it closely, he noted that it appeared to get sufficient use by the residents. Mr. Matlock explained that he has reached out to other town officials in regards to the Food Forest Project, but his efforts were stalled for several reasons, most notably the recent tornado. He is interested in moving forward with the plan and hopes to have captured the interest and support of the TCP Commission.

Questions and Comments:

Mr. Fitch questioned if fruit trees would be the primary plant chosen. Mr. Matlock explained that fruit and nut trees are an option, however, it ultimately depends on the available space. Mr. Matlock also explained that one of the tenets of this project is to design to the space, rather than superimpose a plan to it. If fruit trees are chosen, they would require pruning to limit growth. Mr. Matlock listed examples of similar

projects in other states, which received funding from nonprofits, and were comprised of full acreages. He clarified that he wishes to scale down the project for the TCP. He also explained that the Food Forest Project is an evolving project, which heavily relies on a succession of plants and shrubs.

Mr. Fitch commented that the Food Forest would need to be tailored to CT's growing season. He expressed his interest in the project. He went on to explain that the TCP follows a master plan which was drawn up about 15 years ago. The plan is still being followed, albeit slowly. He encouraged Mr. Matlock to obtain a copy of this master plan, to start identifying potential locations for the project. Mr. Fitch stated that the addition of a Food Forest to the TCP would be staying faithful to the master plan. He noted that the amphitheater section of the TCP will remain an open space and is therefore, not a suitable option. However, the TCP actually comprises land all the way to the canal line. Mr. Fitch admitted that this space is overgrown and not attractive, but it exists as an option for the project.

Ms. Hazen questioned what an ideal area for the project is. Mr. Matlock responded that he had not yet explored the entirety of the TCP. He went on to say that the project would need to adapt to the various conditions of sun and shade, which ultimately determine what can be planted. A 30 x 30 space would be ideal. He clarified that the space does not need to be square.

Mr. Fitch questioned if the project would accommodate clearing and reusing space. Mr. Matlock explained that the level of overgrowth as well as other variables, such as sunlight direction, would determine the decision to use the space. Mr. Fitch suggested Mr. Matlock take a thorough walkthrough of the TCP and then peruse the master plan. After this research has been conducted, Mr. Fitch has invited him to speak at a future TCP commission meeting with any project updates.

Mr. Fitch asked the commissioners if they had any final questions or comments. Ms. Tobin expressed her wish to pursue the Food Forest Project. She stated that she heard Mr. Matlock speak to the Tree Commission, who also expressed support for the project, specifically which trees might work best. Mr. Mitchell also expressed his support for the project. He believes that the project will only further enhance the TCP.

Ms. Tobin questioned Mr. Matlock if he has considered other sites around Hamden. Mr. Matlock said he had visited other sites with Ms. Kathy Shoemaker and Mr. Adam Sendroff. Mr. Matlock explained that he

needs the go ahead from a town official in order to proceed. Once he gets project approval, he can immediately start prepping sites.

Mr. Fitch once again expressed his interest in the Food Forest Project. He said developing the site without spending tax money is keeping in line with the intended purpose of the TCP master plan. Mr. Fitch asked if there were any final questions or comments for Mr. Matlock. There were not. Mr. Fitch once again advised Mr. Matlock to personally walk through the TCP and assess potentials sites for the Food Forest Project, and update the TCP Commission at a future meeting.

7. Old Business: None

8. New Business:

As stated above in the Chairman's Report, the meeting time for the TCP Commission has permanently changed from 4:30 pm to 4:45 pm.

9. Adjournment:

Mr. Fitch requested a motion to adjourn at 5:12pm. Ms. Tobin moved to adjourn. Mr. Mitchell seconded and all were in favor.

Submitted by: **Liana Paglia**, Commission Clerk