

## Eastern Norwalk Neighborhood Association Meeting with Mike Mocciae, Director of Parks & Recreation, to discuss use of Veterans Park

January 31, 2007  
City Hall, Room 231

Meeting: 6 PM – 7:20 PM

### Attendees:

ENNA Board: Laurel Lindstrom (President); Sarah Hunter; Erik Nees, Maribeth Becker; David Park; Nick Overall (Advisory Board); Marija Bryant (Advisory Board)  
Officials: Mike Mocciae (Director of Recreation and Parks); Fred Bondi (Chairman of the Recreation, Parks and Cultural Affairs Committee of the Common Council)  
Other: Ted Vandercamp (Vantage Point Condominium Association)

Agenda – in red below is the information provided by Mike Mocciae or Fred Bondi during the meeting.

1. Please discuss the plan for the park:
  - a. Is there a Master Plan, and if so, how was it drafted and approved?  
Park was designed in 1983. Before there was a Recreation & Parks Committee there was a Parks Commission. Although there is a Master Plan of Norwalk Parks that was approved in 1996, it is not specific. Specific improvements made to parks are decided through the Parks Department and the Common Council. No public hearings are required. Along with the most recent plan to put in miniature golf and a batting cage, the field use at the park would change. The reconfiguration will allow for 3 lacrosse fields; 4 soccer fields; and 2 little league fields.
  - b. Please discuss the extent of community participation in the planning (stakeholders – residents, business owners, etc.)  
Not answered. Additions to the park are made based on perceived need.
2. Are there restrictions on use of the park? Some believe there is a covenant that prevents commercial use. Could you discuss this?  
The City's Corporation Council (law department) has determined that park activities are permitted. A heliport was not permitted in the past because it could not be classified as a park use. Concession stands, miniature golf, batting cages, etc. can be classified as allowable park uses – run commercially or by the City. There is precedence for this throughout the country. The Town Clerk has found no additional deed restriction or covenant that would restrict any of these uses.
3. Please discuss the details of the miniature golf course and batting cage facility:
  - a. Benefits to the City and the neighborhood.  
Revenue (lease agreement will allow collection of about 20% of the revenue); Family use of the park, get rid of the drug-sellers and loud party-crowd
  - b. Potential risks or disadvantages to the City and neighborhood.  
None. City can end lease and require the vendor to return the park to its original state.
  - c. Need for the course (market studies?).  
No studies done by City. But the successful bidder would not be willing to put \$800,000 into the venture if he does not believe there is a need. And if it fails the City loses nothing.
  - d. How it is to be funded, and whether options have been explored.  
The City put out an RFP (Request for Proposals) in the fall. Two proposals came in. The owner of My Three Sons was chosen. The lease is still being drafted.
  - e. Environmental impact – any studies? Not answered

f. Design specifics: **Nautical theme.**

- Plan drawing of the proposed facility, and when citizens can see and comment on it.

Preliminary sketch displayed at meeting. Mike will have design plans when they are available. Any member of the public can call and arrange to see them

- Number of holes? **36 holes**
- Trees, shrubs, and groundcovers – how many, who will install, and who will maintain (per proposal)? **Leaser**
- Perimeter enclosure?

**4-foot high chain link fence with landscaping on park side to improve aesthetics**

- Lighting system proposed?

**Pedestrian lighting on poles that are 15 – 20 foot high**

- Hours of operation?

**Seasonal (May 1 – October 31). Until 10 PM weekdays and 11 PM weekends**

- Will the proposal include any advertising or signage? What will the proposed signage say? Will they advertise their other business ventures?

**Signs will be per zoning regulations in size.**

**Structures planned on course will be Maximum 14 foot high – e.g. - boat to go along with nautical theme.**

g. Will the public have an opportunity to comment? Will there be a public hearing?

**No public hearing is planned or required. The Planning Commission reviews the plan. Zoning looks at it because a CAM (Coastal Area Management) approval is required because of its proximity to the Sound. The Recreation, Parks and Cultural Affairs Committee of the Common Council will discuss it once Planning and Zoning have approved it. They can then vote to send it to the Common Council for approval. The only time the public have a guaranteed time to speak is at the beginning of that Common Council meeting. Limit is usually 3 minutes per speaker. Fred Bondi allows the public to speak at the start of each Rec and Parks Committee meeting, so that is another opportunity to comment on the proposal – but it isn't a legal public hearing.**

4. If the park becomes more utilized through such activities as miniature golf, or concerts at an amphitheater, the surrounding area will be impacted (increased traffic, parked cars, noise, etc.). Is there a plan to counter these negative effects?

**Plan is to encourage parking for Norwalk residents in Vets Park and at the garage in SoNo for out-or-towners. The amphitheater could also be approved without a public hearing, but a sound study would be done.**

5. What are the pros and cons of leaving the park as open space?

**Not answered directly.**

6. Are the Mid-Harbor Plan recommendations for the park being followed? **Yes**

7. How do the other parks in Norwalk (in particular Calf Pasture and Shady Beach) fit in with what is planned at this park? Has there been planning to avoid duplication of uses? **No duplication.**

8. Are there documents, renderings, maps, models, or any other visuals that could be made available at the meeting?

9. Additional questions and comments.