



*City of Bristol
Board of Park Commissioners*

INFORMATION TO ACCESS MEETING

<https://bristolct-gov.zoom.us/j/88962098471?pwd=tUIEr2YCTI5twltd8mgsAnQheYx9p.1>

Ladies and Gentlemen:

The regular meeting was held on Wednesday, December 17, 2025, at 6:00 PM in Meeting Room 1-2 in City Hall, 111 North Main Street, Bristol, CT 06010.

1. Call to Order

Vice Chair Fiorito called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

a. Pledge of Allegiance

b. Attendance

Members Present:

Mayor Ellen Zoppo-Sassu, Chair
Robert Fiorito, Vice Chair
Cynthia Donovan, Commissioner
Leonard Lamothe, Commissioner
Rob Parenti, Commissioner
Mark Dickau, City Council Liaison
Dr. Joshua Medeiros, Superintendent
Sarah Larson, Deputy Superintendent
Cecilia Garay, Commissioner
Aaron Weber, Commissioner

Absent:

Vice Chair Fiorito welcomed Rob Parenti as our newest Board of Parks Commissioner.

2. Approval of Minutes

a. Approval of Minutes: November 19, 2025, Regular Meeting Minutes

MOTION: Made by Commissioner Lamothe to approve the November 19, 2025, Regular Meeting Minutes
Seconded by Commissioner Donovan; all in favor; motion carried.

3. Public Participation

None.

4. Superintendent's Report

a. Division Supervisors Report

Bristol Parks, Recreation, Youth and Community Services Superintendent Joshua Medeiros presented the Division Supervisor's Report. Muzzy Field has been named the 2025 Baseball Field of the Year for North America by the Sports Field Management Association. Athletics & Ball Field Supervisor Doug Trillo will accept the award at Sports Field Management Association's annual conference in Texas next month, with a press and recognition event planned for late January–early February 2026 to honor staff contributions. The Locks at Stocks Heart sculpture is now installed at Casey Field, and recent holiday programming included Scuba Santa and shows at Downtown Live. The department is also running the “Name Your Park Plow” community engagement event, with 160 public submissions narrowed to finalists; voting continues through December 28, and winning names will appear on Parks snowplow vehicles. Finalist favorites include *Snow Bob Plow*, *Boulevard Beast*, *Stormbreaker*, and *Clear-a-Pathra*.

b. Project Updates

Superintendent Medeiros presented the Project Updates. Page Park renovations are experiencing delays due to electrical work at the pickleball courts, as Eversource now requires a full pad replacement, pushing substantial completion to January–February 2026; field lights are tied to the same system but are not part of the current scope. Phase 2, including the pavilion parking turnaround and pond work, and Phase 3 / alternatives bidding have been delayed by the purchasing office to January 2026, with approximately \$3 million remaining in the project budget for Phase 2. The Rockwell Park Revitalization Grant is on hold pending a state MOU and municipal resolution, and work cannot begin until the MOU is finalized. For the Rockwell Maintenance Building, the revised HVAC proposal increased from \$26,000 to \$76,000, and alternatives are being explored to reduce costs while addressing safety concerns, with resolution expected early 2026. Lastly, the starter blocks installation remains scheduled for Spring 2026.

c. Year to Date Financials

Superintendent Medeiros presented the Year-to-Date Financials. At the six-month mark of the fiscal year, the department is on track financially with no major budgetary concerns. Overages have occurred in water and sewer lines, largely due to aging splash pads, but these are expected to decrease once the Rockwell Splash Park and Page Park Phase 3 renovations are completed. Vandalism-related costs have been higher this year, though efforts are being made to ensure proper billing to the correct accounts. Other accounts are stable, with slightly lower recreation and aquatics revenue due to modest declines in preschool and teen camp enrollment and aquatics rates. Overall, the department expects to remain within budget, though exceeding revenue targets may be less likely.

d. 2026 Board of Park Commissioner Subcommittee Assignments

Superintendent Medeiros presented the 2026 Board of Park Commissioner Subcommittee Assignments. The 2026 subcommittee assignments largely mirror 2025, with Rob Parenti replacing John Fitzgerald. Vice Chair Fiorito will chair the Finance Committee, Commissioner Donovan Policy and Strategy, and Commissioner Weber Fund Development, with Deputy Superintendent Larson leading policy work and Community Engagement Coordinator Erica Ussery continuing in fund development. The current configuration is expected to maintain momentum, and feedback on any changes are welcome.

e. Strategic Plan Updates

Superintendent Medeiros presented the Strategic Plan Updates. The 2026 strategic plan prioritizes advancing Parks initiatives with staff leads and structured engagement, including alternating Fund Development and Policy Committee meetings. Key efforts include the ADA audit (report by June), adoption of 20 CAPRA policies, and completion of a staff orientation program by January 2027. Commissioner-focused initiatives include the Park Safety Task Force to improve perceived safety and the Public Awareness on Littering Task Force to launch a campaign in spring/summer. A robust schedule of meetings, brainstorming, and heat-mapping exercises is in place to ensure progress on all strategic priorities.

Commissioner Lamothe inquired about an update on Hoppers - Birge Pond. Erik Madsen of 70 Oak Hill Drive in Bristol, and Friends of the Hoppers Birge Pond Preserve board member, have been granted intervenor status and are participating as an equal party in the review process. We believe any development on this property would negatively impact the surrounding park, and we are firmly opposed to it.

The application is currently under wetlands review and is moving slowly. This week, the planning department issued a negative recommendation, which was an important step in our favor. Zoning has been delayed and would ultimately depend on the Inland/Wetlands Commission's approval. Our focus is on stopping the project at the wetlands level. The developer is now facing unexpected issues with wetlands located in the park across Grassy Road, close to the project site. Conflicting soil studies have produced very different conclusions about the extent of these wetlands, highlighting how results can vary depending on who commissions the analysis.

MOTION: Made by Commissioner Lamothe to place the Superintendent's Report on file. Seconded by Commissioner Donovan; all in favor; motion carried.

5. Old Business

a. By Commissioners

Commissioner Lamothe conveyed the veterans remain concerned about signage on the boulevard, particularly related to truck traffic, and want to know what is happening. There

had been discussion, through the park liaison, about installing signage, but the process appears to have stalled because the land is state property.

Public Works is handling the issue. The timeline mentioned previously was around 2026, though there were indications from city officials that it may be getting closer. Superintendent Medeiros stated that he will follow up with Public Works regarding this matter.

6. New Business

a. Presentation of the 2025 Bristol Parks, Recreation, Youth & Community Services Annual Report

Superintendent Medeiros presented the 2025 Bristol Parks, Recreation, Youth & Community Services Annual Report. Superintendent Medeiros acknowledged Community Engagement Coordinator Erica Ussery, for her exceptional work in creating the Annual Report.

The Bristol Parks, Recreation, Youth, and Community Services Annual Report has been completed and is now available on the department's website. It highlights key accomplishments and impact over the past year, including 8,500 program participants, nearly 10,000 hours of field and pavilion rentals, close to 2,000 summer campers, and strong growth at Downtown Live, including the first fully sold-out show and over 2.2 million social media views. Park satisfaction remains high, with Rockwell, Page, and Hoppers-Birge Pond the most visited parks. Walking trails, playgrounds, and pools were the most popular amenities, and over 80% of respondents reported positive wellness benefits. While most users reported no access barriers, cleanliness, parking, and program awareness were identified as areas needing improvement. The Dennis Malone Aquatic Center reported strong usage and satisfaction, with 96% of patrons satisfied overall and continued benefits from recent facility upgrades. The department also reported positive trends in youth wellness data through the BEST program, though long-term funding will be needed once the federal grant ends in September 2026. Employee satisfaction stands at 76%, with plans underway to improve training and professional development. The department's \$5.8 million budget represents less than 1% of the city's total expenditures, and efforts are ongoing to supplement funding through a future Parks Foundation.

MOTION: Made by Vice Chair Fiorito to place the Bristol Parks, Recreation, Youth & Community Services Annual Report on file.
Seconded by Commissioner Donovan; all in favor; motion carried.

b. Approve the Fiscal Year 2026-2027 Proposed Parks, Recreation, Youth & Community Services Budget and refer to the Comptroller's Office

Superintendent Medeiros presented the Fiscal Year 2026-2027 proposed Parks, Recreation, Youth & Community Service Budget for approval and refer to the Comptroller's Office. Staff provided a high-level overview of the proposed budget, noting that all required hearings had been completed and that adjustments and recommendations were developed based on trend analysis, the economic forecast, and

other relevant factors. The committee was advised that endorsement was being sought, after which the proposal would be forwarded to the Controller's Office for further review, followed by presentation to the Board of Finance. Final approval is anticipated in May, with funding to take effect on July 1, 2026.

The Administration budget was presented as largely status quo, with minor increases driven by projected utility costs in accordance with the economic forecast and recommended slight reductions to liability insurance based on recent trends. The primary increase within the Administration budget reflects a request to restore funding for the City Arts and Culture Commission to \$15,000, consistent with historical funding levels, following a reduction to \$5,000 in the prior fiscal year.

The Parks operating budget reflects an overall increase of approximately 2% before regular wages, which are calculated separately by the Comptroller's Office based on union negotiations. Revenues are largely held flat, with a small anticipated growth from Muzzy Field and a placeholder estimate of roughly \$32,000 for the Bristol Blues contract, which is up for renegotiation in early 2026. Seasonal wage increases include the approved minimum wage scale-up, while a key decision point remains whether to fund two additional full-time park maintainers or continue higher seasonal staffing costs. Additional increases are driven by rising water and sewer rates tied to aging splash park infrastructure, with expected long-term savings following planned revitalizations, alongside slight adjustments for equipment, conferences, and memberships.

The Recreation budget includes increases in professional fees and program supplies to account for rising costs such as transportation, field trips, and camp materials, along with a \$12,950 increase in part-time wages tied to the January 1, 2026, minimum wage adjustment. Slight increases are also recommended for conferences and memberships to support staff participation in the NRPA conference in Philadelphia. To help offset these cost pressures while remaining mindful of affordability and access, the department is recommending a \$5 increase per program, projected to generate approximately \$16,000 in additional revenue and bring total program revenue from about \$313,000 to \$330,000.

The Aquatics budget recommends modest revenue increases tied to the department-wide \$5 program increase and reflects the final year of the Parks Board-approved four-year membership rate plan, with future discussions anticipated on a new phased approach to keep rates affordable. On the expense side, small increases are proposed for overtime to address operational uncertainties, professional fees driven largely by rising Red Cross certification costs, and necessary items such as chlorine, alarm system upgrades, and AED pad replacements. Heating at Page Pool remains a long-term concern, with the existing oil tank nearing the end of its lifespan and likely to be addressed as a future capital outlay rather than in this budget cycle.

For the Pine Lake Challenge Course, the budget focuses on investing in facilitator recruitment and training to address ongoing staffing shortages that have limited program capacity. Funds are included in hosting a local training session in Bristol, recognizing the upfront cost but viewing it as a necessary investment to expand operations. As the course operates within a special revenue fund and is treated as a self-supporting enterprise rather than a taxpayer-funded program, the department is taking a measured approach; despite increased investment in training, the overall budget reflects a 35% decrease compared to the prior fiscal year while positioning the program for future growth.

The capital outlay proposal outlines a range of one-time purchases under \$100,000

focused on maintaining facilities, improving efficiency, and addressing deferred needs, totaling approximately \$540,000. Key items include replacement of the Dennis Malone Pool scoreboard, backup pool pumps to prevent extended closures, cosmetic and safety improvements at Muzzy Field, bleacher replacements across multiple parks, robotic field painters to improve efficiency as field responsibilities expand, and replacement of aging park vehicles. While all items are recommended, the board discussed the likelihood that only some requests may be funded and emphasized the importance of prioritizing safety, operational continuity, and long-deferred investments if reductions are required.

The capital improvement plan prioritizes full funding for the Page Park revitalization, with an estimated \$14 million needed to complete Phase 3 and finish the project, which has been deferred for the past two fiscal years and remains the department's top priority. Additional major recommendations include advancing long-delayed improvements at Hoppers–Birge Pond to address critical boardwalk and dam issues, continued investment in other deferred park projects such as Peck Park, and a comprehensive approach to replacing multiple failing roofs at Rockwell Park rather than as needed repairs. Collectively, these requests reflect an effort to address significant deferred maintenance, protect public safety, and complete long-planned projects that have been repeatedly postponed.

Deputy Superintendent Larson presented several fee schedule options for DMAC rentals and field use in response to Board of Finance requests, including potential increases intended to offset costs and discourage field overbooking. While a moderate increase option initially gained support, commissioners raised concerns about the impact on youth sports organizations, consistency with regional practices, and the potential for community backlash. As a result, there was no action on fee changes, and continued discussions, including the possibility of convening a youth sports summit to address field allocation and related issues.

MOTION: Made by Vice Chair Fiorito to Approve the Fiscal Year 2026-2027 Proposed Parks, Recreation, Youth & Community Services Budget and refer it to the Comptroller's Office.

Seconded by Commissioner Donovan; all in favor; motion carried.

c. Approve the 2026 Board of Park Commissioners Meeting Calendar

Superintendent Medeiros presented the 2026 Board of Park Commissioners Meeting Calendar. The Board discussed the proposed 2026 meeting calendar, including whether meetings are typically held during the summer months. It was noted that the Board had previously approved the full calendar and canceled meetings as needed, and alternative summer activities such as an informal park gathering were suggested for future consideration. The October site visit was highlighted as a productive use of time, and the calendar was approved as presented, with the understanding that meetings may be adjusted if necessary.

MOTION: Made by Vice Chair Fiorito to Approve the 2026 Board of Park Commissioner Meeting Calendar.

Seconded by Commissioner Donovan; all in favor; motion carried.

d. By Commissioners

Commissioner Lamothe thanked all the people who attended the Carol Sing. The event was a success even with the cold temperatures. Mayor Zoppo-Sassu stated that she had been receiving requests to bring back the Parade in Reverse. She also made suggestions to improve future holiday celebrations, including revisiting the Parade in Reverse format to reduce costs and increase community engagement. It was noted that opportunities may exist to work more formally with City departments or Parks and Recreation to coordinate logistics and funding mechanisms as planning continues for 2026.

Superintendent Medeiros presented an update on the "No Trucks" sign on Memorial Boulevard. The Public Works Director responded to an email inquiry. The response stated that there is an existing "No Truck" sign on the westbound lane, and that the Department of Public Works has Department of Transportation approval to install an additional sign in the eastbound lane along CT Route 72, near the gas facility, with coordination currently underway. The Department of Transportation is also scheduled to replace the traffic signal at the Memorial Boulevard, Down Street, Blakeslee Street, and CT Route 72 intersection, and DPW has requested approval to install a "No Trucks" sign on the signal head. The matter had been advanced to Public Works at the previous meeting, and the update was received positively by the Board.

7. Reports and Committee Reports

a. Fund Development & Advocacy Committee

Nothing to report.

b. Policy & Strategy Committee

Nothing to report.

c. Finance Committee

Nothing to report.

d. City Council Liaison Update

Mayor Ellen Zoppo-Sassu distributed a map to the Board showing parcels related to the Hoppers–Birge Pond area, including properties owned by HTH Holdings, adjacent private parcels, and City-owned land. It was noted that three privately owned parcels west of the Hoppers are potentially for sale, and that a Planning Commission referral regarding the HTH Holdings proposal resulted in a non-binding negative referral due to scenic impact concerns. Discussion included the proposed land swap involving a six-acre parcel in the core forest area and a five-acre City parcel, noting that state DEEP approval and replacement land requirements under state statute would apply. The Board was advised that the parcels in question are zoned residential and may be developed as a use by right, underscoring the importance of ongoing coordination with stakeholders to protect the core forest area. It was further noted that wetlands and zoning reviews are ongoing, additional nearby parcels may be coming on the market, and future consideration could be given to including multiple parcels in a single open space grant application.

8. Adjournment

MOTION: Made by Vice Chair Fiorito to adjourn at 7:58 p.m.
Seconded by Commissioner Lamothe; all in favor; motion carried.

Respectfully Submitted,
Amaris Estrada
Recording Secretary
Board of Park Commissioners