

# CITY OF NEWPORT TREE AND OPEN SPACE COMMISSION

Annual Report 2024

ATTACHED TO THIS REPORT ARE AGENDAS AND MINUTES FROM COMMISSION MEETINGS THROUGHOUT 2024. BELOW ARE HIGHLIGHTS BY MONTH

## 1. January 2024

*At the first meeting of the new year the Commission discussed the continuing issue of Pickleball in city parks and decided to follow up with city administration relative to its report that had been submitted last month. The Middle Passage Project team continues to work with the Commission on addressing some of the build issues related to the monument. They presented their most recent alterations and a discussion with the Commission and members of the public occurred.*

## 2. February 2024

*The Commission meeting for February was busy with collaboration on projects from many partners – The Friends of Cardines field presented a new project, The Friends of Newport Skatepark did their final presentation before their appearance at City Council, The newly formed Newport City Sculpture Committee gave a presentation related to the Vanderbilt fountain and the City of Newport Harbormaster presented information on the extensive construction that will be needed to repair/replace the bulkhead at Perotti Park.*

## 3. March 2024

*During the March meeting the draft advisory for the Middle Passage Project was reviewed and discussed. The draft was read aloud for all the public to hear and a discussion amongst Commission members took place. During the vote 1 member of the Commission voted with continue discussion while the other 6 voted to approve the draft as a final work product and to submit as our recommendation relative to the Middle Passage Project in Liberty Square.*

## 4. April 2024

*James Dring, Chair of the Miantonomi Park Commission, attended the meeting and reviewed structural change that the Commission was considering. There was lively discussion related to the changes and how we could work together with the Miantonomi Park Commission to help and support.*

## 5. May 2024

*The work continuing of the Dog Park North was discussed and the Commission was deeply concerned that the State is not incorporating any of the amenities and enhancements that it has recommended. It was great news to hear that the Skatepark had broken ground and would be under construction soon.*

## 6. June 2024

*The Friend of the Waterfront discussed with the Commission the importance of making sure that new homeowners on Washington Street, who abut Cherry Street right of way, understand and honor the public access rights even and that their new construction does not interfere with public access. The Commission agrees with the FOV.*

## 7. July 2024

*No meeting due to summer schedules of members.*

## 8. August 2024

*The Commission has been working with the Newport Open Space Partnership (it is a partner) on creating an Evaluation Plan that can be added to the existing Tree, Park and Open Space Master Plan. The plan will rate any projects in the future relative to their best use of the land, zoning/planning, public access, resiliency, and community benefit. The final version was discussed and presented to Commission members. A vote to approve was taken and passed. This will be a valuable tool to use when reviewing projects in the future.*

## 9. September 2024

*On September 16 the Commission hosted a community workshop entitled – Dogs in Parks and Dog Parks. The purpose was to hear from the public about their thoughts, concerns and needs related to dogs and dog parks. The workshop was well attended and provided much detail to inform a recommendation for council and administration*

## 10. October 2024

*At the October meeting the Commission reviewed and approved a draft recommendation for the city Council and Administration on dog parks in Newport. The report was based on the best practices and community feedback.*

## 11. November 2024

*The Tree Canopy project that is being led by RI DEM and the Green Infrastructure Center, with the Commission as partner, is approaching the time when a public workshop for results and recommendations can be had. Discussion continues.*

## 12. December 2024

*No meeting due to holiday season.*

**AGENDA -- TREE AND OPEN SPACE COMMISSION**

**Tuesday, January 30, 2024**

**6:00 – 7:15 pm**

**Newport City Hall**

**City Council Chambers**

**43 Broadway**

- 1. November Minutes**
- 2. Update Park Ranger, Pickleball and RI Energy Bill**
- 3. Middle Passage Project update – Members have answers to questions poised by Commission in prior meeting**
- 4. Forestry updates**
  - Arbor Day with Met School**
  - Spring Tree Planting Plans**
  - RIDEM Technical Assistance Grant**
- 5. Park / open space updates**
  - New playgrounds**
  - John Chaffee Recreation Area**
  - King Park Seawall / Coastal adaption grant**
  - Miantonomi Girard Ave Wall**
  - Braga Backstop Replacement**

AGENDA -- TREE AND OPEN SPACE COMMISSION

Tuesday, February 27, 2024

6:00 – 7:30 pm

Newport Recreation Department

The Hut facility

35 Golden Hill Road, Newport, RI

1. January Minutes Review
2. Presentation by Friends of Cardines Field
3. Vernon Park Communication re: condition
4. Newport Harbormaster communication re: Perrotti Park
5. Friends of Newport Skatepark Proposal Plan for submission to Interlocal Trust review and approval
6. Vanderbilt Memorial – Review with Newport Sculpture Commission members
7. Project Reports and Updates

AGENDA -- TREE AND OPEN SPACE COMMISSION

Tuesday, April 30, 2024

6:00 – 7:30 pm

Newport City Hall

2<sup>nd</sup> Floor Conference Room

43 Broadway, Newport, RI

1. March Minutes Review
2. Update: Playground installations
3. Update: Skate Park
4. Receive: Communication from Peter Rice
5. Miantonomi park
6. Adopt A Spot: Baycoast Bank
7. Discussion: NOSP Evaluation Guide
8. Murphy Field
9. Spring Tree planting

**AGENDA -- TREE AND OPEN SPACE COMMISSION**

**Tuesday, March 26, 2024**

**6:00 – 7:30 pm**

**Newport City Hall**

**City Council Chamber**

**43 Broadway, Newport, RI**

- 1. February Minutes Review**
- 2. Commission Member review of Middle Passage Port Marker Project and recommendation to City Administration and Council**

AGENDA -- TREE AND OPEN SPACE COMMISSION

Tuesday, May 28, 2024

6:00 – 7:30 pm

Newport City Hall

2<sup>nd</sup> Floor Conference Room

43 Broadway, Newport, RI

1. April Minutes Review
2. Updates from April Meeting
  
- 3. Park Project Updates:**
  - Skate Park
  - Miantonomi Park
  - North End Skate Park
  - Braga & King Playgrounds
  - Hunter Park
  - Murphy Field
  - Spring Park
  
- 4. Forestry**
  - RIDEM Technical Assistance grant
  - Tree Planting
  - Beech leaf Disease
  - RI Energy Bill

AGENDA -- TREE AND OPEN SPACE COMMISSION

Tuesday, June 25, 2024

6:00 – 7:30 pm

Newport City Hall

2<sup>nd</sup> Floor Conference Room

43 Broadway, Newport, RI

1. May Minutes Review
2. Rhode Island Energy Bill Update
3. Tent Ordinance
4. Sculpture Ordinance
5. Uniform Park Hours
6. Friends of the Waterfront – re: Right of Way on Washington Street
7. Metal Detectors

AGENDA -- TREE AND OPEN SPACE COMMISSION

Tuesday, August 27, 2024

6:00 – 7:30 pm

Newport City Hall

Council Chambers

43 Broadway, Newport, RI

1. June Minutes Review
2. City Dog Park(s)
3. Middle Passage Update
4. NOSP Evaluation Guide (see attachments)
5. Braga Park Playground
6. Charles Roberts – George T Downing Award winner (re: sculpture attachments)
7. Follow up on park rules – i.e. smoking/grills/dogs on lease

AGENDA -- TREE AND OPEN SPACE COMMISSION

Tuesday, September 24, 2024

6:00 – 7:30 pm

Newport City Hall

2<sup>nd</sup> Floor Conference Room

43 Broadway, Newport, RI

1. August Minutes Review
2. Tent and Metal Detector update
3. Sculpture Ordinance – Ad Hoc committee
4. Dog Park/Dog in Parks Workshop – review
5. Review Draft recommendation and location for George T Downing statue in Touro Park
6. Project Updates
  - Murphy Field
  - John Chafee Blvd Recreation Area
  - King Playground

AGENDA -- TREE AND OPEN SPACE COMMISSION

Tuesday, October 29, 2024

6:30– 7:30 pm

Newport Library

Rotary Room

300 Spring Street, Newport, RI

1. Updates:

Tent and Metal Detector update

Sculpture Ordinance

Dog Park/Dog in Parks Workshop and Ordinance Changes

Downing Statue in Touro Park

Braga Park Playground

2. Community Park and Safety Workshop

3. Tree Warden project updates

AGENDA -- TREE AND OPEN SPACE COMMISSION

Tuesday, November 26, 2024

6:00– 7:00 pm

Newport Library

Friends Room

300 Spring Street, Newport, RI

1. October Minutes
2. Updates:
  - Fall tree planting
  - John Chaffee Recreation Area
  - King Park playground
  - Miantonomi Park
  - Downing Statue

Newport Tree and Open Space Commission  
30 January 2024

Present: Maureen Cronin, Scott Wheeler, Rob Currier (scribe), Stephanie Szneke, Stephanie Smyth, Dennis Bristow, Denis Demurs

Minutes from last meeting approved

Park Ranger report submitted to City Council, and well-received; suggestions for an increase in personnel, and extended hours were included.

Pickleball issue; Maureen to meet this Friday with the City Manager to check in on the Commission recommendation submitted to City Council in November.

RI Energy- original bill withdrawn, and again re-submitted. The Aquidneck Island team continues to monitor and be engaged with representatives – elected and RI Energy.

RIDOT sent Pell Bridge Realignment Plan “landscape plan” after being requested to from Rep. Carson. However, what they sent was the exact copy of the one of 3 years ago. Commission members voted to allow the Chair to write a letter detailing the lack of collaboration and communication between the Commission and RIDOT on this project.

Middle Passage Project representative Peter Fay presented a review on the progress and current state. Steve White (Roger Williams Dean of Architecture) addressed the issues brought up at previous meetings. Structural, practical, and social concerns were directly answered. Specifically, rot-resistant wood species, structural framing, helical piers for

foundation, and sealants for dealing with graffiti were covered. Frederico Santi Chair of the Newport Public Sculpture Commission submitted a letter on behalf of the Sculpture Commission stressing their desire that proposed Middle Passage build focus be on appropriateness of design relative to the site, materials, and visual prominence. Colonel William Farrell representing the Newport Artillery Company brought to light the importance of the Liberty Square and its history as a mustering site. He gave a history of the land, and of its historical significance to the Newport Artillery Company. He expressed deep concern that the actual size of the proposed structure would overpower the physical space and diminish the history of the site as a mustering point in the early years of our country. Commission members will share their thoughts and reflections on the project by email to the Chair and she will collate those thoughts into a draft document for review at the March meeting.

The Commission voted to approve the Arbor Day initiative with the Met School, in conjunction with the Newport Tree Conservancy.

Renovation, and installation of playgrounds throughout the city continue.

The Skatepark initiative is well underway with aggressive fundraising, sufficient enough to move forward to realize plans, onsite.

Bids are out for the Pine Street access to the bay.

Preserve RI has come forth with a grant to rebuild Girard Street wall at Miantinomi Park.

Braga Park backstop is out for bid.

A large \$2 million grant was awarded to the city for repair, and construction of seawall at King Park.

## Newport Tree and Open Space Commission

27 February 2024

Present: Rob Currier (scribe), Maureen Cronin, Scott Wheeler, Lauren Parmalee, Kara DiCamillo, Bill Willis, and Denis Bristow

Friends of Cardines Field: Presenting ideas for design upgrades. They will work on organizing and solidifying finances to move forward.

Vernon Park-Cottrell: The strong concern over the state of the field was a primary point. The town is in full understanding of the problems, as it has done annual repair work to keep the field operational. This March, a request to City Council for funds to initiate more thorough, and in-depth repairs. As the field is presently suited for younger middle school athletics, the goal is to bring the field to standard for heavier play conditions.

Harbormaster: Presentation brought to the commission on the state of the decrepit bulkhead at Perrotti Park, and the extensive construction process to remediate. This includes the the harbormaster's office, and restrooms. The office will need to be replaced, and updated, due to the impact of bulkhead restoration. These issues are in fact much needed, as the physical facilities are outdated, and obsolete. In consideration of the increase in cruise ship visits, and the closure of the Discover Newport center, this need is even more pressing. This will be included in the November 2024 bond issue.

Friends of Newport Skatepark: Presentation of the current state project. Progress is very impressive, as plans have been drawn up, and funding goals have been reached. Drainage plans, utility plans, and insurance details need further attention. NTOS unanimously voted to forward approval to the City Council for action forward.

Newport City Sculpture Commission; The group organized for the Alfred G. Vanderbilt sculpture restoration is now directly connected to this commission, as a subcommittee. The artist E.H.Morahan was a student of St. Gaudins. The proposed site in the park on Broadway has become too complicated, and therefore too expensive to realistically accomplish the goal. This subcommittee has brought forth a proposal to set the sculpture, pedestal, and basin in the park on Broadway at the intersection of Memorial. Vanderbilt Circle, as named, is the new proposed site. This commission voted for this proposal; all in favor to move forward.

Newport Tree and Open Space Commission  
26 March 2024

Present: Maureen Cronin (Chair), Rob Currier (scribe), Scott Wheeler, Stephanie Szneke, Stephanie Smyth., Kara DiCamillo, Denis Bristow, Bill Willis

Minutes from February meeting approved, by vote

The Chair provided the members with a draft report and advisory regarding the Middle Passage Project. The draft was written after the Chair received comments and opinions from each Commission member. The draft report represents input from each member and includes an overview of work done and meetings held over some years with the Middle Passage Committee, as well as an advisory to Council and Administration on the proposed built structure's location in Liberty Square.

A vote was taken to approve the draft as a commission advisory and to send it to the City Council and Administration. Six members voted For to send, one member voted Against sending.

Newport Tree and Open Space Commission  
30 April 2024

Scott Wheeler, Maureen Cronin, Rob Currier(scribe), Denis Bristow, Stephanie Szneke, Stephanie Smyth, Denis Demers

March minutes accepted by vote

The Commission advisory re: Middle Passage build in Liberty Square was received by the City Council and Administration.

Jim Dring, Chairman of the Miantonomi Park Commission attended the meeting as a guest and reviewed some structural changes concerning the role of the Miantonomi Park Commission. He is working with Chair Cronin and the Newport Open Space Partnership (NOSP) to improve present day relevance, and function of the MPC with the goal being for a more cohesion with city open space and commissions as well as the general public

Cardines, and Hunter parks are now open. Memorial benches installed, as well. Braga Park opening delayed due to excess water.

Murphy Field softball field has been eliminated, thus increasing usable space. ADA work is completed.

60 bare-root trees have been planted, mostly in the North End; 12 memorial trees designated.

Skate Park has the approval of the City Council. Permit applications have been submitted.

Newport resident Peter Rice presented the Commission with a statement of great concern involving the mountain of fill resulting from construction of the new high school. This Commission reassured him of its awareness of the problem. This commission also made clear the commitment to the installation of playing fields at the high school, after the proper capping. NOSP (comprised of ALT, NTC, CON and NTOC) have been in talks with the Superintendent and School Board leadership on this issue.

Maureen put out a handout on the NOSP mechanics of a connected system for members to review.

Spring Park will be officially dedicated and transferred to the city on June 1, 2024. All are invited to attend and celebrate.

Newport Tree and Open Space Commission  
28 May 2024

Present: Scott Wheeler, Maureen Cronin, Rob Currier (scribe), Bill Willis, Denis Bristow., Denis Demers, Kara Di Camillo

The Chair reported that the information that Stephanie Szneke brought to the last meeting (re: tree removal during new bank construction on Broadway) was followed up on by Scott Wheeler. The plan Stephanie showed the council was not approved and Scott weighed in with the project managers that the tree was not to be removed and that they were using an unapproved plan. If Stephanie had not noticed this on the plan the tree would most likely have been removed. The Commission is grateful for her checking the plan and informing them so action could be taken.

Dog Park North End- Scott would like to see engineered wood chips used for base material, as it would make a safer floor for pets. The surround fencing is also a point of concern, as there is too much of a gap from the bottom of the fence to the ground... dogs can escape. The plan is for a Fall 2024 opening of this area. Maureen is investigating the possibility of an additional dog park in the South end. She will keep us informed as things progress.

The Skatepark will break ground this Friday after many years in planning and fundraising.

Miantinomi Park Tower work is getting assessments from structural engineers in regards to cracks in the stonework. The flagpole mounted at the top will be moved to the ground base for safety reasons.

Braga playground work progressing in spite of rain. One large concrete pour is complete with one lesser one to do. Other playgrounds finished are Cardines (big hit!). Sidewalk work done at Murphy field, with the drinking fountain. Plans also for the removal of the softball field and going for council support.

Spring Park Grand Opening is this Saturday, June 1 at 11:00. The City will officially take over the ownership and management of the park. ALT has been granted an conservation easement as well. Signage which will include QR codes will be coming soon.

Green Infrastructure Center will be getting involved in Newport's Open space plans, tree management, tree canopy. This is basically a tree audit, encompassing all things related to sewage overflow, storm drainage in general, etc. We will have the opportunity to review the findings.

RI Energy Bill concerning the tree warden legislation, has turned into a year and a half of meetings lobbying and follow up. It appears that there will be a House bill that contains the compromises on both sides before the session closes in June. A big round of thanks to those heavily involved including our own Maureen Cronin and Scott Wheeler.

Minutes – June 25, 2024

2<sup>nd</sup> Floor Conference Room, Newport City Hall

Newport Tree and Open Space Commission

Attending: Maureen Cronin, Scott Wheeler, Cara DiCamillo, Stephanie Szneke, Stephanie Smyth, William Willis, Denis Demers

The Chair gave an update on the progress of the Rhode Island Energy bill which impacts trees and open space throughout Newport. As the state session comes to a close there are still meetings taking place to hammer out an agreed upon compromise.

The need to alter the current Tree and Open Space ordinance relative to tents and metal detectors was once again discussed. The use of tents and metal detectors is increasing in parks and is now considered a safety issue. The members voted to draft language for the current ordinance that would address these two issues and submit to Council for review/approval.

The need to create uniform park hours was once again discussed and agreed to be a priority in 2025.

The leadership from the Friends of the Waterfront (FOW) appeared at the meeting to discuss Cherry Street right of way off Washington Street. The house adjacent to the right of way has changed ownership and the FOW wants to ensure that the new owners make sure that the new owners understand and respect the accessibility to the public and make sure that they do not obstruct in any way. The Commission agreed. Since the new owners have presented at a City Council meeting and acknowledged their desire to comply with accessibility the Commission did not feel at this time that there was any action they could/or needed to take.

Minutes

Tree and Open Space Commission

August 27, 2024

Newport City Council Chamber

Review of upcoming work shop on Dog Parks/Dogs in Parks

Vote to recommend the Newport Open Space Partnership Evaluation Plan be added to Tree, Park and Open Space Master Plan as an amendment – vote was unanimous to accept

Braga playground – review of equipment causing concern for neighbors. Neighbors appeared and outlined concerns, Commission reviewed warranty and possible options to review. Next steps being taken by city staff with a future report at a Commission meeting.

Resident Charles Roberts presented a recommendation to honor past Newport resident George Downing by placing a statue in Touro Park. Review of specifications, sculptor and location reviewed. Mr. Roberts and Mr. Wheeler will review actual location and report back to Commission. Commission voted to approve moving forward and directed Mr. Roberts to attend a Sculpture Commission meeting to ensure they approved the material and size of sculpture. Next meeting will vote to move project to recommendation to city Administration and Council

Minutes

Newport Tree and Open Space Commission

September 24, 2024

Present: Rob Currier, Bill Willis, Denis Demers, Maureen Cronin, Scott Wheeler, Kara DiCamillo

Discussion related to the September 16 community workshop and a working session to finalize the draft recommendation too place this this meeting.

Minutes

Newport Tree and Open Space Commission

Tuesday, October 29, 2024

Attending: Maureen Cronin, Scott Wheeler, William Willis, Denis Demers, Stephanie Sznec, Stephanie Smyth, Kara DiCamillo

Scott Wheeler reviewed with the Commission updates on all parks, playgrounds, proposed sculpture and work that was currently ongoing and hoped to be concluded by end of calendar year.

The remaining meeting time had the Commission members reviewing and writing their report of the Dog Park Workshop that was hosted by the Commission on Monday, September 16, 2024. At the conclusion of the writing and review the Commission voted to submit the recommendation to the City Council and Management

## Newport Tree and Open Space 29 November 2024

Present: Rob Currier, Scott Wheeler, Maureen Cronin, Denis Demers, Stephanie Smyth, Kara DiCamillo, Bill Willis

Update on the metal detector use in parks – Ordinance changes accepted by a vote and advisory getting prepared for submission to the new Council

Sculpture Committee -- The Chair had a meeting with 3 members of the Committee and discussed how to help align and define their purpose and goes within the Tree and Open Space Ordinance. The define work as: "Guardians of the nature of the art and the relevance to Newport".

Downing Statue, Touro Park – The Commission recommendation was received by Council. Maureen will be meeting with the city manager to go forward.

Public concerns of safety issues with the Braga Park playground continue. Any option will first need to be in line with the manufacturer since any alterations would cause insurance problems. After meeting onsite with the manufacturer and the city staff the Commission sees no looming safety issue and will look at this issue again after the entire project is completed.

Tree canopy mapping project continues will be an aid to the city's work regarding resiliency. Canopy map showing coverage type, current coverage, and potential coverage will be the final deliverable . Work continues on tree planting grants in the North End.

The skatepark project is ready to have it grand opening date TBD. Some additional concrete work, and grading. November is target for opening. Kirby Construction has been the driving force in the construction project.

Slide in Aquidneck Park is to be replaced.

Per direction from City Manager the Commission will review siting options and recommendations for the the carousel and elephant sculpture gift.

Murphy Field is finished

Pine Street Drift way project it back to moving forward