



Date: November 16, 2022  
To: Common Council President DePietro and Common Council Members  
From: Hilary Hillman, Chair, Hudson Conservation Advisory Council  
Re: 2023 Budget and Hudson City Parks

MEMO

As you know well, the Hudson Conservation Advisory Council (CAC) is tasked with advising city government on environmental and conservation issues. This memo is to make you aware of the CAC's position on the need to create a Parks Director position. This was not funded in the 2023 budget and want to keep this on the radar of City Hall and the Common Council and aim for future funding. It is understood that the Council is not in the position at this juncture to "add" line items to the 2023 budget; the intention is to create awareness of the CAC position on this topic.

Our city parks are wonderful, high-value assets that serve not merely aesthetic environments for public gathering, but also serve to cool the city, store carbon, create habitat and take up storm water.

In February 2022 we advised that the city seek to hire a Director of Parks; someone who's education, knowledge and experience uniquely qualifies the individual to care for and grow the green infrastructure and the city's considerable investment in our parks and street trees.

Consider:

- the nearly completed ADA compliant, re-landscaped Promenade Hill Park;
- the considerable climate resilient redesign plans created by the Hudson Valley Collaborative for Riverfront Park;
- the efforts and huge progress for the restoration/redesign of the Public Square at Seventh Street Park;
- the completion of the complete Park and Street Tree Inventory and 5-year Community Forestry Management Plan;
- the recommended amount of tree care indicated in the Community Forestry Plan;
- the massive volunteer efforts, DPW work and grant awarded work on Oakdale Lake and rewilding of Oakdale Park;
- and the exciting work being done to create safe and beautiful community recreation space at Charles Williams Park;
- the recently awarded National Grid grant for the planting of 9 street trees in spring of 2023;
- Pocket Park improvement grant application in progress
- DEC tree planting grant application in progress

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All of these deserve and need the attention of a specific point-person with expertise in management, horticulture and hydrology. The city needs an official structure to focus on the management of these assets with an eye to the current and future needs as our climate changes, someone to keep the spaces well maintained, safe, growing and is also able to advise all of the ongoing projects.

We feel that a Director of Parks should working *with*, but not *for*, the Department of Public Works. That the Director or Parks should answer to the DPW Commissioner (if not a Parks Commissioner) the Mayor and the Common Council.

The CAC does not have a problem with the Hudson DPW. The department has been very helpful in projects such as Arbor Day tree planting efforts, 10 trees in two years. That said, this, and caring for green infrastructure is not the DPW's strong suit, nor should it be. Water delivery, reservoir monitoring and maintenance, water treatment plant, sewer system and sewage treatment plant, street upkeep and paving, storm water overflow, snow removal and city property maintenance, garbage and recycling hauling and many more essential tasks are beautifully handled by DPW. Horticulture and Arboriculture is a profession that requires training and experience; DPW does possess some of these skills, but not all.

Interacting with volunteer groups, landscape design professionals, working with seasoned ADA compliant playground designers, coordinating landscaping, plant and tree replacement, and caring for a thriving tree canopy of the city should be in the hands of a Director of Parks.

I suggest that Council consider the following:

- 60k – Director of Parks starting salary
- 41K – Dedicated parks worker
- 40K – Budget for the first year (would need to be set by the hired professional)
- Use of a truck, and collegial sharing of equipment and work requests/coordination with DPW.

Because our parks get many volunteer efforts, citizen fund raising and grant-related improvements, serve all residents equally, create a beautiful environment for Hudsonians and visitors, this should be considered the bare minimum city taxpayer annual financial attention to our essential living green infrastructure asset.

The creation of a Parks Director position as soon as possible is strongly advised.

With respect and appreciation,  
Hilary Hillman

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