



November 14, 2023

CONNECTICUT DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY & ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

BATTERSON PARK STUDY

NOTICE OF PUBLIC MEETINGS AND REQUEST FOR COMMENTS ON DRAFT STUDY

In June 2023, the General Assembly passed Public Act 23-204, *An Act Concerning the State Budget for the Biennium ending June 30, 2025, and Making Appropriations Therefor, and Provisions Related to Revenue and Other Items Implementing the State Budget*. Section 143 of this Act requires the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) to “study the feasibility of, and recommend options for the provision of, public recreational access to the Batterson Park property located in the city of New Britain and the town of Farmington” in consultation with the city of Hartford and other interested municipalities.

This Act specifically requires DEEP to evaluate the following elements of Batterson Park in a study due to the Environment Committee in the CT General Assembly by January 15, 2024:

- Public and public-private partnership options to govern its redevelopment.
- Water quality of Batterson Park Pond.
- On-site and off-site measures necessary to support swimming in Batterson Park Pond.
- Existing and new infrastructure and capital investments needed to accommodate public recreation and public access.
- Ongoing operation and maintenance costs.
- Any associated public safety concerns.
- Funding needs associated with each redevelopment option; and
- Any other issues deemed necessary by DEEP’s Commissioner.

Also required in the Act is for DEEP to accept public comments through public input sessions held in Farmington, Hartford, and New Britain. 90-minute public input sessions have been scheduled in each municipality to provide the public with opportunities to attend and participate either in person or to join remotely via Zoom.

Background on Batterson Park and Study

Batterson Park is owned by the City of Hartford. It is located on approximately 260 acres between Farmington and New Britain. The park’s location is in a densely populated region of the state with potential for high visitation, and, due in part to its popularity, this has required significant costs to operate over time including staffing, supervision, maintenance, and capital costs. The combination

of significant operational costs and its location outside Hartford's city limits has made Batterson Park's upkeep challenging for the City compared to other well-used parks located within its boundaries. Because the staff and financial resources required to manage this park were not sustained, the park has been reduced to "limited public access" status other than via the boat launch since 2015.

There are several specific challenges to park management that will be addressed in this Study:

Water Quality

Batterson Park Pond contains high levels of E. coli bacteria and cyanobacteria as well as elevated levels of nitrogen and phosphorus common for an older, eutrophic pond in an urbanized area. Stormwater runoff from I-84 and the nearby developed watershed, fecal inputs from geese, and natural eutrophication make efforts to improve water quality to accommodate swimming and wading both expensive and impractical to maintain over time.

Land Management/Encroachment

The properties that make up Batterson Park have suffered from benign neglect for many years. That has left a legacy of land management challenges to resolve. For example, several of the parcels that make up the Batterson Park property are encumbered by electric utility easements, drainage easements, and sewer and water easements. These easements will need to be monitored and potentially enforced by the landowner if the easement terms aren't followed. There also appear to be significant encroachments into the property along the boundaries of Batterson Park that will need to be addressed by any future manager of the Park.

Public Safety

Ensuring public safety at Batterson Park will require additional personnel and resources above what is available at this time. Concerns include the number of visitors the park could hold sustainably as well as traffic in and around the park, which is situated in a thickly settled residential area. Managing walk-in visitors would be challenging with open borders, and the pond and boat ramp create additional public safety concerns related to potential unauthorized uses.

Overall

Batterson Park has potential to be a recreation resource for the public located in a diverse, densely developed neighborhood setting, but it will require substantial investment of additional resources, and solutions to the following challenges:

- **Determine Safe and Sustainable Recreational Uses:** Several potential recreational uses have been proposed for Batterson Park by various historic and potential future park users. A primary consideration for whomever is responsible for managing Batterson Park in the future will be to determine what activities are compatible with the water quality of Batterson Park Pond and its elevated bacteria and nutrient levels.
- **Ensure Adequate Personnel and Financial Resources:** In this Draft Study, DEEP includes an estimate of the staff and funding that would likely be required to operate and maintain Batterson Park as a "passive use park" through various potential public or public-private partnerships. Through additional interviews in November with municipalities and other potential partners, and in consideration of public input in early December, DEEP will provide additional perspectives on the capital investments, maintenance and public safety personnel, and other considerations required to manage Batterson Park in the future.
- **Establish Governance Structure for Park Maintenance and Operations:** The City of Hartford owns Batterson Park. It is possible that a new partnership with other municipalities and/or

with other public or private partners (assuming additional funding and staff resources are provided) may represent a workable model for Batterson Park's future. Once updated with input from interviews and public input, the final study will include several potential models of park governance.

DEEP is interested in public input and ideas related to these challenges above or other elements of the Draft Study attached separately.

Instructions to participate in public input sessions

Along with this Notice, DEEP is providing for public review and comment a Draft Batterson Park Study. At each public input session, DEEP will provide an overview of the Draft Study findings and seek oral comments at the public input sessions listed below. If you wish to offer oral comments at the public input session, we ask you to summarize your comments in 3 minutes and invite you to submit written comments that can be of greater length. There will be an opportunity to sign up to make comments at the meeting. Zoom participants will be asked to use the raise hand feature to be recognized.

DEEP also invites written public comments on the Draft Study through December 18, 2023. Recordings of the virtual public meetings will be posted on the DEEP website following the meetings. Written comments can be submitted via email to DEEP via Eric.Hammerling@ct.gov.

To participate remotely via Zoom, please register in advance for the session you would like to attend through one of the links below:

Public Input Session: Farmington

Date/Time: December 4, 2023, starting at 6:30 p.m. until 8:00 p.m.

In-person Location: Farmington Town Council Chambers, 1 Monteith Drive, Farmington, CT 06032

Register via Zoom: https://ctdeep.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_31qjqsPrSH-Ulsw9ErtfZg

Public Input Session: Hartford

Date/Time: December 6, 2023, starting at 6:30 p.m. until 8:00 p.m.

In-person Location: Hartford Public Library, CCC Room, 500 Main Street, Hartford, CT 06103

Register via Zoom: https://ctdeep.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_PypUSOF4QLe344skcni25g

Public Input Session: New Britain

Date/Time: December 7, 2023, starting at 6:30 p.m. until 8:00 p.m.

In-person Location: New Britain Police Community Room, 10 Chestnut St, New Britain, CT 06051

Register via Zoom: https://ctdeep.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_9JhZzL8rQYGbQpgF64GC5g

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END OF PUBLIC NOTICE