

ORDER CALLING FOR A WORKSHOP WITH THE DEPARTMENT OF YOUTH & RECREATION (YARD), THE NEW HAVEN PUBLIC SCHOOLS, AND OTHER RELEVANT OFFICIALS TO DISCUSS YOUTH SPORTS IMPROVEMENTS AND THE POTENTIAL ESTABLISHMENT OF A YOUTH SPORTS COMMISSION

WHEREAS: Participation in youth sports supports healthy development, physical and mental health, academic engagement, teamwork, leadership, discipline, and resilience, and creates a sense of belonging and purpose for young people, and

WHEREAS: New Haven has a long and proud tradition in youth school athletics, and sports remain one of the primary ways students and families rally around their schools and neighborhoods; and

WHEREAS: School coaches play a critical role as mentors, advocates, and trusted adults for student-athletes and youth participants; and

WHEREAS: Coaches, leagues, and partners report growing challenges, including limited and inconsistent access to gyms, fields, and courts, aging facilities, transportation and equipment barriers, and limited institutional support; and

WHEREAS: Many youths feel disconnected from organized sports due to cost, transportation, lack of information, or perceptions that programs are not accessible; and

WHEREAS: The City of New Haven has experienced an uptick in youth violence, and expanded access to high-quality youth sports is a key strategy to provide positive alternatives, strengthen mentorship, and increase safe, structured spaces for young people; and

WHEREAS: Other municipalities have developed travel sports and inter-municipal league models that may offer valuable lessons for New Haven; and

WHEREAS: A more coordinated approach involving YARD, the New Haven Public Schools, Parks Department, school athletic programs, community leagues, and nonprofit partners could improve facility use, expand access, and strengthen mentorship; and

WHEREAS: The City is interested in exploring the potential establishment of a Youth Sports Commission to provide ongoing input on youth athletics, facility access, programming needs, and policy recommendations; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT ORDERED that a workshop be held with YARD, the New Haven Public Schools, Parks Department, school coaches, youth sports leagues, nonprofit youth sports providers, and other relevant officials and partners to:

1. Discuss the role school and youth sports coaches play in the lives of young people and the mentorship and stability they provide.
2. Identify key challenges facing coaches, athletic programs, youth leagues, and nonprofit providers, especially access to gyms, fields, and courts and how these challenges affect youth participation and outcomes;

3. Discuss what support, resources, coordination, and communication are needed from the City, New Haven Public Schools, and partners to strengthen youth sports opportunities; and
4. Consider strategies to improve facilities and program coordination citywide, including reviewing best practices from other municipalities and discussing the potential structure, role, and membership of a Youth Sports Commission or similar advisory body.