

OFFICE OF FISCAL ANALYSIS

Legislative Office Building, Room 5200
Hartford, CT 06106 ◊ (860) 240-0200
<http://www.cga.ct.gov/ofa>

HB-5214

AN ACT CONCERNING BATTERSON PARK.

OFA Fiscal Note

State Impact:

Agency Affected	Fund-Effect	FY 25 \$	FY 26 \$
Department of Energy and Environmental Protection	Passport to Parks - Cost	At least 250,000	At least 500,000
Department of Energy and Environmental Protection	Passport to Parks - Revenue Gain	None	Approximately 600,000

Municipal Impact:

Municipalities	Effect	FY 25 \$	FY 26 \$
Hartford; Farmington; New Britain	See Below	See Below	See Below

Explanation

The bill results in an annual cost to the Passport to Parks account, beginning in FY 25, to pay for the care and operation of Batterson Park, which is owned by Hartford and located in Farmington and New Britain. It allows for the transfer of Passport to Parks funds to Riverfront Recapture, a nonprofit, as part of an agreement for the organization to operate the park. The bill additionally results in a revenue gain to the Passport to Parks account in FY 26 and in certain other out years.

The bill may mitigate costs of Hartford, Farmington, and New Britain associated with the park, but these costs have been minimal in recent years.

Primary Analyst: JS
Contributing Analyst(s): PM
Reviewer: MP

3/25/24

Section 1 results in an annual cost to the Passport to Parks fund beginning in FY 25 as it requires that the fund support Batterson Park's care, maintenance, and operation effective July 1, 2024. The park is owned by Hartford while located in Farmington and New Britain.¹

The magnitude of the cost depends on the extent of operations and maintenance performed at the park. Given the bill's provisions in Section 2, the annual cost to operate Batterson Park is estimated to be at least \$500,000. Costs may be higher, depending on park activities, use, staffing levels, and decisions made by Hartford as the property owner. It is assumed that costs in FY 25 will be approximately half of the annual costs as park operations would ramp up over time. This estimate assumes a relatively passive-use park, similar to the state park model described in DEEP's January 2024 report on Batterson Park.²

Staffing including fringe benefits may cost an estimated \$350,000 per year for approximately four permanent staff (a supervisor, two maintainers, and an Environmental Conservation officer) and two seasonal staff, assuming these are not state employees.³ Utilities and routine dam maintenance add approximately \$150,000 annually. If Hartford decides to resolve property encroachment issues, then an additional \$800,000 per year in staffing and other costs may be required, according to DEEP's report.

These cost estimates do not include capital improvements that would be needed to reopen the park (approximately \$6.4 million to \$9.6 million depending on desired amenities), or major repairs to or replacement of the dam (an estimated \$600,000 annually for ten years). There is

¹ The park has been minimally used over the last several years, with annual expenses of approximately \$26,000 by the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) associated with the state-owned boat launch, and \$15,000 by the town of Farmington.

² Department of Energy and Environmental Protection. Batterson Park Study. January 15, 2024. https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/DEEP/Public_Notice_Attachments/Batterson-Park/Final-Batterson-Park-Study-for-CGA-1-15-24.pdf

³ The personnel and other expenses estimates assume that swimming will not be offered at the park. If swimming is offered, costs will be higher.

approximately \$9 million remaining of a \$10 million carryforward General Fund allocation to Hartford for Batterson Park, which could be used for this work.

Operating and capital costs will increase if more-active amenities are offered at the park, such as an event lawn or a splash pad. Hartford's Master Plan for the park contemplated these and several other options.

Section 2 requires DEEP, the city of Hartford, and Riverfront Recapture to enter into an agreement for the care, maintenance, and operation of Batterson Park by Riverfront Recapture. The section additionally allows the agreement to include an annual grant from DEEP of Passport to Parks funds to Riverfront Recapture for its work in Batterson Park. According to DEEP, Hartford and Riverfront Recapture are working on a potential scope of work for a partnership. The estimated costs of a grant to Riverfront Recapture for the operation of Batterson Park are discussed above.

Section 3 results in a one-time revenue gain of approximately \$600,000 in FY 26 for the Passport to Parks account within the General Fund by increasing the Passport to Parks fee on 1-year, 2-year, and 3-year motor vehicle registrations by 50 cents.

Additionally, beginning in FY 28 and every two years thereafter, the bill requires DEEP to adjust the base fee to reflect changes in the consumer price index (CPI), resulting in out year revenue gains commensurate with those adjustments.⁴

The Out Years

The bill has no fiscal impact to revenues of the Passport to Parks account in FY 27. Beginning in FY 28, there is expected to be a revenue gain to the account subject to the CPI adjustments.

⁴ The first CPI adjustment would apply to current law fee levels because the bill only applies the 50 cents increase to FY 26. Current law revenues for the Passport to Parks fee derived from motor vehicle registration are expected to be between \$17 million - \$18 million annually in the out years.

The annualized ongoing cost to the Passport to Parks account due to funding the care and operation of Batterson Park would continue into the future subject to inflation and decisions regarding park amenities.