

**PARKS, RECREATION AND FORESTRY COMMISSION**

**THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 11, 2008 – 7:30 PM**

**NOVI CIVIC CENTER – COUNCIL CHAMBERS**

The meeting was called to order at 7:32 PM with Commissioner Schwarzlose presiding.

**ROLL CALL:** Dooley (Present arrival at 8:20), Iszler (Present) Policicchio (Present), Schwarzlose (Present), Staab (Absent), Wingfield (Present), Bharadwaj (Present 7:30 to 9:00), Venigalla (Present 7:30 to 9:00).

**AUDIENCE COMMENTS:** None

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES:**

Moved by Commissioner Wingfield, seconded by Commissioner Policicchio to approve the August 14, 2008 meeting minutes.

**Voice Vote**

**Unanimous**

**COMMITTEE REPORTS:**

A. Park Foundation

Commissioner Dooley stated this will be our fourth annual Parks Foundation Gala and the second one to have an elaborate theme. It is a black tie option. It will take place on Saturday, November the 8<sup>th</sup> from 7:00pm until midnight. There will be a DJ and a casino. The theme is "Go for the Gold", an Olympic theme. The highlight of the evening will be the presentation by Director Auler with probably Linda Blair, who is the president of the Novi Parks Foundation, on the Signature Park. We will also recognize the politicians who are in town. There were about 180 people who attended last year and we hope to have that many or more this year. He asked for the Commissioners to commit to bringing twenty or thirty people. The invitations should be ready to go before the end of this month.

Director Auler stated that one of the areas where help is need is in decorating for the Gala. Volunteers are needed from the Commission and from the Foundation Board.

Commissioner Dooley appealed to the Student Representatives to look in to seeing if they knew of anyone at the High School who might be willing to help.

B. Walkable Novi

Commissioner Policicchio stated that it was the first meeting. It should be noted that Commissioner Iszler was elected vice-chairperson of the committee. The date of the next meeting is September 22<sup>nd</sup>.

## **STAFF REPORTS:**

- A. Superintendent of Recreation Nancy Cowan  
Soccer and Flag Football have started and we have great new soccer uniforms. Adult Fall Softball has started at Power Park. The Senior Show is this week and next week. A new community event, the Fall Family Camp Out, will happen next Friday at Lakeshore Park. Fall for Novi and the International Festival have been combined and are Saturday, September 27<sup>th</sup>. The second annual Fire up Fest will be tomorrow night at Power Park. Mallery Wethers has accepted a full time position and her last day is tomorrow.
- B. Superintendent of Parks Matt Wiktorowski  
Park Maintenance staff are working to get the fields ready for the upcoming fall athletics. Forestry fall planting of around 300 trees is coming up. This will go before City Council on September 22<sup>nd</sup> and if the bid is awarded the completion date will be around November 15<sup>th</sup>. The staff has been working with Community Relations by landscaping the three new City of Novi entryway signs. They are at Twelve Mile and Cabot, Eight Mile and Napier (ITC Community Sports Park) and Eight Mile and Haggerty. Six additional signs will be placed within the next two weeks and will be landscaped. The Electrical Services contract and Generator Maintenance contract are coming up for review.  
Commissioner Schwarzlose asked if there is a general area for the tree planting. Superintendent Wiktorowski replied that most are replacement trees. Some will go along Chase Drive and some adjacent to West Oaks and the others will go all around the City to replace trees that have died.
- C. Communications & Resource Development Supervisor Tracie Ringle  
The Engage! publication went through an improvement/enhancement process and is more a magazine style. It will be arriving in homes next week. We have increased our partnerships with other communities including the Novi Community School District, Walled Lake Community Education, Botsford Hospital, MSU Tollgate Center and others. The Recreation Reminder which goes out once a month to Kindergarten to 6<sup>th</sup> grade has been redesigned as well. A Senior Newsletter is in the works. That will go to about 7,000 older adult residences in the City.  
We are in the process of going through the year long proposals to some of our sponsors for year long and event by event support.
- D. Director of Parks, Recreation & Forestry Randy Auler  
The Commission Meeting is not being televised tonight because of a change out of equipment in the TV and sound system room. He gave a well received presentation to the Rotary Club today on the Signature Park, Fuerst Park, citizen involvement and returns on investments.  
Commissioner Schwarzlose asked Director Auler if that is the only presentation he has made.  
Director Auler replied yes to date but he is just starting the discussions.

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## **MATTERS FOR COMMISSION DISCUSSION AND/OR ACTION:**

- A. Capital Investment Project Update-Matt Wiktorowski  
Superintendent Wiktorowski stated that he wanted to review some of the projects. One hundred and fifty-two thousand dollars has been allocated toward the ITC Community Sports Park maintenance facility. Twenty thousand of that is allocated toward engineering and design. Due to soil issues at the originally decided site an alternate site behind Field number

one was chosen. If it is decided that this location will work they would like to have it done by December 31, 2008.

The Softball Complex, Police Headquarters and City Hall lighting project in total is just under a million dollars. On September 15<sup>th</sup> Rauhorn Electric will be mobilizing in the rear Power Park parking lot and will begin with directional drilling which will take about a month. Once the softball season is over the new light poles will be erected. November 26, 2008, is the completion date that the contractor has provided. Director Auler stated that on Monday there will be a meeting with the Homeowner's Association to review how the new lighting will have less impact on their homes.

Power Park phase three was just awarded on Monday to Integrated Design Solutions. This is the same firm that designed the lighting. There was a kick off meeting today where they provided a preliminary schedule for development and construction. It is anticipated that the concession facility will be up and operational by April 8, 2009, and construction will start on December 1, 2008, for that to happen. Three renditions for that structure will be presented to the Director within the next seven days. These will be presented to Commission members for feedback.

Commissioner Wingfield asked if they are going to completely replace the building.

Superintendent Wiktorowski replied that they are looking at demolishing the structure, increasing the size, and bringing it up to code.

We are moving forward with the Power Park Lift station upgrade which is thirty thousand dollars. The design work has been done for that and we are going out to bid and anticipate having a contractor secured the first two weeks of November. This project should be done by December 31, 2008.

The Lakeshore Park Shelter has thirty-five thousand, five hundred dollars allocated. Initially the department was working with T-Mobile to put a cell tower on top of the hill at Lakeshore Park. As part of that arrangement they were going to construct a shelter. That did not transpire but we still have the funds to build an additional shelter and bring additional revenue and opportunities. There are three possible locations for this shelter or gazebo.

Director Auler stated that if the location chosen is at the top of the hill a lot of the money will be used making it ADA accessible. If it is put in a different location it may solve that issue but how it fits in the function and operation of the park has to be considered, how it will affect the neighbors next to the park, and how it fits aesthetically in the park.

Commissioner Policicchio stated that looking at the aerial photo the site closest to the road gives the most visible presence and be more inviting. That location is closer to the parking lot. Gazebos are attractive and more conducive to events.

Commissioner Iszler stated the location at the front would be best. The tent by the sand volleyball is a popular location. The location by the playground may be too close to the other shelter. A gazebo would be the better choice and wherever it was put it would be utilized.

Student Representative Venigalla asked if it was possible to put a gazebo at a shelter location. It would look better than the shelter.

Superintendent Wiktorowski replied that would be possible.

Commissioner Schwarzlose stated that a gazebo up by the road would have to be small. He stated that he liked the location by the volleyball court. There is ample parking and it is accessible and somewhat secluded yet visible. He prefers the open gazebo.

Commissioner Wingfield stated that he thinks that the gazebo offers a little more intimacy and would have more of a draw.

The Lakeshore Park Maintenance Facility will accomplish two goals. The first is to build a secure location to keep equipment so it is readily available for staff. The second is to provide a slightly larger space than what is currently there. The facility would have about 500 square feet and one garage bay door and a side entry door.

Commissioner Iszler asked about the concession structure at Power Park.

Superintendent Wiktorowski stated that the consultants know that we are looking for a single story structure that is energy efficient, easy to winterize and yet convenient for the park. Recreation Coordinator, Derek Smith brought up the idea of having a locker for the umpires. There could possibly be a storage area in the center of the structure to eliminate the wooden storage shed there now. There may be a kiosk and a softening area around the building and possibly adding some trees and picnic tables. There would be no observation deck because of the prohibitive cost. Part of the project is to redo the asphalt pathways and the consultant's initial thoughts are to tear out the existing pathways and putting in a sidewalk with a slight curve to it that may weave around the lighting that will be installed and to plant grass to soften it.

Commissioner Policicchio stated that initially the cost may be greater for brick but there may not be much maintenance for brick walkways once they are in and they look nicer than asphalt.

Superintendent Wiktorowski stated that the cheapest material is asphalt. Superintendent Cowan brought up the idea of pavers or a paver concourse. This is something we will look at.

Commissioner Schwarzlose stated the schedules and standings are printed out and put on the bulletin board. It would be nice to have a monitor that the information could be sent to. At ITC Community Sports Park it was stated that a potential site for the maintenance building might be behind Field one but exactly where in that area?

Superintendent Wiktorowski stated that it would be in the same location as the temporary storage units had been and it would eliminate the digging of a fourteen foot basement for structural issues. This would keep it close to the road which would eliminate the need for a fire lane or ADA pathways which will run right in front of the building. We could tie electricity to it and have an alarm with remote access to the Police Department.

#### B. Fuerst Park Project Update-Tracie Ringle

Supervisor Ringle stated that the north barn and the house have been removed from the site. The stone from the chimney and the porch are still on the property which we may be able to

utilize. The design firm of Hamilton Anderson Associates have been retained. The Township Hall will be moved farther on to the site to accommodate the building of the new library. We are working with the design team and the engineering department to determine the potential use and cost and exactly where to locate that building on the site. That will be taken to City Council. We are working with Hamilton Anderson to refine the conceptual plan that McKenna Associates provided earlier in the year. We are looking to further community input. We would like to hear from the Commission any input you may have for this park.

Director Auler stated that we have gotten with each Council Member individually for their input. We would like the Commission's input this evening. By the end of the month we want to have a draft of the concept plan to take to the City Council for their feedback and then revise it and have it completed. At that time we will go public with the plan and provide an opportunity for the public to provide input. The input session will be at the next Commission Meeting (October 9, 2008). Promotion of this will be on the City website, a billboard on Channel 13, and any other way we can get the word out to the citizens. That meeting will be the input of the citizens only. After their input then it will go through the Planning Commission process and then to City Council so the project can go out to bid in the spring. We would like to have phase one completed by July 1<sup>st</sup>.

Director Auler gave repeat overview of the McKenna Associates site plan for the Fuerst Park.

Commissioner Policicchio asked Director Auler to describe what the corner of Taft and Ten Mile will look like.

Director Auler stated there is not a specific design but the concept is to develop some kind of a plaza maybe using the stone from the house or brick. There may be a seating area with a focus point and a campus sign indicating it is the Fuerst Park.

Commissioner Iszler asked about the orchard.

Superintendent Wiktorowski stated that the trees in the orchard are in bad shape since they have not been maintained. The fruit is poor quality. Several decayed trees have recently been removed. There are still some trees that are bearing fruit but to bring them back to a productive state may not be possible.

Commissioner Iszler stated that she likes the idea that they are there whether they are fruiting or not. She agrees that the gateway at the corner of Taft and Ten Mile may not work because people would not sit there unless it was a bus stop.

Commissioner Dooley stated that the corner may not be an area where a plaza should be. When you come in to a college campus you see their mascot. Since the High School is so close maybe a large wildcat at that corner so when people come to the High School they will see the representation of Novi. It does not have to be a wildcat but can be anything that might represent Novi.

Commissioner Policicchio stated that he doesn't envision that this will be a picnic or pavilion type park but it could be a gathering place for a community or social area if you tie it in to the concept of walkways and greenways ending up where people could gather with some seating and possibly something for shading if there are not trees.

Commissioner Schwarzlose added that it may be something like what is indicated in the middle area of the park.

Commissioner Iszler stated that there are many other trees other than those in the orchard.

Commissioner Policicchio stated that you could have several of those areas instead of just one big one.

Commissioner Schwarzlose stated that he could see the park being used as well in conjunction with the library and the summer reading program for the kids. He does like seeing something in that center area whether it is a building, amphitheater or fountain.

Commissioner Policicchio stated that the amphitheater in the conceptual design is probably the most cost effective way to have an amphitheater. It looks nice and it can be very useful for things like outdoor concerts.

Commissioner Dooley stated that an amphitheater would draw people in. You could bring in a band and a silent movie and the band could play a sound track to the movie.

Director Auler made the clarification that there will be no commercial development on the site. He then stated that the second part is to decide what you see the use for the site being.

Supervisor Ringle stated that they may want to decide what kind of programming they would like for the park and design around that.

Commissioner Dooley asked if the trees currently in the park are going to stay intact.

Director Auler stated that yes they would or they would be replanted. He then explained how the new library would have an all glass wall which would look out on the park.

Commissioner Policicchio stated that he didn't know that the park needed to have official programs. It could be a social center. You have to incorporate Michigan summers and some means of using the site during the winter months if it is possible. He thinks the amphitheater is a great idea for small events.

Commissioner Iszler spoke but tape was inaudible.

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Supervisor Ringle asked the Student Commissioners what they envision.

A Student Commissioner stated that the amphitheatre would be a popular place to hang out.

Supervisor Ringle asked the student Commissioners if the High School might use the park to take students out for classes.

The Student Commissioners replied that they probably would not.

Commissioner Wingfield asked if there had been any problems with vandalism or High School students "hanging out" on the property in the past. There is no place on the High

School campus for the students to meet their friends. With the new library going in more people will use the park.

Commissioner Iszler and Commissioner Schwarzlose spoke but were inaudible.

### C. Signature Park Project Update-Randy Auler

Director Auler showed the Commission a two minute tape which was presented to the School Board at the September 4<sup>th</sup> School Board Meeting. "Facts from the Signature Park Board – Need is Now". The Mayor did a presentation that evening and talked about a Signature Park. The 2003-2008 Community Recreation Plan identified the need to acquire an additional 80 to 100 acres of active parkland to be current and provide for the future Parks and Recreation needs. There were ten strategies, nine of which have been completed. The only one remaining is the acquisition and development of 80 to 100 acres for active use.

Novi has been ranked 48<sup>th</sup> out of 700 communities in Money Magazine. One of the key components they identified was Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services. We are the only community in the state of Michigan to receive the Gold Award for the Michigan Governor's Council on Physical Fitness last year. Our goal next year is to receive the Platinum Award. We would be the first community to ever achieve that. Michigan is the 11<sup>th</sup> heaviest state in the country. 26% of Michigan adults and 23% of Michigan youth are obese so we serve a critical role in getting people out and active.

The definition of a Signature Park is a dedicated space which creates an image of who the community is, what it represents and naturally attracts people to utilize its amenities. It is something the community becomes known for.

This park will not be an aquatic center, golf course or have a weights and cardio room. There will be a Recreation Center with an all encompassing activities building.

There will be an opportunity to develop a theatre program and to take it to a higher level. For years there has been talk of building a Senior Center and of building a Theatre and this will bring it all together under one roof. By doing this we have cross-generational programming, intergenerational services, will minimize operation costs, share staff resources and profits, promotion and marketing, etc. This is also an opportunity for the School District as a partner for shared space and programming. They have stated that they have a need in the future for some type of building but they don't know what that need will be. Why not put it all under one roof and share resources, staff, promotions and marketing.

A Signature Park would provide an opportunity to have or develop:

- Art Fairs
- Movies in the Park
- Cultural performances
- Sculpture and art park

City Council identified as a top priority goal the acquisition and development of land to create a Signature Park. In July or August City Council appointed a committee to begin discussions with the Novi School District to determine any opportunities there. Other parcels of land

were also identified and had discussions with those property owners. These are still on the table. The School District discussions are our primary focus because of a possible opportunity to do a land swap with no cash transaction so funding would go to the development of the parcel. One of the properties consider is commonly known as the Bosco property. This property is 73.88 acres located at Eleven Mile and Beck Road. Just down Eleven Mile are Wildlife Woods Park, the Middle School and Deerfield Elementary. This park came about through shared opportunity. The City purchased the entire parcel including where the School District facilities are. At that time the School District paid half of that price to the City and took the prime property and developed it. As part of that transaction we acquired the Fuerst property. We have an excellent relationship with the School District. A few years ago Dr. Lippe came to the City Council and presented an opportunity for the School District and the City to collaborate for the benefit of the community which resulted in the School District leasing, for one dollar, fifteen acres of Power Park south of the High School for the High School expansion project to occur. Today that is where two practice soccer fields and the varsity softball field are. The City asked for nothing in return because it was for the benefit of the community. At the last School Board Meeting Mayor Landry presented an opportunity to do a land swap based on the same theory. He stated that Dr. Lippe had it right then and has it right now, which is "for the benefit of the community". It is not about who is getting the better deal or the value of the property but about doing the right thing, the right way. The land swap or trade would be the City would give the School District all of Wildlife Woods Park which is 52.2 acres plus the fifteen acres which we currently lease to them. In exchange, the City would take deed to the Bosco property. The School District would retain 7.2 acres of property for future use. The City would build, at the City's cost, a ring road across the property. The cost of the road would be \$1.6 million. The School District would have access to whatever they choose to do with the 7.2 acres of property. The City would also develop any construction for parking. There will be about 4.5 acres of parking which is the same area as the parking at the Deerfield and Middle School campus. That proposal was made to the School District and now a formal proposal in writing will be made to them. They will have that on their next agenda for the September 18<sup>th</sup> but he did not know whether they would take action on it.

If you take out the wetlands, we are offering the School District more land than the City is receiving, more land suitable for building. The City will make the investment in the infrastructure for the road and the parking. The School District will still retain 7.2 acres for future use.

There is 19.79 acres which we call the Kaluzney Trust property. An offer was made on this property by the City and it has been accepted. To purchase this land will cost around \$1.5 million. That parcel is contiguous to the ITC transmission corridor and contiguous to the Bosco property. This lets us achieve the targeted number that we feel we need to build a Signature Park to accommodate a Recreation Center, activities and programming to meet the community's needs in the next fifty to one hundred years. That parcel has contingencies on it that we have placed. If the deal falls through or we don't get the money that deal is off the table. So there is no risk.

This is a multi pronged approach. The first is the land acquisition. The second is to have a special election, which the City would pay for, to have a ballot issue for a bond and have that targeted for February 24<sup>th</sup>. We have formed a cross departmental team of members from City staff to evaluate how we know what the citizens want, how much they will support, if they will vote for it and if so, how much they would be willing to pay. We will contract with a firm



that specializes in Parks and Recreation and go through a statistically valid random sample survey process. He will take a proposal for that to the Park Foundation for them to fund. That will cost around \$14,000. The reasons we are asking the Foundation to do that is because the Foundation can move faster on this due to the February 24<sup>th</sup> target date. It will probably take sixty days to do the survey instrument. The survey will serve many purposes. It will tell us what the citizens want in the Signature Park, how strongly they feel about it and what level of funding they will support. It will also tell us perceptions of department services and facilities. That is important because our Recreation Plan expires this year and we have to do a new five-year plan.

There is another parcel of property that we will be working on later this year in terms of developing a plan. This is what we refer to as the Landings Property. It is a 13 acre parcel of land adjacent to Walled Lake at Old Novi Road and South Lake Drive.

The survey, which is in our department budget and will ask the Foundation to fund, will give us very valuable information.

Director Auler passed out a proposal from the firm on the survey for the Commission to read and consider. It contained background on the firm, a list of places they have worked and some sample information.

Commission Wingfield asked if we knew where we were going to put things in the Signature Park.

Director Auler stated that we do not. We need to hire a firm that will take the information from the survey, information we already have, the discussion from City Council and the Commission for the last few years and come up with a concept plan. This would tell what might be there, where it might go, what makes the most sense and what it might cost.

A Recreation Center is a high priority but how big should it be? A footprint was done for a Recreation Center at 130,000 square feet. That would include six to eight gymnasiums, a theater, program rooms and the outdoor component. The reason for six to eight gyms is because last year 50% of our gym requests to the School District were denied because they were already being used by the School District. That has affected our organization by limiting opportunities for youth and having to turn some away. It has eliminated adult programs like adult volleyball. The economic of impact of six to eight gyms would let us compete to host national tournaments. It also lets us expand our programs for Novi youth and adults and not turn anyone away.

The Park Foundation will be asked to:

- Fund the Survey (\$14,000)
- Potentially fund hiring a firm for conceptual design
- Sell Naming Rights
- Fund Marketing components and encourage voting for the Bond

In the document is a draft timeline of all the things that need to happen. This is usually a 12 to 18 month process to be done in 7 months.

The City can not champion the bond but only give factual information. Commissioners can not talk to citizens as Park Commission members but can talk to them as an individual.

Commissioner Wingfield asked if there would be any baseball or soccer fields in the new 80 to 100 acres of parkland.

Director Auler stated that he did not know because it depends on what the School District decides.

Commissioner Policicchio stated he would like more discussions in terms of what he can and cannot do in terms of promoting the Signature Park and Bond. With other Bond issues he has known about there is usual a group or committee that campaigns for it. He would also like a short fact sheet on the project.

Director Auler stated that he would get something out to them of what they can and cannot do. In its simplest form, as an individual, do not identify yourself as a member of the Commission. As an individual and citizen of Novi you can do anything in that capacity. There are currently no organized campaigns for the Bond. Some groups or bodies are being identified to be the leader/organizer of that effort when the time comes. As a Commissioner or as a body as a whole, you can talk to people about it but only the facts both pro and con.

Commissioner Wingfield stated that at a neighborhood gathering at his home there was a School Board member who stated that "we are not going to give you that property." He asked if the administration of the Schools and the School Board is in this like the City in that "this is for the good of the community."

Director Auler stated that he cannot speak to the position of the School Board. The presentation that the Mayor made stated the case and facts and was done within the framework of community benefit.

Commissioner Schwarzlose stated that we can't address this just on a meeting by meeting basis but become actively involved.

Commissioner Dooley stated that is relative if the School Board does not go with the proposal on the 18<sup>th</sup>. What will happen about the \$14,000 to be requested from the Foundation to do a survey and maybe doing the presentation at the Gala on November 8<sup>th</sup>?

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Director Auler stated that whether or not they take action on the 18<sup>th</sup> he thinks we should move forward on the survey since it will give us valuable information on the community's perception of our services, facilities and parks. This is information we can use for our Recreation Plan, Landings property and all of the other decisions ahead of us in the next eighteen months. The last survey done specifically done for the department was done in 1994. The survey instrument will probably be a phone survey because of the timeframe. If the School Board does not take action on the 18<sup>th</sup> hopefully they will take it forward for action at their first meeting in October. What we can't have happen is action by the School Board taking place in November, December or January because that will not give us time to accomplish everything else that has to be done to move forward a special ballot issue. If they take action and the proposal is not going to work then he thinks City Council will consider what that means and what the options are. Those are not defined enough at this time.

Commissioner Policicchio asked if there were any millage elections coming up.

Director Auler stated that there has been no discussion to his knowledge from City Council regarding any millage other than the special election for this project.

**AUDIENCE COMMENTS:** None

**COMMISSIONER COMMENTS:**

Commissioner Wingfield stated that it was a good meeting.

Commissioner Dooley agreed with Commissioner Wingfield.

Commissioner Policicchio stated that he has lived in the City of Novi for over thirty years and this is the most exciting and worthwhile step but there is a lot of hard work ahead.

Commissioner Iszler that it was a great meeting with a great overview

Commissioner Schwarzlose stated that he realized the department has a lot on its plate and he believes the Commission will do whatever they can to help with it.

**ADJOURNMENT:**

The meeting was adjourned by Commissioner Schwarzlose 10:18 PM.

DATE APPROVED: \_\_\_\_\_

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Reagan Schwarzlose, Chairperson

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Jay Dooley, Vice Chairperson