

**PARKS, RECREATION AND FORESTRY COMMISSION**

**THURSDAY, OCTOBER 9, 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), Iszler (Present) Policicchio (Present), Schwarzlose (Present), Staab (Absent), Wingfield (Present), Bharadwaj (Absent), Venigalla (Absent).

**APPROVAL OF AGENDA:**

Presentation of Fuerst Park Conceptual Design will be moved into item 3. A.

Approval of the agenda with modification was moved by Commissioner Wingfield, seconded by Commissioner Policicchio.

**Voice Vote**

**Unanimous**

**PRESENTATION OF FUERST PARK CONCEPTUAL DESIGN:**

Tracie Ringle, Communications & Resource Development Supervisor states that staff has been working with the Hamilton Anderson Associate Group to create a conceptual plan for Fuerst Park and acknowledges the multiple comments from City Council, the Commission, Youth Council, the library, high school and city staff. This plan has been available for public comment via an online survey on the City's website and drop boxes at the Civic Center, Senior Center, and the library. She encourages public comment at this meeting as well. Comments suggested a unifying theme of a passive program for this park including pathways, seating areas, informal play, and family opportunities. An amphitheatre was also strongly recommended for small programmed events up to 150 people, as well as additional seating outside the formal seating area within the park to enjoy the amphitheatre. Fixed seating was not preferred. A connection to the Civic campus, high school, and library both physically and aesthetically was important as well as reference the site's heritage, not recreations, of the historic elements. Also noted was the potential for public artwork, possibly commissioned by local artists. The concept came from such comments and incorporates a fluid path network that organizes the park into components and links them together. A simple loop path would highlight the hill as the park's centerpiece, formalize the natural topography, and allow for a more relaxed setting within that spot. The consistent details and materials communicate the park character and maintain continuity between spaces, including the use of fieldstone and similar plantings located throughout the park. The library, high school, and Civic campuses have strong linkages for connection as well as multiple entry points from the high school and the library. The concept plan does not foresee a lot of grading or altering to the natural topography. The corner should establish an identity for the park and introduce the Civic campus. Public artwork would reinforce the culture and character of the community. Tracie goes on to describe the landscaping throughout the park. The center point could include public artwork that celebrates the high point and/or references the history of the Fuerst homestead. The amphitheatre would be combined with Township Hall and utilizes the back of the Hall as a backdrop for performances. Township Hall will be renovated and enhanced with air conditioning and a restroom addition. The amphitheatre would include approximately three seating terraces in lieu of chairs with expansion opportunities for additional attendees. The connection to the library would tie in directly to the park's path network.

The salvage barn foundations could remain intact and be used for frames for additional gardens that could be developed by the community and ethnic groups. A fire ring would be present for additional programming as well as an area including a loose arrangement of boulders or tabletop stones for additional seating underneath the shaded area. The next step for this process include a budget and phasing recommendation that will be provided to Council at the next meeting on October 20<sup>th</sup>.

### **AUDIENCE COMMENTS**

Roy Prentice (28115 Meadowbrook Road, Farm Manager of MSU Property, Historic Commission Member) generally likes the plan but has a few concerns. He feels it is important that the landscaping and hardscaping around the Township Hall be something that would have been typical of the time period when it was first built for the City. He feels the building is a key building for Novi's history and an opportunity to celebrate that history. He also states that moving the Township Hall would result in the loss of storage and meeting space and he would like to see this loss incorporated into the Hall's design. He is also concerned that the amphitheatre's location, adjacent to the Township Hall, would present conflict if both locations were in use at the same time. He states that the plan would also do away with the open spaces that were once available to groups that utilized the Park as a whole and that the compartmentalization of the park would negatively effect larger functions. He likes that the barn foundations would be maintained but would want them treated in a fashion that is respectful to their heritage.

Roy Szalony (24164 Brentwood Court) lives west of the Fuerst Farm property and was a proponent of saving the Farm. He expresses mixed emotions at the concept. He was glad to see that the topography would be maintained but states that he is concerned about the frequency of use regarding the amphitheatre. He is also concerned about maintaining the foundation of the barns, similar to Roy Prentice. He is glad to see that the corner would be a highlight but still expresses his wish that the Farm had been saved.

Ray Soeters (does not give address) has a concern regarding handicapped access, particularly in respects to the amphitheatre seating. He feels the terraced seating arrangement will not accommodate people who use wheelchairs, walkers, or canes. He suggests that a flat space be incorporated so that elderly citizens may bring their own comfortable chairs. He assumes that all pathways within the park are accessible to these people as well and any stairs will be accompanied by ramps for those who need them. He would also like to see the Council make use of local assets, talents, and volunteers in the creation of this park. He would also like to see low impact development used as much as possible in order to avoid the need for catch basins and additional drain pipes.

Ginger Behrends (24777 Glenda) states that she shared many of the views stated by previous speakers. Most importantly, she would urge that the fire ring be excluded from the plan. She explains that she has severe asthma and that bonfires at the homes of her neighbors cause her a great deal of stress. She adds that fires are also no longer safe for the environment due to chemical use. She is in favor of plantings that utilize the historical character of the park. She would also like something in the park that identifies the Fuerst sisters. She states that she remains ambivalent about the amphitheatre and would be much more at ease if there were no sound system included. She states that the City's concerts are already a disturbance to her home and those are a bit further than this amphitheatre would be. She also approves of the addition of restrooms and air conditioning to Township Hall but adds that a basement should be incorporated. She would like to see more play areas in the park than sculptures and more open spaces. She concludes with the fact that we are in difficult economic times and she cannot give her approval of this plan until she sees how much it will cost.

Cheryl Csordas (24562 Sarah Flynn) states that she likes the plan with the exception of the amphitheatre. She is already able to hear the high school band and concerts in the park from her house and feels that the amphitheatre would add to if not make this situation worse. She would like to see it eliminated from the plan and placed somewhere else in the City. She adds that a skating pond for the winter would be a nice addition. She also dislikes the fire ring as it seems potentially very dangerous.

Vicky McLean (44709 Dunbarton Drive) states that she is pleased with the plan's majority of passive activity. She agrees with previous speakers and is concerned about the hardscaping around Township Hall. She is also strongly opposed to the fire ring as the liabilities would outweigh the benefits. She was unaware until this evening that the plans had been changed for Township Hall so that it would not include a basement. She agrees that the inclusion of a basement is essential.

Commissioner Schwarzlose reads a letter from the Beautification Committee. It states that the Commission approves of the bioswale. They are interested in finding out if the Novi high school parking drain in the area of the library bioswale could direct runoff water to the rain garden. They feel this would improve the frequent flooding that occurs on Taft Road by the north entrance of the high school. They add that a second bioswale on the east side of Taft Road south of Ten Mile Road in the native planting area would also improve this flooding. Another suggestion is for a labyrinth that would provide visitors with a chance to meditate and relax. They refer to the websites [www.lessonforliving.com](http://www.lessonforliving.com) or [www.labyrinthcompany.com](http://www.labyrinthcompany.com). They conclude with praise for the Parks and Recreation Committee on doing a good job on the plan.

#### **APPROVAL OF MINUTES:**

Moved by Commissioner Policicchio, seconded by Commissioner Wingfield to approve the September 11, 2008 meeting minutes.

**Voice Vote**

**Unanimous**

#### **COMMITTEE REPORTS:**

A. Walkable Novi

Commissioner Policicchio states that they are in the process of creating a finalized version of the priorities for continuation of the existing pathways, walkways and bikeways. There has been considerable discussion about the issue of pathways that end abruptly. They have been discussing this issue and found that this stems from the fact that this project is dependant on the developer. There has also been discussion on the prioritizing of areas that should be completed first. There are criteria that establish usage such as proximity to schools, churches, etc. Additionally, there has been discussion about the area around the M-5 interchange which, if it were a priority, the county would be paying for a large part of it. Ultimately, completion rests upon where the money is coming from and what the priority level is. There are more traditional meetings planned and then a presentation will be made to City Council. Also noted was that because of the difference of funding opportunities for the greenways, the possibility of separating that from the sidewalk plans. This would decrease confusion and can be funded from outside sources. The Planning Department has a comprehensive spreadsheet that will assist in the prioritization of sidewalks and pathways.

B. Park Foundation

Commissioner Dooley reminds everyone that the Park Foundation is a non-profit group within the City of Novi. He states his wish that everyone attend a gala that will be held on Saturday, November 8<sup>th</sup>, which will be an opportunity to speak with people from the City including many elected officials, network, and get to know the members of the Foundation and what the Foundation is about. The gala will be held at the Rock Financial Showplace and will entail a live casino, a strolling bar, a martini luge, food with an ethnic background, and silent and live auctions. The funds raised at the gala will go to the Park Foundation so that it may better assist the community.

**STAFF REPORTS:**

A. Communications & Resource Development Supervisor Tracie Ringle

Tracie Ringle states that she has no report.

B. Director of Parks, Recreation & Forestry Randy Auler

Director Auler would like to take this opportunity to update the Commission on a few items. First is an update on the Signature Park project. The School Board had some discussion at their previous meeting and directed school staff to continue meeting with City administration to continue discussions on the land swap of property to enable the Signature Park project to become a reality. He anticipates this item being back on the School Board agenda on Thursday, October 16<sup>th</sup>, at 7:00 pm. Concurrent to that, the Novi Park Foundation funded the citizen's survey component for the project. They are in the process of preparing a questionnaire that will be distributed to the community. It is a statistically valid sample survey that guarantees a margin of error of +/- 5% or less and will enable them to determine and use the information in a number of ways. First, it will enable them to use the information in terms of policy decisions related to the next 5 years as they will be developing their 5 Year Community Recreation Plan over the next several months and also help to establish priorities for the next 5 years. Secondly, the information will be utilized to gather information from citizens in terms of the types of amenities they would like to see in that park, types of uses the community has, types of uses that are currently met and not met, as well as park functions. He anticipates the data being available as a final report in the second or third week of November, including a benchmark analysis against other communities that are similar to Novi in that they have won the National Gold Medal Award for having the best parks and recreation system in the country as well as locally against Oakland County Parks and Recreation and citizens' perceptions of Oakland County parks. The firm being used, ZTC Institute, has done surveys in 48 of the 50 states and over 5,000 or 6,000 surveys keyed in on parks and recreation services. Concurrent to that, a request for proposals was sent out for design firms to develop a conceptual design for the park and for any facilities that might be in it, i.e. a recreation center, and to conduct a financial feasibility study to provide them with accurate numbers so that they might determine what earned income opportunities are there in terms of revenue, what the operating cost would be, the capital investment cost, and how those might be funded. The pre-proposal meeting, which was held today, was well attended. Proposals are due on October 22<sup>nd</sup>, and he anticipates having a report, including some concepts and numbers by mid-January.

Another issue Director Auler wishes to bring to the attention of the Commission tonight is that of the many events that have been held in the last three weeks, including the 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Fire Up Fest, held after a high school football game. This event gives high school youth an opportunity to enjoy a good time with music, free food, inflatables, a bonfire, and different

activities for the kids. Approximately 750 participants attended this year, an increase from last year, with no incidents involving behavior and he looks forward to expanding on that for next year. Fall for Novi also took place and was the largest event that has been held and a component of that was combining it with the International Festival. The product was Fall for Novi with an International Flair. This event was well received and the participants from the various countries that were represented in the entertainment particularly enjoyed that. He looks forward to expanding that as well at next year's event in September. The 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Japan Festival took place and attracted approximately 4,000 participants on a Sunday. Director Auler feels that this really speaks to the diversity of the community. Another opportunity has arisen out of this, which we will be hosting, titled "Spirit of Budo." This is an international traveling exhibit sponsored by the Japan Foundation. Novi was chosen to host its second exhibit through the Detroit Japanese Consulate's Office and the exhibit should take place mid-February to mid-March. Director Auler explains that this is unique honor, similar to Novi's selection to host last year's Kokeshi Doll exhibit. A new event held this year was the Fall Family Camp Out, held at Lakeshore Park. Approximately 35 families participated in the overnight activity and, based on feedback already received, he expects that next year over 150 families will participate in this event.

Additionally, Director Auler would like to share a new item that was a Council Goal and Initiative that was identified in the 2007-2010 Strategic Plan for Older Adults and the Boomer Population. This was to improve communications, specifically the development of a newsletter that would be direct mailed to those individual's homes. The first publication of this quarterly magazine, Enhance, was sent out to approximately 9,000 homes last Tuesday and is already receiving positive feedback. Director Auler would also like to share that last week the City had an opportunity to host a movie company which filmed scenes for a movie that is expected to come out next Spring or Summer, titled Demoted. This was an opportunity to showcase Novi and also provide an economic impact on the community. During this period, approximately 325 people were brought in for the shoot, most of which stayed in Novi, patronizing local restaurants, catering businesses, gas stations, support services, rental equipment, and so on. By all accounts, the company was very pleased with the City's service and hopefully this will help the City to attract other opportunities. The individual that was dealt with is the #1 Locations Manager in the Midwest and he was also very pleased and discussed additional opportunities that may present themselves in the future. The actors involved included Sean Astin, David Cross, Ron White, and Michael Vartan.

Lastly, Director Auler states that he will be out of the office next week but will be reachable by his Blackberry.

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

##### **A. Discussion of Fuerst Park Conceptual Design – Randy Auler**

Director Auler begins by providing an overview. The City staff put together what is called a Venture Team to help lead this process. It is team of staff members that are cross-departmental, including Parks & Recreation Staff, Planning, Engineering, Treasury, Community Relations, Finance, etc. This plan was presented to City Council on September 22<sup>nd</sup> and received positive initial feedback. At the City Council meeting on October 6<sup>th</sup>, Council approved a recommendation for a bid for the relocation of Township Hall. This relocation is as indicated on the site for the Fuerst Park and does include air conditioning and

restrooms but will not include a basement. Reasons for not including a basement are that it would require significant grading which would add significant cost to the project. In terms of storage, it does not seem to add very much and one would have to go around and outside the facility to access it, which would create access issues. Tables will need to be relocated for meetings (which is the current practice). The facility only seats 48 people, which mean only 4-6 tables are required. The next step is this meeting, consisting of the presentation to the Commission and giving the citizens an additional opportunity for input. He addresses some of the points made this evening. First, in terms of accessibility, the park will be completely accessible including the amphitheatre. Second, in terms of large, open space area for events, he states that discussions are taking place with the school district to acquire the 1.77 acres of property, which is adjacent to the Fuerst Park and incorporate it into the design. It was left as an open-space area intentionally for event space and unstructured recreation. In terms of the natural period landscape, he is very interested in including landscaping that is low maintenance, natural to the area, and does not want Township Hall to stand out as though it does not belong, but rather blend in with the park. In regards to the amphitheatre, this is designed to seat approximately 150-200 people, which is roughly equal to the concert series held on the mobile stage. There will be sound but the venue will not be used only for bands and music. There will be storytelling, puppet shows, library and day camp programming, as well as other activities. They strive to be good neighbors and do not anticipate sound to exceed that of what is currently experienced with the high school band on Friday nights. Lastly, it is not anticipated that this will require any additional tax dollars to build. When Council allocated funds last year, they allocated \$347,500 for initial development of the site out of the General Fund Budget without increasing taxes. This funding will go to the development of Phase I for this site but if there is no funding available for the next budget cycle, he does not anticipate that there would be any activity taking place. He does not recommend a tax increase as it relates to this development. He hopes that this addresses most of the concerns of the citizens and invites them to call or email him with any further concerns. He plans to present the plan to Council October 20<sup>th</sup>, with phased recommendations and recommendations for the initial development of the project with the funding that is currently allocated and proceeding from there through the planning process and getting this project out to bid this winter so that construction could begin in the Spring for phase I.

A concern was voiced regarding policy on whether or not bikes rollerblades, skateboarding, etc. will be permitted. Director Auler answers that bikes and rollerblades would be encouraged but he is unsure about skateboarding. He does not believe that this park would interest skateboarders and does not anticipate that being an issue.

Commissioner Policicchio recognizes the participation of the citizens, citing the attendance at the meeting and the constructive criticism and positive comments that were made. He also states that he shares their concern about noise and would like to reassure the citizens that he had some of the same concerns about Power Park. He feels that the natural components of the park will help reduce some of the noise created by the park's use. He would also like to point out that within the City there are many parks that are mostly used for sports activities but this would be one of the few that are designed to be a passive park for communal gatherings. He feels it would also be beneficial in terms of enhancing property values, providing the City's kids with a place to gather, and the school with a place to conduct pep rallies and things of that sort in a low key manner. He is in favor of the fire ring in respects to being an asset to Novi's youth, adding that it is his belief that just anybody would not be able to make a fire there. He states that the amphitheatre could be a particular asset to those entering the senior citizen age range, giving them a place to gather and hold concerts and

events as well. Overall he feels it will service all citizens in addition to being easily accessible. He points out however that there was no mention of lighting of any kind, which he feels might extend the use of the park into the evening hours.

Director Auler responds by saying that they have looked into incorporating low-lit pedestrian lighting into one of the phases, but nothing that would light up the entire complex.

Commissioner Dooley states his belief that the amphitheatre will add to the community spirit that which is lacking within the downtown area. He enjoys the music and types of activity that he believes would take place there and feels that the surrounding residents should give it a chance.

Commissioner Iszler states that she enjoys the flow of the plan and the incorporation of the library. She supports Director Auler by reassuring the citizens that the amphitheatre would be completely ADA compliant. She also appreciates the homage to the historical components with the orchard layout and the use of the barn foundation. She recognizes that since it is a passive park, it will be easy to phase and the importance of the addition of restrooms to Township Hall. She would like to state that she supports the bioswale and would like to see more incorporated, potentially into the parking lot. Lastly, she would like to see more information regarding the maintenance of the park.

Commissioner Schwarzlose would like to echo everyone's comments of being impressed with the layout of the park. He appreciates all of the citizens' participation and comments, particularly the comments regarding ADA compliance.

Director Auler asks the Commission if it would be appropriate to for it to make a recommendation tonight for City Council for consideration for approval of the plan to move forward to the next phase of development.

It was moved by Commissioner Policicchio, seconded by Commissioner Dooley to approve the plan for Fuerst Park as presented.

**Voice Vote**

**Unanimous**

**AUDIENCE COMMENTS:**

Cheryl Csordas firmly states her wish that the 50's Festival not be moved to this park, mainly because it currently takes place at a comfortable distance from residential areas. She adds that she would like to see solar lighting along the pathways similar to that which residents use. She feels it would be sufficient and would not cost anything to utilize. Lastly, she is still strongly opposed to the amphitheatre and the noise that she feels it would produce, but strongly supports an ice skating rink.

Ginger Behrends asks for clarification on the next event where comments can be made. Director Auler states that City Council will be the next step in addressing this project. She follows with another comment on the fire ring and states that Commissioner Policicchio has heightened her fears about health issues not being taken into consideration. She recommends that he research the American Lung Association and perhaps even the local fire chief for information on the health issues related to bonfires and how far the smoke is capable of traveling.

Roy Szalony states his agreement with Ginger Behrends on the issue of smoke created by the fire ring as his wife does have severe asthma. He suggests that Oakland County Health Commission be contacted. He will remain opposed to the fire ring.

Derek Blair (24811 Terra Del Mar Drive) states that he is excited about this plan and the Signature Park plan. He enjoys the thought of having a passive park with greenspace and is in favor of the addition of a skating rink. He would like to see the addition of some sort of food venue for families visiting the park, i.e. a small hot dog or ice cream stand. He sees an issue with parking as the only available spaces would be adjacent to the library or high school. Security should also be addressed either in terms of small security cameras or webcams so that the fire ring and so forth would be able to be monitored in the park.

**COMMISSIONER COMMENTS:**

Commissioner Iszler states that she feels a lot progress has been made and that it will be a nice use of the space.

Commissioner Dooley emphasizes that all are invited to attend the Parks Foundation Gala on November 8<sup>th</sup>. Additionally, he highlights the positive comments the Commission and the Department of Parks and Recreation have received and asks for the community's continued support so that they may continue to be beneficial to the City of Novi.

Commissioner Wingfield expresses his contentment with the design and the community's involvement. He too has several issues that he shares with the citizens and feels that Director Auler is addressing these issues.

Commissioner Policicchio feels it is important to note that even though there is disagreement on specific points, there is still general agreement on the direction that the City is going in terms of trying to improve the quality of life, enhance property values, and attracting business.

Commissioner Schwarzlose thanks everyone who came forward this evening and provided input in any way. He commends Director Auler and the Parks and Recreation Department for the continued success of their events and the recognition that it is getting the City.

**ADJOURNMENT:**

The meeting was adjourned by Commissioner Schwarzlose 9:07 PM.

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

\_\_\_\_\_  
Reagan Schwarzlose, Chairperson

\_\_\_\_\_  
Jay Dooley, Vice Chairperson



To: Parks and Recreation Commission

The Novi Beautification Commission (NBC) has had a great interest in environmental impacts. We have installed a Rain Garden at Tollgate and a Bioswale at Rotary Park. The Fuerst Farm plan is one that several members of the NBC have been able to review.

The Bioswale on the west side of the Library is wonderful. The NBC would like to see if the Novi High School parking drain in the area of the Library Bioswale could have the runoff water go to the rain garden. The topography was not available to review, but if it were possible it would help the flooding that occurs on Taft road by the North entrance of Novi High School. Frequently, the Taft Road corridor by the north entrance of the school is flooded. Many of the High School drivers are new drivers and when the road conditions are wet or flooded it really is difficult to drive for even the experienced driver.

A second Bioswale would be helpful on the East side of Taft Road, South of Ten-Mile Road, in the native planting area. The Bioswale would again prevent the flooding that occurs during heavy rainfall. The best way to create a Bioswale would be to create a lower ditch by 2-4 feet deep, 10-12 feet long, fill with compost and allow the water runoff to sit in the compost. Specific plants need to be planted in the compost of the Bioswale to allow proper absorption of the water by the roots of the plants. The ditch could have multiple Bioswales in a row to allow drainage to be stationary and then absorbed for a period of time. If multiple Bioswales were incorporated a clay wall (the soil that is present at the current ground level) between each Bioswale would be beneficial to separate each area and slow the runoff. The best thought would be to have 3-5 Bioswales in a row to contain the most runoff. This would really enhance the safety of the traffic flow on Taft in a heavy rainstorm.

The NBC could provide many of the plantings for the Bioswales and the native planting areas. We are able to ask the people attending the Perennial Exchange for specific plants that could be used. The NBC received many of the plants for the previously planted Bioswale and Rain Garden in this fashion.

The other suggestion was a Labyrinth, which provides a chance for people to meditate and relax. A website to view Labyrinth is [www.lesson4living.com](http://www.lesson4living.com) or [www.LabyrinthCompany.com](http://www.LabyrinthCompany.com).

Thank you for your kind consideration and hope these suggestions will be helpful. The Parks and Recreation Commission is really doing a good job with this Fuerst Farm Plan.

Lynne Paul