

PARKS, RECREATION AND CULTURAL SERVICES COMMISSION

THURSDAY OCTOBER 8, 2009 – 7:00 PM

NOVI CIVIC CENTER – COUNCIL CHAMBERS

DRAFT

The meeting was called to order at 7:05 PM with Commissioner Dooley presiding.

ROLL CALL: Blair (Present), Dooley (Present), Iszler (Present), Jewell (Absent), Policicchio (Present), Staab (Present), Wingfield (Absent), Kerbrat (Absent).

APPROVAL OF AGENDA:

It was moved by Commissioner Staab and seconded by Commissioner Blair to approve the agenda as written.

Voice Vote

Unanimous

CITIZEN COMMENTS: None

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

It was moved by Commissioner Staab and seconded by Commissioner Jewell to approve the September 10, 2009 minutes as written.

Voice Vote

Unanimous

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

A. Walkable Novi – Commissioners Iszler & Policicchio

Commissioner Iszler stated that the Walkable Novi meeting was held just prior to this Commission meeting. The pathway and sidewalk prioritization analysis and process were approved. She, Commissioner Policicchio and Mark Spencer attended the Oakland County Trail Summit today from which they received useful information. ITC was there as well as someone from the National Park Service. ITC talked about their vegetation management program and their opportunity to collaborate on trails. They will update their policy plan by the end of the year. The National Park Service person spoke on an Outdoor Recreation Report. Commissioner Policicchio stated that there were also some breakout workshops. He went to the marketing workshop. What struck him most is that perception by the public becomes reality. He feels that often the perception of what is being done is far removed from the reality of what is trying to be done. One of the most important things, going through the strategic planning process, is the public perception of what we are doing.

Commissioner Blair asked that with all of the construction going on in town on the roads if there is anything being done to help us with Walkable Novi like sidewalks being redone at the same time.

Commissioner Policicchio replied unfortunately this is one area where we are not being given enough consideration in our planning to expand walkways. With all

of the construction it would be a perfect time to connect north of the freeway to south of the freeway since it is already going on but that has not been done. We did well with Taft Road in putting in the bike path but that has not been expanded on. We are doing what we can in terms of the program to build and continue to expand sidewalks and pathways in conjunction with development.

Commissioner Blair asked Director Auler if there is anything they could do as a Commission to reach out to some of the other governmental agencies to try and coordinate some of these efforts.

Director Auler stated that he could speak with the Department of Public Services about this. He knows City Council and City staff who work on the road projects are in frequent communication with other governmental agencies and express the importance of including those in the project. He will find out if there is a way the Commission can lend some support and report back.

B. Novi Park Foundation – Commissioners Dooley & Staab

Commissioner Staab stated that he and Commissioner Dooley recently participated in “Fall for Novi” at a booth. They also offered people the opportunity to purchase raffle tickets. It also gave them an opportunity to promote the Gala on November 14th at the Hotel Baronette. There is a meeting coming up on Monday, October 19th.

Commissioner Dooley added that on the 19th of September at ITC Community Sports Park during picture day before soccer the Novi Parks Foundation was there for their bi-annual free hot dog cookout. They cooked over 850 hot dogs. He thanked Justin Fischer, Mayor Landry, and Brian Burke for their help. Theresa McClure and her staff were out there early setting up the grill and equipment and he wanted to recognize them.

STAFF REPORTS:

A. Administration Division – Randy Auler, Director of Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services

1. Overview of Strategic Planning process

Director Auler stated that the strategic planning process has started internally and he asked for the Commissions’ thought and activity over the next week and a half to provide additional information. A strategic plan was done in 2007. Almost all of the objectives and strategic directions in that plan were implemented and most have been achieved. This process is about defining what the future of Parks and Recreation should look like and how we plan to get there in the next two to three years. It will answer what we can do to operate better to be more efficient and effective in our service delivery and what we can do to continue to grow. The process is in four phases. The first phase is an environmental scan where we look at trends that affect our operation and environment. There was a two hour staff work session today to compile that information. He asked the Commissioners to complete a SWOT analysis of the department and e-mail it to him. Then we will take all of that information and have work sessions to analyze that and the survey documents done last year to formulate a vision of where we want to be in the next three years. We will then identify strategic directions and narrow that down in to goals and objectives which can be implemented by our team and Commission. We target to have this complete by December 30th so that the kick off can be in January.

Commissioner Blair asked about the survey for the strategic plan.

Director Auler replied two surveys were performed last year and the results compiled. The first was the ICMA survey which had a plus or minus margin of error of 5%. It was a citizens' perception of City services. It identified three key drivers for citizens when they are making decisions within the community. One of these was Parks and Recreation services. The City does this every two years. Our score in terms of citizen satisfaction and perception of our services increased from the previous survey done two years prior. The second survey is one that was funded by the Novi Parks Foundation. It keys in specifically on Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services within the community. We scored well. 81% of citizens have visited a Novi park within the last twelve months, which is significantly higher than the national average. This speaks well to the quality of our parks which were rated good to excellent. 28% of citizens have participated in a Parks and Recreation program within the past 12 months. We can use this information in terms of citizen perceptions for our survey piece as well as the information from the Commission from being out in the community and the staff knowledge to compile and have a good data base for strategic direction and outcomes. Commissioner Dooley applauded Director Auler for SWOT analysis because it is sound business.

Director Auler stated that at the last Commission meeting park maintenance standards were discussed. He provided a draft. He has received some revisions from the DPS staff and is working through those. He hopes to have those on the agenda for the November meeting for review and consideration for approval. The Commission will serve as the body to do the evaluations in the parks.

Director Auler stated that we have closed out the Power Park Concession Stand building. It is complete. The Power Park lighting project is also complete and is being prepared for City Council for their final pay out on October 26th at the City Council meeting.

At the last Commission meeting we spoke about different activities within the department so in this packet there is a calendar of events which will be included in all future packets.

We will be doing a quarterly report. This is a first draft of the report for department services. The purpose is to give the Commission a snapshot of where we are as an organization in terms of our goals and as a tool for information that is handy when you are talking to citizens. It will be the same format each quarter but the information will be updated and changed. The addition is our capital investment program. In this first quarter, which started July 1st and goes to September 30th, we completed the enhancements to Power Park, which enabled us to host two State tournaments. That investment has also enabled us to be awarded a National tournament for the next year and we are also in final consideration for a National tournament in 2011. The investment made in that facility has already paid off in terms of economic development for businesses, hotels, restaurants and gas stations within our community. We are seeing a pay back from our programs as well. Because of those improvements we have been able to expand our league program. Fuerst Park opened in late August. Next year that will become a destination Park. Nancy and her team are working on developing a series of programs, activities and events as well as partnering with the

Library and the School District and other entities to make that a place where people will gather. At the site we are finishing with some construction issues and are working on the continuous presence of the geese issue in a humane way.

The next two pages are community events highlights of what we did in the first quarter. Fall Family Camp Out is part of Outdoor Week. We had over 300 participants stay at Lakeshore Park for overnight camping. We held our third annual Fire Up Fest and over 700 teens attended that event following a Novi High School football game. Our Senior Variety Show is very popular every year. We had over 1300 people attend this year from all over the metro Detroit area. The seniors do a professional job and it is a unique program that we always want to be able to provide. Our soccer program structure was changed and we went to small sided soccer games (four on four or five on five) where the philosophy is that the players get more touches on the ball and have more fun and stay more active.

The next section is partnerships which Nancy will speak to later in the meeting.

Fiscal Fitness is something we are doing as a department and a City. We are doing more with less. As a City we expended less money than was allocated as a whole. We generated additional revenue of about 1.4 million dollars to the city budget. Every year Director Auler has been here, staff and City Council have had the privilege of being able to be in that position. Our department contributes to that. Our department is on track for that again this year. Within the first quarter our revenues are comparable to last year in terms of program registration and our expenses are lower compared to the same period last year. Part of this is from partnerships and some from staff expertise and commitment.

The City recently published the first edition of Fiscal Matters and Fiscal Fitness, a newsletter. It highlighted that out of every property tax dollar, 29.1 cents comes to the City. Of the 29.1 cents, 4 cents come to the Parks and Recreation Department and the library. This is another way of showing how the tax dollar is broken down for City allocation and how we deliver, and the surveys support this, excellent value for the money. We supplement that with our fees and charges. Our Park Millage rate generates about 50% of our budget. The fees and charges generate about 48% of our budget. The other 2% comes from sponsorships, grants and interest on our investments. We are almost 50/50 and exceed the national average in this area, too. We no longer receive a subsidy. The Ice Arena covers its costs as does Meadowbrook Commons. We also cover our costs.

Upcoming activities talk about activities for a healthy, active lifestyle and senior activities. The Mobfather is a partnership we have going.

The last page is about the Parks Foundation. The Parks Foundation is a 501c(3) not for profit for the purpose of raising funds to help support Parks and Recreation programs and projects as well as establish an endowment for the long term maintenance cost and operation of the park system. Currently they focus on two fund raisers. They are the annual Golf Outing, which this year raised about \$16,000. The second is the Gala which takes place in November of this year. We anticipate in raising at least \$10,000 to \$11,000 on that night.

This publication is a tool to give you a “snapshot” of our organization and progress and can be used when you are out speaking or if people ask you questions as Commissioners. This will be a component of our scoreboard.

Commissioner Dooley stated that communication is so important. The “Engage!” which comes out quarterly is a fabulous magazine. He then asked Director Auler through what media source this new report could be accessed.

Director Auler stated that we have not looked at having it as a media tool but for the Commission as a tool to measure our progress. It is something we could evaluate sending it out on the website or other sources.

Commissioner Policchio stated that he had talked to some residents about Fuerst Park and only good things were said except for the geese. He also stated that the information on the quarterly report is the information that needs to be out in the public. If this information is out there it will be the perception and the perception will be the reality. One of our primary rolls as a Commission is to make sure that the public fully understands what is being done, how it is being done and the cost effective way in which it is being done. The public will not support something that they do not know about or don’t understand. He suggests some way to partner with the High School to produce programs on the events or put them on the internet. Hard copies of information have a limited reach to the public. The best sales people for the department are the participants in the activities and events.

Director Auler stated those are excellent comments and that those are in the works and are coming. The City has a cross-departmental team (venture team) who are focusing on social media networking. Nancy Cowan serves as the chairperson on that venture team. The social networking becomes a two way communication which in today’s world is very important.

Commissioner Blair stated that he knows that the City uses the e-mail blast. If there is a way to get this newsletter out on e-mail it would help and also cut down on the mailing cost.

Commissioner Jewell stated that communication is key because perception is nine tenths of reality. There are people in the community who see these developments and it concerns them because others are cutting back and they wonder why Parks and Recreation is building. Communicating the fact that having nice parks near you will increase your home value and that this is money that was set aside before. This needs to get out to the public.

Commissioner Staab stated that the report was a nice presentation device and agreed will all of the comments that have been made.

Commissioner Iszler asked if getting a copy to the Chamber of Commerce may be another way for them to do some of their marketing of attraction.

B. Recreation Division – Nancy Cowan, Superintendent of Recreation

1. Overview of Partnerships that enhance service for the community
We had an International Festival tied with the Fall for Novi event which was a tremendous success. It was one of the main focal points at Fall for

Novi with over fifteen cultural booths and entertainment of dancing and demonstrations.

Our department is planning for summer camps already. We have completed our draft for the January through April "Engage!" All of our staff is working very hard to look at what the community wants, assess the surveys, and meet to discuss the programs and how they are working. We do a lot with the resources we have and a big part of that is partnerships. We have over fifty partnerships. Superintendent Cowan highlighted three of the current partnerships and how they work. Partnerships are something we will continue to work on and something we talk about on a daily basis. She asked the Commissioner that if they know of or can think of a partnership to call or e-mail her or Director Auler.

Commissioner Blair stated that the department is doing a great job with partnerships because it is fiscally responsible. He would like to see more formal economic relationships which are mutually beneficial. Something he has not seen tonight is the mention of Novi Youth Baseball League and the Novi Jaguars. Both organizations use Parks and Recreation facilities. He asks that we continue to develop the relationships with both of those organizations.

MATTERS FOR COMMISSION DISCUSSION AND/OR ACTION: None

CITIZEN COMMENTS: None

COMMISSIONER COMMENTS:

Commissioner Staab stated that it was a good meeting and that he appreciated the updates. He really liked the quarterly report. He would like to see a list of all of our existing partnerships so that when they are in the community they can promote the partners.

Commissioner Policicchio had no comments.

Commissioner Iszler stated that her family did participate in the Fall Family Campout and that it was a lot of fun. They did the night hike and there were many educational things there. The breakfast was great. She hopes to participate again.

Commissioner Blair asked the public for their input on the Parks and Recreation strategic plan. The City Planning Commission has an open house for the master plan in the next week or so. Walkable Novi is involved.

Commissioner Jewell thanked Director Auler for all of the department's budget savings. He is a part of the Novi High School Athletics Boosters who had their "Taste Fest" the same evening as the Fire UP Fest. The kids ran from the football game to get to the Fire Up Fest which was a great success. Congratulations also for Power Park. It is an outstanding park. He has heard comments that people would like to see the same thing done at ITC Community Sports Park so we could start getting some of the hard ball tournaments.

Commissioner Dooley stated that is a good reason why Novi citizens should be aware of the Novi Parks Foundation Gala on November 14th at the Hotel Baronette. The Gala is a great opportunity to come in and talk to elected officials and volunteers and tell them what they like about the City of Novi and what their needs are. The Foundation is about scholarships for families who may not be able to afford theatre, youth sports or adult sports and also for park improvements. It is also a great opportunity to make a contribution to the Novi Parks Foundation to achieve our goals. He then commented to Director Auler that when he went in front of City Council, in the spring at the time of the opening of Power Park, and state why he wanted to continue to serve on the Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services Commission. He stated that he wanted to continue because of Director Auler's vision.

Director Auler stated that he appreciates the comment but he feels that it is the teams' vision and the Commission is a major component of the team. He appreciates his support.

ADJOURNMENT:

It was moved to adjourn the Commission meeting by Commissioner Staab and seconded by Commissioner Blair.

The meeting was adjourned by Commissioner Dooley at 7:57 PM.

DATE APPROVED:

Jay Dooley, Chairperson

Paul Policicchio, Vice Chairperson