

**PARKS, RECREATION AND CULTURAL SERVICES COMMISSION**

**THURSDAY DECEMBER 10, 2009 – 7:00 PM**

**NOVI CIVIC CENTER – COUNCIL CHAMBERS**

**DRAFT**

The meeting was called to order at 7:02 PM with Commissioner Policicchio presiding.

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

**APPROVAL OF AGENDA:**

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

**Voice Vote**

**Unanimous**

**CITIZEN COMMENTS:** None

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES:**

It was moved by Commissioner Jewell and seconded by Commissioner Blair to approve the November 12, 2009 minutes as written.

**Voice Vote**

**Unanimous**

**COMMITTEE REPORTS:**

- A. Walkable Novi – Commissioners Iszler & Policicchio  
Commissioner Policicchio stated that there was not a Walkable Novi Committee meeting this evening.
- B. Novi Park Foundation – Commissioners Dooley & Staab  
Commissioner Staab stated that the third annual Parks Foundation Gala was held on November 14<sup>th</sup> at the Baronette Hotel. On December 4<sup>th</sup> at Ringing in the Holidays the raffle drawing was held. The amount earned from that has not been determined yet. Ringing in the Holidays was a well attended event. There will be a Parks Foundation meeting next Tuesday.

**STAFF REPORTS:**

- A. Administration Division – Randy Auler, Director of Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services
  - 1. Update on Strategic Plan  
Director Auler stated that there will be a final draft for the Commission of the Strategic Plan after the New Year. The environmental scan and the vision formulation have been completed. These analyze all of the trends, and critical issues. We are beginning to put the framework around the vision, mission and core value statements. We are in the process of identifying strategic themes and then will put together some goals, objectives and measurable results.

B. Recreation Division – Nancy Cowan, Superintendent of Recreation

Superintendent Cowan stated that at the last meeting it was requested to look at ITC Community Sports Park field use. In the packet is a memo regarding that issue. There are eleven game fields at the park. We concentrated mainly on soccer fields. There is an article attached about turf. There is no magic number as to how many events a field can have on it. It depends a lot on weather conditions, the type of turf, who is playing on it, etc. We play about the same amount on those fields as we have the past two years. This fall may have been a little less rain than last fall, it depends on when the rain comes. We had it come on or close to many weekends when we play our games. The fields held up well until the second to the last weekend of games. We need to have a better check list to utilize with our supervisors and staff to continually monitor at the fields through out the day. Currently we utilize the fields within a recommended level of use. We need to look at a check sheet procedure list as well as looking at the practice time spent. Currently the Jaguars practice about 400 hours at the park each season. Our house teams practice at other sites. In fairness to both user groups, we are going to take a look at that.

Commissioner Blair asked for elaboration on the other sites.

Superintendent Cowan stated that all games are played at ITC with the exception of 8v8 and two 6v6 fields at Lakeshore Park. All of our practices are at other facilities including Lakeshore Park, Wildlife Woods Park, Brookfarm Park, Orchard Hills School, Village Oaks School, Novi Woods School and Novi Meadows Schools.

Commissioner Blair asked how those facilities are holding up.

Superintendent Cowan stated that they are holding up well. They are not game turf fields but they are maintained and safe.

Commissioner Blair asked what we expect from the fields.

Superintendent Cowan stated that the kids can still expect great playing conditions. We will monitor the fields continuously with DPS and Recreation staff as we put the checklist procedure in place and continue to maintain and rotate them.

Commissioner Blair asked if there are any other places we can use to spread out use, like Mayberry State Park.

Superintendent Cowan stated that we are always looking but then you have to consider who will be maintaining those fields, etc. Many communities are in our same situation and everyone is stretched with the amount of space they have.

Commissioner Jewell asked if there is someone from the Jaguars whom we meet with so that they understand the usage and policies as far as wear and tear on the fields.

Superintendent Cowan stated that Director Auler is our main liaison with the Jaguars and has meetings with them during the year to discuss those kinds of issues. Wendy DuVall is our sport supervisor who is in touch with them on a seasonal/continual basis. As an organization they understand the need to keep the fields up and are quick to let their people know when we have to cancel practice or games. They do not usually participate in field condition evaluation.

Commissioner Jewell asked when the athletic field use policy is developed will it involve members of the Jaguars.

Superintendent Cowan stated that we would like to make sure they are part of the process.

Commissioner Policicchio stated that with the cost of an artificial turf field being \$700,000 he doubts it is something we could do in the near future.

Superintendent Cowan stated that "Ring in the Holidays" was this past Friday. She thanked ITC, Home Depot, B.D.'s Mongolian Bar-B-Q, Busch's and Biggby Coffee as well as others for coming out and sponsoring the event. We estimate

that about 2,000 people attended the parade and event. Derek Smith led the event. Wendy DuVall was in charge of the kid's area. Kathryn Knapp and Lauren Sorrentino were in charge of the seventeen crafters who were part of the event. Everyone did a great job

We have "Annie, Jr." opening tomorrow night. There are 60 performers who are doing their final dress rehearsal right now. There are six shows over the next two weekends. Those shows are already seventy percent sold out. She encourages everyone to attend.

If you are "Facebook" users she asked that everyone friend and fan page Novi Parks. This past week the City of Novi, Parks and Recreation and Public Safety launched some social media sites. We already have 108 fans. This will be another communication tool.

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

**A. Approval of Park Maintenance Standards**

Director Auler stated that he is presenting the final draft of Park Maintenance Standards he presented two meetings ago. Park Maintenance Standards are a way to establish consistency within the parks and the park amenities. It is an evaluation tool. We have made an easier document for the evaluators to utilize. There are three booklets in the packet. The first booklet is the Park Maintenance Standards. There are seven different categories. For each section there is a series of criteria. The second booklet is the Evaluation. The Commissioners will be given training at the next meeting. Each Commissioner will be assigned a park to evaluate. The parks will be rotated so that all the parks can be visited by each Commissioner. Each Commissioner will grade a park and will submit the evaluation. The third booklet is an Evaluation Summary that will take the percentage of the standards we met and the percentage of the standards we did not meet and track it on a quarterly basis as a way of measuring how consistent we are in terms of delivering the expected level of service from the community and if we see trends and why. The standards are used based on the level of service that you want and match it with the resources that you have. What he is asking the Commission to do this evening is to consider approval of the documents as they are presented.

It was moved by Commissioner Jewell and seconded by Commissioner Blair to approve the Park Maintenance Standards as presented.

**Voice vote**

**Unanimous**

**B. Recommendation of FY 10/11 Capital Investment Program**

Director Auler stated that the budget process for the staff starts in November and December. For the Commission it has a December/January timeline. It starts with the Capital Investment Program and culminates with all of the budget documents that are being adopted by City Council in May. That is then the budget for July 1, 2010 through June 30, 2011. The Commission has been involved with helping analyze the 5-year Capital Improvement Plan, which is part of our 5-year Community Parks and Recreation Plan. The Community Parks and Recreation Plan was approved earlier this year and is on file with the State. This enables us to be eligible for State and Federal Grant funds. What has been done in the past is staff provides recommendations for the upcoming fiscal year. We are presenting a recommendation for four projects that would go through the budget process. The Commission provides a recommendation on what the Capital Investment Projects should be for the upcoming fiscal year. That is submitted and the staff has a recommendation which is submitted. It then goes to the Planning Commission. The Planning Commission has to approve the City

Capital Improvement Plan. It then goes to the Capital Improvement Committee, which consists of two City Council members and two Planning Commission members. They approve a plan. All of these may agree or not. The City Administration makes a recommendation in the budget document. All of this information is carried forward to City Council for their deliberation which takes place in April with the ultimate adoption of the budget in May. What you will be doing this evening is providing the Park Commission's recommendation in terms of the projects.

The four projects are:

- The Landings Property is land that the City owns on South Lake Drive and Old Novi Road. We contracted with a firm and did a land use analysis of all of the options for that property. That analysis was presented to City Council this past Monday evening. During the discussion, City Council elected to keep it as public land and to make it public park land. They also recommended that it go to the Planning Commission for appropriate zoning to match public park land. They also have asked us to consider submitting and preparing a document for a grant application, which has to be submitted to the State by April 1<sup>st</sup>. It will be a development grant and the maximum amount of eligibility is \$500,000. There has to be a match put up for the minimum of 25 percent up to 50 percent so we are looking at a minimum of \$125,000 to be available to match that grant. That could come from the Park Foundation, through the naming rights program which City Council manages. It could come from the Park Foundation in the form of a donation to the City from their non-restricted fund. Or it could come from other unidentified sources. We do not know what the grant application will be, what the concept plan will be or what the development plan will be so there is a lot of work to do in the next 90 days. Since there are no plans there is no cost associated with it yet.
- Resurfacing of the basketball courts and tennis courts at Rotary Park and ITC Community Sports Park has been in the capital investment budget in the past couple of years. The courts usually have a life expectancy of eight to ten years depending on the amount of use. The main thing to avoid is having cracks that are a quarter inch to half an inch in width because water gets in and you get what are called "birdbaths" on the court. We are beginning to see this at both sites. It will cost less to maintain it than to fix it later. You need to invest about 6 to 8 percent every year of your capital program just in maintenance and upkeep.
- Resurfacing the Power Park access road and parking lot is the third item. The access road leads from the west end of the Civic Center back to Power Park adjacent to the school property. That road is crumbling not just cracked. We will either have to take up the asphalt and have dirt or repair it. It will cost about \$285,000.
- Fuerst Park Phase II would include additional seating and lighting. City Council has indicated that they would like to have a formal garden where the barns had been located but there is no funding in place to do that. This project will be presented to the Park Foundation.

These are the four projects. Two of these are maintenance. With the Landings Property there is a lot of visibility and an opportunity to get something started with grant money. Fuerst Park, with the season we have programmed, the location and the opening of the new library, has the opportunity to truly be a community gathering place. To accomplish this we have to put in the additional amenities which were outlined in the concept plan.

Commissioner Blair stated that he is concerned because he does not want City Council or taxpayers thinking that every time Parks and Recreation is short of money that it can automatically look to the Foundation. He feels a great job is being done by looking at grant money and from clients who are using the facilities.

Director Auler stated that the Foundation was created to bridge the funding gap. It was not created to be the sole funding source. Before the Foundation existed, if the money wasn't available from the City budget it wasn't found because it didn't exist. As a result, the 6 to 8 percent that needs to be invested to upkeep the system didn't happen for a number of years so as a result we had dilapidated facilities. For the past eight years we have been "catching up" on facility repairs. It is incumbent on him to use every recommendation he has for every resource we have to keep focused on the investment in the system so we don't go back to where we were.

Commissioner Staab stated that in 2001 there was no Foundation and we had no means to get grants because we did not have a viable Strategic Plan. Novi has always wanted top-notch facilities and we have to find ways to fund this in these economic times. He was glad to see the Tim Pope Playstructure moved back to 2011 and to see the renovation and upkeep that was done on it this past fall and spring because it is such a magnet at the ITC Community Sports Park.

Commissioner Jewell asked if it could be considered that the lighting for ITC Community Sports Park slated for 2014/2015 be moved up. A fantastic job was done at Power Park. There are so many people who play baseball and soccer that if we took the same approach out to ITC we might be able to get more tournaments.

Director Auler stated that we have not considered moving it up because of the amount of use the existing turf can take. If we put lights out there it would double the usage. We have to address the turf issue before we could put up lights. In terms of tournaments, we have been successful with the Jaguars. They have put on excellent tournaments and this has shown through its growth. We held a lacrosse tournament there last year. In its first year we had a successful event with over 94 teams participating. Unfortunately, we had to send them to a different community this year because of the condition of the turf. As far as baseball tournaments, we have outside groups who come in and want to rent the facility. Novi Youth Baseball has never really stepped forward and done any tournaments. He has encouraged them to do tournaments for eight years. He cannot advocate moving up the lighting at ITC at this time.

Commissioner Policicchio stated that \$300,000 is a lot of money to replace play structures. He then asked if a cost benefit analysis has been done. He asked if the projects which are down the line, like the greenways, could potentially be grant projects. He stated that in the future city services are going to have to generate income unless they are police and fire. On the four projects for this year, he thinks that the basketball and tennis courts should be number four rather than number two because the road in Power Park is in bad need of repair. It would be a shame not to continue Fuerst Park to completion after coming so far with it. It is in the heart of the City and everyone sees it no matter where you are coming from.

Commissioner Blair stated that right now, with money the way it is, perhaps instead of cost benefit analysis we should check the citizens' needs and demands. In terms of numbers, it seems like soccer and baseball fields are affecting a lot of people.

Director Auler stated that the survey that was done and funded by the Foundation with Leisure Vision Institute showed that the four greatest needs were playgrounds, walking/biking trails, fitness/wellness and arts. For all of these he has proposals presented to the Foundation he will support. Baseball, soccer and sports were a low priority in terms of the random sample survey. This was also followed up by a Citizen Mail Survey which was done by the City through the National Citizens Survey Institute. The City does this every two years. That information indicated that Parks and Recreation Services is a key driver for the community in terms of making quality of life decisions. The top priorities were the same in both surveys.

One of the things he has before the Foundation for Fuerst Park is a proposal for \$12,000 to put in eight sculptures and create an "art in the park" project around which programming can be done. You may want to look at reprioritizing the projects.

Director Auler stated, in reply to Commissioner Policicchio's question on play structures, that playgrounds can range anywhere from \$30,000 up to \$100,000. The life expectancy on playgrounds is generally ten to fifteen years. We get a tremendous amount of usage on our playgrounds. If you go to ITC Community Sports Park there is hardly ever a time there is not a child or family at the Tim Pope Playstructure. The cost for the playground is not just the amenities but also the base that is under it, the safety surfacing and the drainage system. The playgrounds are all in a ten to twelve year cycle.

Superintendent Cowan added that the playstructure at Lakeshore Park is heavily used. Camp Lakeshore is there and there were concerts held there.

Student Commissioner Raina commented that the ITC Community Sports Park basketball and tennis courts are constantly in use. He asked about Rotary Park, as far as the playstructure, whether many people use the facility there.

Director Auler stated that he knows that the tennis courts at Rotary Park are used frequently. Tennis is a big sport in Novi. The playground is used by people who use the trail system and those who use the shelter for picnics and meetings. At Rotary Park the posts that hold the nets on the tennis courts are heaved.

Commissioner Policicchio suggested the order of the projects be Fuerst Park, Power Park road resurfacing, Landings Property, and tennis and basketball court resurfacing.

Commissioner Staab agreed except that he would put the Landings Property as fourth because of all of the information yet needed.

Commissioner Policicchio then suggested that the revised order of projects be Furest Park, Power Park road resurfacing, tennis and basketball court resurfacing and the Landings Property. He then asked if there is a tennis club in Novi who might help with the resurfacing of the courts.

Director Auler stated that there is not currently a tennis club in Novi.

Commissioner Policicchio asked if there was a motion to recommend the order of projects for the Capital Investment Program.

A motion was made by Commissioner Staab to recommend Fuerst Park, Power Park road resurfacing, tennis and basketball court resurfacing and Landings Property as the order of projects for the Capital Investment Program FY 10/11. There was no second to the motion.

No other motions were made.

Director Auler stated that we have to submit the Capital Improvement Budget by December 21<sup>st</sup> and this is the last Commission meeting prior to that date. The

staff will be submitting a recommendation. It is possible that the Commission could consider this again at the January meeting with a full attendance. Hopefully a consensus can be reached that night. He doubts that the budget document will be put together in January. He is unsure of the Capital Improvement Committee dates. He asked if there is no second on the motion what other projects are coming to the forefront.

Commissioner Blair stated that the concerns of most the citizens in the community he talks to are parks and fields. He found it intriguing that the survey results showed these as low priority.

Director Auler stated that his understanding with the president of Novi Youth Baseball is that their numbers are maintaining or the same. The field space has been adequate and they have not had to turn teams or youth away. To address the usage rate for soccer, there are the same number of children practicing on the field a couple of times a week and playing a game or two a week so the numbers aren't as large as they are for the community as a whole coming to things like festivals or events. Ringing in the Holidays had 2,000 people attend on one night for three hours. If you do a series of these events that takes in the community as a whole which is what the surveys address. There are opportunities with the school district if they will be more lenient with the number of hours and open their facilities up more.

Commissioner Blair stated that he took the survey and he felt that it was leading and questioned the validity. He stated that we have to address games being cancelled for a recreation program.

Director Auler stated the survey was a statistically valid random sample survey. The survey addressed not only the Signature Park component but the community as a whole.

Commissioner Policicchio asked for discussion on priorities.

Commissioner Blair asked if one of the allocations for an upcoming year could be moved up for more balance.

Commissioner Jewell stated that until the issue of use and overuse of the fields is addressed the lighting issue is moot.

Commissioner Policicchio stated that he favors the prioritization of passive parks. Until Fuerst Park there was really no passive park where seniors could go and walk or enjoy. Almost every park is dedicated to active athletic activity. There is a need in this community for places like Fuerst Park, the Landings and the greenways and pathways or you will be providing a disservice or no service to that segment of the population who don't play sports any longer. When you start a project, like Fuerst Park, there is an obligation to continue it to fruition. That is why he is an advocate of finishing Fuerst Park, the Landings and greenways. He also believes that it leverages more money in terms of grants and partnerships. He asked if it will just be the staff who will be giving their recommendation to City Council for the Capital Investment Program.

Director Auler confirmed that the staff will submit a recommendation which will be the four projects presented this evening. As long as the Capital Improvement Committee and other groups have not met, the Parks Commission can submit a recommendation in January.

**CITIZEN COMMENTS:** None

**COMMISSIONER COMMENTS:**

Commissioner Staab wished everyone a happy holiday season. There are a lot of exciting items on the agenda for 2010 and he is looking forward to it.

Commissioner Blair wished everyone a happy holiday. He stated that he went to "Ring in the Holidays" and it was fantastic and there was a great crowd. Facebook is not just for teenagers and is a wonderful idea and a great communication tool. He does not want the Commission to lose touch with the community. We need to treat the schools, Jaguars and Novi Youth Baseball as very valued clients because they bring revenue in to the City in direct and indirect ways. He is looking forward to the New Year.

Commissioner Jewell wished everyone a happy holiday. He was unable to make it to "Ring in the Holidays" but has heard nothing but great things about it. He stated that he thought it was a shame that there was no band participation from the schools at the event. He appreciates what Director Auler does.

Student Commissioner Raina wished everyone a happy holiday. He stated that it looks like we have an exciting group of projects to look forward to in the coming year.

Commissioner Policicchio welcomed Student Commissioner Raina, noting that this is his first meeting. He wished everyone in the City a happy holiday and prosperous New Year. He did attend "Ring in the Holidays" and it wasn't as cold as last year. He recognized Commissioner Staab and Commissioner Dooley for their work on the Park Foundation Gala.

**ADJOURNMENT**

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

**Voice Vote**

**Unanimous**

The meeting was adjourned by Commissioner Policicchio at 8:30 PM.

DATE APPROVED:

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Jay Dooley, Chairperson

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Paul Policicchio, Vice Chairperson