

PARKS, RECREATION AND CULTURAL SERVICES COMMISSION

THURSDAY FEBRUARY 11, 2010 – 7:00 PM

NOVI CIVIC CENTER – COUNCIL CHAMBERS

DRAFT

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 PM with Commissioner Dooley presiding.

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

APPROVAL OF AGENDA:

Due to the lack of a quorum there was no vote to approve the agenda.

CITIZEN COMMENTS: None

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Due to the lack of a quorum there was no vote to approve the December 10, 2009 minutes.

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

- A. Walkable Novi – Commissioners Iszler & Policicchio
 - 1. Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant (EECBG) non-motorized Master Plan
Commissioner Isler stated that at this evenings meeting, Mark Spencer reviewed public comments regarding different sidewalk connections. Mark Spencer and Andrew Mutch attended the last Oakland Trail Advisory Council (OTAC) meeting and presented a recap. Oakland County Parks has various outreach opportunities including “go biking”, “go fishing”, etc. You can rent or they can bring out mountain bikes or fishing equipment for community groups and cities.
They also talked about The Landings concept plan, which is being included for the grant. They had a discussion and Mark will put together a recap of their thoughts.
 - 2. Regional Trail linking Hines Park Trail with Huron Valley Trail
Mark Spencer also started to talk about connections with neighboring communities. He sent out a letter to Northville Township and Wixom about the regional trail system. He will send additional letters because he is getting positive feedback.

- B. Novi Park Foundation – Commissioners Dooley & Staab
Commissioner Dooley stated that there have been great discussions among Foundation board members. They are trying to create interest again with Novi naming rights and partnership opportunities. Hopefully in March there will be some reports on how these are progressing.

STAFF REPORTS:

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

1. 2010 City Council Goal Work Session

Director Auler stated that in the packet there is a memorandum outlining the affect of the economy and the reduction of property values over the next three years in terms of revenue. This figure is around eight million dollars. This will require several strategies to address the issue. He did include a draft of the City Council goals as it relates to the Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services Department. Many of them are tied to the Parks Foundation and the Parks Commission to raise funds for park capital improvement projects. Five of the six goals for the parks are in one way or another connected to the Park Foundation and the need for it to raise money for the capital improvement projects.

Previously there was a review of goals, which did not rate high enough to come out in the top five or six. He has outlined some of the things which the Commission might consider. Item number three is the City Council goal to develop a community garden at Fuerst Park in 2010. This is something the Commission could provide focus and effort toward. Goal number six is to pursue sculpture rental for Arts in the Park. Some of the other items focus on maintaining the existing parks. Some of the items which did not have enough votes to be rated high enough are to consider the alcohol beverage consumption at Power Park and consider the Bosco property for green field possibilities.

Commissioner Blair asked Director Auler to explain the points on the recommendations.

Director Auler stated that City Council goes through a work session where there are ideas and discussions on all items for a particular area. These were outlined. Following the discussion there is a voting process where items with three votes or more are identified in the top six. Those with two or one vote are noted. Each Council Member has only a certain number of votes they can place. The Staff focus is on the top six items. Many of these are tied to the Commission and to the Novi Parks Foundation. These goals will be considered and discussed at the March Commission Meeting.

B. Recreation Division – Nancy Cowan, Superintendent of Recreation

1. Overview of 2010 Fuerst Park recreation program schedule

Superintendent Cowan stated that Fuerst Park is the newest park and one we want to highlight and introduce to the community this spring. The Sizzling Summer Arts Series is continuing to expand. This year there are a total of sixteen events planned and we are continually adding events and programs which will take place at Fuerst Park. We will still have the free concerts and the free puppet shows, which we are doing in conjunction with the Novi Library. We will have free family movies to take place on Friday evenings on the movie screen which we are purchasing through the inter-government agreement we have with other communities. There are also three classic movies we will show. We will also have four jazz nights in partnership with Arts Novi. All of these activities are free. We are also working with a small group of High School students and talking about their interests and things they would like to see there. Many great things will be happening at Fuerst Park as well as all of

the non-program time which can be spent there with people accessing WiFi and using the trails.

Commissioner Blair asked how someone would find a calendar to see when these events are going to occur.

Superintendent Cowan stated that we are working on getting them published. They are normally released in our next recreation guide which comes out in early April. We are hoping to release them in the next three to four weeks. We are working on finalizing all of the groups.

2. Lakeshore Park mountain bike bridge survey report

Superintendent Cowan stated that this item highlights the partnership between the Michigan Mountain Bike Association (MMBA) and the City of Novi. The document in the packet is an assessment of all the bridges in the biking trails at Lakeshore Park. MMBA spends a great deal of time and effort there working in conjunction with our Department of Public service (DPS) staff. They worked together with DPS to produce this document which looks at the quality and safety of the bridges.

Superintendent Cowan stated that the annual Daddy Daughter Dances will take place tomorrow and Saturday. We have over 100 additional participants from last year. We are full for Saturday and have only thirteen spots left for Friday.

Our Summer Camp publication will be released on Tuesday the sixteenth and registration will begin for summer camps. We will be doing a e-mailing, Facebook and press release blast on all of our summer camps. A High School event, Winterfest, is taking place next Wednesday, the seventeenth, at the Novi Ice Arena. It is mid-winter break for our students in Novi. There is a five dollar entry fee for music, ice skating, video games, food and hanging out with friends. Our maximum for that is 250. We are working on programming for our next session and that guide will be out in April.

MATTERS FOR COMMISSION DISCUSSION AND/OR ACTION:

A. Discussion and/or approval of the Parks, Recreation & Cultural Services Department 2010 – 2013 Strategic Plan

Director Auler stated that we have been working on developing a Strategic Plan. The purpose of the Strategic Plan is to focus on operational excellence to provide improved service within the resources we have. It identifies how the organization focuses its energy on doing the right things and doing them the right way and getting the maximum results with the resources available. The timing is good based on several key factors.

One of the major things to do is look at the critical issues that are facing the organization, community and region. One of the first issues, childhood obesity, was in the news yesterday. Studies show that if they have access to physical activity, people will participate. Yesterday, Michelle Obama announced the national campaign to fight obesity. The second issue is the age wave. There are 16.9 million people currently in the "Baby Boomer" to senior older adult population, or 55 and older. This will increase to 49 million. What that means for Novi is over the next thirteen years there will be a 269% increase in that population. We will see a dramatic age shift which will affect the services we need to provide. That positioning needs to begin now. This age group is an economic development tool.

Environment is another critical issue. Environmental sustainable is going to be a critical issue for the country. This comes down to sustainable design and operation.

The next critical issue is citizen interaction. Citizens today do not want an e-mail and an answer back but they want to interact. You see that now with Facebook and Twitter that enables instant communication and dialog. It is not the typical public meetings and focus groups any more.

The last issue is the economy. 720,000 jobs have been lost in Michigan. That is one half of the U.S. total. Michigan has lost a half million people since 2001. We are facing a decreasing population. In Novi there is another 25% decline in residential property value and a 10% decline in commercial property value. That will have an effect on our Park Millage Rate and the amount of revenue it generates. For the Parks Department there will be a \$325,000 to \$500,000 decrease in our Park Millage Rate. Right now we generate 1.3 million dollars in our Park Millage. Our ability to provide services still has to be there, but how do we do that with our resources declining? This is what the Strategic Plan is about. We need to position ourselves now so we can provide excellent services, which the community expects, with the available resources. There will be some tough decisions.

We have to identify what business we are in, assess what the issues are and then talk about the future.

The business we are in is creating community through people, parks and programs. Cities without community, without a parks system, without quality parks and recreation services in the community are the ones that start to decline. You cannot have a great city without a great park system.

As a Commission and staff there are things we do to position ourselves for the future to meet the challenges. In this process the Commission was asked to do a SWOT analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats). We received the feedback and it was included in the document. The internal staff was asked how they operate, what they value the most and to what they hold themselves accountable. The feedback from that produced four themes for our core values which are creativity, excellence, integrity and service.

The vision statement is "To become a great organization that achieves national accreditation, is financially sustainable and wins the National Gold Medal Award." At the March Commission meeting he will talk about the strategy map and what that means, what the necessary steps are and the outcomes as far as repositioning the department to solve community problems and issues with our resources.

- B. Discussion of Parks, Recreation & Cultural Services FY 10/11 budget
- Director Auler stated that traditionally Commissions only weigh in on capital investment programs and not on the operating budget. Given these times, he wants to provide information on the impact the declining tax base is going to have on the Park Millage rate. In 2009/2010 we generated 1.3 million dollars through Park Millage. Next year, the fiscal year coming, this will decrease to 1.1 million dollars. There will be at least a \$142,000 decrease in tax revenue, followed by another \$110,000 based on today's projections followed by another \$72,000 also based on today's projections. We believe those projections to be true and hopefully better and not worse. That is a minimum \$325,000 decrease in tax revenue for the Parks Department over the next three years. We have to live within our means which is our user fees and our Park Millage. That will require some difficult decisions. Included in the packet are some cost reduction opportunities to look at as well as some opportunities for additional revenue. This is not an all inclusive list. He would like some feedback. The operating budget will be submitted tomorrow.
- Commissioner Dooley asked what determined these particular items to be listed on the cost reduction page.

Director Auler stated that as a staff they have gone through the process and given feedback about what are things we can do to cut our costs with the goal of not reducing service. We are a lean organization running with eight or nine full time people and about six part time people. The number of programs and services that are provided and the number of people we serve (approx. 250,000 to 300,000 user visits through our programs and facilities) with the staff we have show that we are getting a lot done. These were just some of the items that were listed from about fifteen pages of items.

Commissioner Blair suggested that since the Commissioners are going to be asked for feedback on the operating budget that they would need a gauge based on participation numbers for park visits, sports and also the surveys which were done as far as priorities for the citizens. This information as well as information on revenue and expenses would help Commissioners to make better recommendations or suggestions.

Commissioner Iszler asked that if the Lakeshore Park lifeguards and booth attendants were eliminated whether we would then not charge to enter the park. She asked if the beach would be open year round if there were no lifeguards. Director Auler stated that without the lifeguards it would make the beach "swim at your own risk". We are doing additional research on this. The beach would not be open year round but it would extend the season some because currently we do not have lifeguards from near the beginning of the season or at the end of the season because many of them are college students and they go back to school. If we did not have booth attendants we would still have a park supervisor on the weekends and they could be a combination of supervisor and booth attendant so we could charge at the booth. It also gets challenging with one person there so we are researching and looking at the options and for feedback.

Student Representative Kerbrat stated that getting rid of the lifeguards could be good. It would help Community Schools because people would be more inclined to get their children swimming lessons. The reason a lot of people go to the beach there is because of the lifeguards. It would help Community Education make money on swimming lessons and save us money on lifeguards.

Commissioner Dooley asked if there was a generous revenue generation (charging more for programs), eliminating some services we do for free and start charging for the use of our park facilities (like charging for practice time) could this offset any of the potential eliminations on the first page of the document. Director Auler replied that it could. We have to live within our means between the Park Millage, our user fees and donations. The operating budget would be covered by the Park Millage and fees and the capital budget would be covered by raising funds through the Park Foundation. We do not have the funding tools in Michigan that they have in other states.

Commissioner Dooley stated that great cities have great parks and Novi has great parks. He personally feels that revenue generators are what the discussions should revolve around. He feels that not having lifeguards at Lakeshore Park would be a reason for people not to go because of safety concerns.

Director Auler stated that it may involve bringing in other user groups. He has been contacted by some people in Chicago who run baseball tournaments. They have heard about ITC Community Sports Park and how great the fields are and they would like to come here and do the same thing and run major tournaments. He has also had groups who have called and are willing to pay for practice.

Commissioner Dooley asked what the next step is from this particular discussion. Director Auler stated that we have been working for the past month on the operating budget which will be submitted tomorrow. We are submitting a balanced budget if everything holds true as far as projections for revenue.

What we will be looking at before submitting tomorrow is no significant reduction but that is subject to change as projections come in and we start the budget deliberation process.

Commissioner Dooley asked if there were no formula in place for revenue generators, is it forth coming.

Director Auler stated that what was focused on right now was reducing our cost as much as we could to be within our expected revenue based on our user fees and Park Millage rate. We will have to look at how we generate additional revenue for the next year's budget and possibly this one.

C. Civic Center Catering & Beverage Service

Director Auler stated that they had hoped to get a recommendation this evening from the Commission but would welcome input. There was a cross-departmental venture team created within the City to look at how the rental process works and how we might enhance the opportunity for more rentals essentially generating additional revenue and helping offset items. They discussed what some of those fiscal improvements might be as well as marketing and policy issues. One of the policy issues that came up is whether alcohol should be permitted under certain criteria and limitations. These were identified in the handout in the packet. The renter would have a caterer who would have a liquor license and provide that service for limited types of activities. He anticipates this item being presented to City Council in the near future for their consideration. It may or may not be approved. The venture team is recommending this. He would like feedback from the Commission. Alcohol could be served for events like wedding receptions or similar functions where a caterer could be contracted and brought in. This would make us more marketable. There are other facilities, both private and municipal, in the area which do this.

Commissioner Dooley stated that he trusts the staff and if this is their recommendation he would recommend and support it as well.

Director Auler stated that it can not be voted on this evening but he would like to bring in an additional item. In the December meeting, the Commission had an opportunity to weigh in on the Capital Improvement Program. There were four members at the meeting and the item failed with a two to two vote and no majority. Tonight he was going to ask for the Commission recommendation but cannot because there isn't a quorum. The Capital Improvement Committee meeting was scheduled for this week so we have missed that opportunity to bring it forward. He can bring it back at the March meeting unless the budget document has gone out.

Commissioner Iszler asked, for the beverage service, if any other of the parks is included besides Fuerst Park as an option.

Director Auler stated that it is really focused on the Civic Center and Fuerst Park at this point. At Lakeshore Park, alcohol is permitted. You can't sell it but users of the park can bring it there. That is currently the only park where we permit alcohol.

Commissioner Blair asked regarding his request for an overview of participation and the surveys of facility use and budget, could Novi Ice Arena and the participation, tax dollars that go in to operating it, and the revenue be included as well as any other outdoor facilities we operate. This would include revenue from Novi Youth Baseball, Jaguars, etc. This would give us a better assessment as a Commission.

Director Auler confirmed this and stated that the Senior Residential Complex can also be included. He wanted to make clear that the Novi Ice Arena does not receive tax revenue nor does the Senior Residential Complex. Their enterprise funds live off the fees they generate.

Commissioner Blair stated they are enterprise funds but asked if it was public knowledge in terms of the amount of money they generate and their expenses. Director Auler stated that they are annually included in the City Budget. They pay for their debt service as well as their operating cost through user fees.

CITIZEN COMMENTS: None

COMMISSIONER COMMENTS:

Student Representative Kerbrat stated that she missed the last meeting but will review the information. She thinks we are on the right track and hope the Commission can come to a consensus on the budget. She then asked what is the maximum increase on profit we can put on things that bring in revenue.

Superintendent Cowan stated that is a difficult question to answer because that is something we look at consistently. There is research that says you should always continually move your fees so that people won't be surprised. We also try to look at where a fee may be raised to the point that people no longer participate. As Director Auler stated, there are opportunities for user fees on things we don't charge for right now. We are increasing revenue next year based on raising our program fees slightly for everything we do. We are also looking at more sponsorships and partnerships to offset costs.

Student Representative Raina stated that he thinks having events at the Fuerst Park is a great idea because it brings the people of Novi together more, making it a better community. Having an effective campaign to notify people of the events is really important. As Director Auler said, it is hard to break even at these events if you are charging for them at all but maybe the small things could be charged for and spread awareness. He stated that he had not heard of Winterfest. One of the reason the Fire-up Fest is so big at the High School is because that week at lunch they are being constantly reminded of it and it is after a football game. The hockey team is doing great this year so if Winterfest is close to a hockey game it may help.

Superintendent Cowan replied that is a great idea but our only challenge with the Ice Arena is the capacity. We could not have the kind of crowd we have at Fire-up Fest so the campaign was not as big. Flyers and information did go out. It is interesting to know that it is not on the announcements because we were told that it is announced during lunches. We will make a call to the school tomorrow. It is also on our Facebook page.

Student Representative Raina asked if there is going to be a charge for the events at the Fuerst Park and how they plan on spreading the information.

Superintendent Cowan replied that with our "Sizzling Summer Arts Series" we have many partners and banks that put it on their calendars. We also do press releases. It will be on Facebook and in the Engage. We plan to do the little cards with the High School events like is done for Fire-up Fest as well as Facebook and also Twitter when it is set up. We do not have the High School schedule planned out yet. We do not currently have a charge for those but we are talking about collecting donations at them. We do get sponsors to offset some of the cost but that does not include the staff time or the effort that goes in to planning those events.

Commissioner Blair stated that having worked in marketing and communications field, he knows that is one of the first things to get cut when budgets get tight. The self marketing ideas like Facebook are great. Don't underestimate the power of even a

simple e-mail. He stated that some feedback on the Daddy Daughter Dance registration is that it was difficult for some users.

As Director Auler said, he thinks that it is important for the department to reposition itself. It is important to realize our priorities and get those clear. He encourages public comments on this.

He is looking forward to the Daddy Daughter Dance on Saturday night.

Commissioner Iszler stated that all of the information is a lot to process and will take some time to review. She thanked the department for putting it together and hopes that everyone will be at the Commission meeting next time so they can have a good discussion.

Commissioner Dooley stated that he appreciates Director Auler's and Superintendent Cowan's flexibility for allowing some of this discussion to continue in March. He wished to acknowledge Student Representatives Kerbrat and Raina. They made very astute comments. Sometimes as adults we take for granted what they see everyday. Their insights help strengthen what we try to do and we appreciate it.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned by Commissioner Dooley at 8:12 PM.

DATE APPROVED:

Jay Dooley, Chairperson

Paul Policicchio, Vice Chairperson