

PARKS, RECREATION & CULTURAL SERVICES COMMISSION

Thursday, October 20th, 2022 – 7 P.M.

Novi Civic Center – Council Chambers

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

ROLL CALL:

Dooley (present), Staab (present), Joseph (absent/excused), Joshi (present), Riggins (present), Tolkacz (absent / excused), Torimoto (present)
Student Representatives: Bheemineni (absent / excused), Raghunathan (absent / excused)

APPROVAL OF AGENDA:

Commissioner Riggins motioned for approval of agenda and second by Commissioner Staab.

Voice Vote

Unanimous

CITIZEN COMMENTS:

None

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

It was moved that the minutes for the September 15th meeting be approved by Commissioner Joshi and second by Commissioner Riggins.

Voice Vote

Unanimous

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

- A. Walkable Novi – Commissioners Dooley & Tolkacz
Commissioner Dooley said tonight's meeting was cancelled. There is a tentative meeting scheduled for November and December. A lot of things are going on with respect to Walkable Novi. He spoke about Ten Mile between Meadowbrook and Haggerty on the right-hand side heading east. It will be an interesting discussion. Please share your thoughts and concerns with Commissioners Dooley or Tolkacz which can be addressed at the next meeting.

- B. Novi Park Foundation – Commissioners Joseph, Riggins, Staab & Torimoto
Commissioner Riggins had nothing to report. Director Muck has been in contact with Mr. Landry and Melissa Agosta so hopefully next month there will be more.

- C. Grants Committee – Commissioners Joseph & Joshi
Commissioner Joshi said there has not been a meeting because we are still waiting to submit for the SPARKS grant for the expansion of Wildlife Woods. Director Muck added that the Spark grants are opening Monday which are federal funds. It was a little unexpected that they are opening Monday. There will be a webinar on the 28th at 10:30am hosted by the DNR. Information has been

sent to the grants committee if they wish to view as citizens. More information will be provided on stipulations and amounts that has not been on the website. We know what we want to apply for and will give a full report at the next meeting about the status of the grants.

D. Parks and Facilities Updates

1. ITC Trail - Commissioner Torimoto

Commissioner Torimoto showed a summary of pictures from the north side of the ITC Trail with the connections to other parks. He focused on this area because he recently presented the ITC Park. It was a beautiful weekend with the peak of fall colors when he visited. The photos showed how the trail interacts towards Wildlife Woods, pickleball courts, exercise equipment, connector towards Providence Park as well as the Wellbridge and Rose Senior Living facilities. The gate systems by the platform walks and roads were also shown. These prevent motor vehicles from coming onto the trail. A manual crossing light that comes on when a button is pushed to indicate someone is going across was highlighted. The ITC Trail is well maintained and continues to evolve.

Commissioner Torimoto asked about a line painted across the trail. Director Muck explained that it was the middle school cross country course.

Commissioner Torimoto was able to access the trail through his neighborhood connector which he said is a great set up. He asked about the maintenance responsibility. It was clarified that six feet on either side of the trail is the city's obligation. The neighborhood association or residence should be maintaining their paths. Commissioner Torimoto noticed some chips, cracks and root systems growing into the trail and asked about the maintenance schedule. DPW handles the boardwalk and spot addresses issues with the asphalt. Future budgets for repairs and replacements are being planned. Overall, the trail looks great.

MATTERS FOR COMMISSION DISCUSSION AND/OR ACTION:

- A. Invasive Species Removals in Parks – Rick Meader, City Landscaper Architect
- Director Muck introduced Rick Meader the city's Landscape Architect. They have worked closely for the last seven and a half years. Prior to Rick arriving there were not invasive species removal efforts. He said helping to make the parks healthier ecologically is one of his favorite parts of his job. In addition to removing invasive species, they have been adding plants back to the parks. Mr. Meader explained invasive species are typically plants that are not from the United States or Michigan. In our case all are from other continents. The problem is not with an individual plant but the cumulative effect they have on an area. Buckthorn is the dominate invasive species in Novi. When it starts to accumulate in the woods it blocks out everything and nothing can grow, due to the shade and chemicals it puts out which changes the soil chemistry. Bush honeysuckle and other species from Asia were brought over intentionally because they are a good screen until they start spreading. Autumn olive was promoted by the DNR because it was good for birds but is no longer recommended since it shades out open spaces. Other invasive species mentioned were phragmites, a tall grass which grows in low lying areas and Japanese knotweed that gets really tall and crowds out everything else.

Some grant money has been used to fight the invasive species. Money from the tree fund has been spent because the ordinance states it can be used for maintenance of the woods as well as adding trees. The work started in Rotary Park in 2016. A presentation was shown with details of the treated areas and techniques used for removing the invasive species. In his experience the first year the area rejuvenates, and the second year begins the regrowth. Plants have been added to the area, wildflowers are coming back with butterflies and bees because a lot more food sources are available. More vegetation with roots helps hold the soil better which helps the river too. This has been a really nice thing to see the conversion for a healthier wildlife. It is great to see the change happen just through the removal of buckthorn.

Rick Meader continued explaining work being done at other parks especially Lakeshore with phragmites and wetland mitigation. The area was heavily populated because they spread by seeds and runners. He continued with details on how they fight the phragmites including chemical treatments and burning which is efficient. Additionally, buckthorn has been removed at ITC and Village Wood Lake. Mr. Meader said this has made a big difference in terms of rejuvenating for healthy stuff, making the parks look nice and cleaning up the areas has been fun.

Every year we put \$50,000-\$100,000 of plants into the parks. The money comes from the tree fund and includes trees and shrubs. An equal number of dollars goes to street trees. The priorities are for new parks adding a good amount, so it is not barren. Lakeshore added trees when the park was redesigned plus to help with screening for the neighbors on all sides. At newly acquired Bosco trees and shrubs were added around the detention pond. Villa Barr had 11 birches planted. ITC had had trees and shrubs added by the Tim Pope playground to make it more attractive and increase shade. The department does esthetic and habitat improvements in various parks which typically adds plantings in six to eight parks every spring and fall.

Several of the commissioners had questions for Rick Meader. Commissioner Joshi suggested that more signs were used to let the public know about the work being done to fight invasive species. There was a lot of praise for the presentation and Mr. Meader said he would be happy to come back anytime.

B. Commission Chair, Vice Chair Elections and Committee Appointments

The commissioner roles and committees were discussed because according to the bylaws members need to be appointed in October. Chairman Dooley and Vice Chair Staab will continue in their respective roles. The commissioners on the committees will be as follows:

Parks Foundation – Joseph, Staab, Torimoto and Riggins

Walkable Novi – Dooley and Tolkacz

Grants Committee – Joseph and Riggins

STAFF REPORTS

A. Administration Division – Director Jeff Muck

1. Park Project Updates

Director Muck said that the original roofs on the ranches at Meadowbrook Commons are currently being replaced. The main building was done two months ago.

Next month the ITC master plan will be presented. Recreation Supervisors Root and Morris will be here to explain where we are in the process, the recommended consultant and timeline. There are plans to do some of the utility work for the splash pad yet this year.

A visual update of the plans for Wildlife Woods was shown. Details of the parking lot expansion and installation of stairs were highlighted. Director Muck said it is a simple project but initial estimates over \$500,000. Due to the grant timeline the project probably will not happen in 2023 if we are approved for the grant.

B. Recreation Division – Director Jeff Muck

1. Program & Services

Director Muck provided the updates from the programming team since Deputy Director Tracie Ringle was not in attendance. He began with cultural arts and said the last Villa Barr resident of 2022 left this week. While Kau'i Dalire was here, she worked with the Polynesian dance group on a luau dance workshop, assisted teaching classes, created a Hawaiian altar that is displayed at Villa Barr and led a lei making class. The Studio Six production team is working on a piece about her time in Novi.

The dance recital is taking place December 18th with 158 dancers. This is the largest numbers for that program. Youth theatre is rehearsing and building sets for the production of Cinderella which will take place in January.

The Jack O'Lantern Jubilee will be held Saturday at ITC Community Sports Park. There will be twenty-five candy stations, character visits, live music and more.

Plans are being made for the Winter, Wine, and Whimsy Kids Alley. This community celebration will be at Fountain Walk the weekend before Thanksgiving. The Kid's Alley portion of the event will be open Friday and Saturday with games, crafts, and surprises. Registration begins November 1st for Lunch with Santa which will be held at the Civic Center December 10th. It is highly recommended to register early since it sells out quickly.

There is one more week of fall adult softball due to make ups from weather issues. The youth basketball and volleyball teams are full, and practices have started. The Pistons will be offering a winter break camp at the Novi Schools facilities. Hopefully, a player will come visit since they are in season. A special experience for the soccer players will happen November 9th. A game will take place under the lights on the high school field. The adult cornhole league at Lakeshore Park is full.

Shelter rentals continue through the month of October. Park bathrooms will close for the season October 30th so they can be winterized. Reservations for events at the Civic Center for 2023 can be scheduled now. Rentals for 2022 are being turned away because the facility is so popular.

The December holiday edition of Engage will be delivered the week of November 21st.

C. Older Adult Division – Director Jeff Muck

1. Programs and Services

Director Muck acknowledged Commissioner Staab's request for statistics of programs and services for the year and said OAS Recreation Supervisor, Madison Lachance will be at the November meeting to provide that information.

Studio Six and our certified fitness instructor created a video on fall prevention which was posted on our Facebook page September 22nd, the first day of fall. As part of the S.O.S program their resource guide information will be posted on the City of Novi Boomers and Beyond Facebook page; September – fall prevention, October – fire prevention and November – caregiver support.

It is Medicare open enrollment time, now through December 7th and we are hosting one on one counseling for Medicare part D. There is also a program called Getting Ready For Open Enrollment on October 20th presented by Megan Schira. Volunteer training for AARP tax aid begins in November. The councilors need to go to sixteen sessions and pass a test before they can work to file tax returns. Appointments can be made starting January 5th. This is definitely a needed service for seniors in our area. The Powerful Tools for Caregivers class will be held again in conjunction with the Area Agency on Aging in November. Madison Lachance will be traveling with forty-five seniors for the Mackinac Island Grand Experience next week. The Grand Hotel will be offering many programs, contests, tours, nightly dancing with the orchestra, a carriage ride and meals are included. The program was sold out and it will be brought back next year. An afternoon travel fair was attended by fifty-three individuals interested in learning about offerings for the rest of the year and 2023.

Currently, there are 125 people registered for the Veterans Day Celebration. Mission Barbecue will be providing lunch. Rotary members and Commissioner Staab are volunteering. The VFW will be presenting the colors, pledge of allegiance and retrieving the flags as part of the ceremony. There will be a P.O.W table. Entertainment will be provided by the ABC Sisters, a magician/comedian, and the Novi High School Choir.

Friday November 18th at 3:30 as part of Winter, Wine, and Whimsy the movie White Christmas will be shown at Emagine Theatre for those 55+. After the movie attendees are encouraged to explore Fountain Walk, visit the vendors, and stay for the tree lighting at 6:30.

COMMISSIONER COMMENTS:

Commissioner Riggins

This was a very productive meeting, and it sounds like next month will be even more. I really enjoyed Rick's presentation, so thank you. An additional suggestion about Commissioner Joshi's comment to have a sign regarding invasive species work, would be to put an article in Engage or the library newsletter.

Commissioner Torimoto

Very good discussion. It is great to see the major projects proceeding like the ITC strategic plan and the Splash Pad. I did not realize how much actually goes into planning and maintenance in the parks for the trees and the shrubs. The presentation was very informative and interesting.

Commissioner Joshi

I would echo what everyone is saying. Thank you for the great presentation. We all learned a lot. It was definitely informative, and we would love to have Rick back. Thank you, Commissioner Torimoto for your presentation. We have a long meeting ahead next month. Thank you for all the updates.

Commissioner Staab

I would like to thank my fellow commissioners for the approval of our slate for the upcoming year and myself and Jay moving forward as chairman and vice chair. I look forward to working on the committee. I appreciate Rick coming out and the presentation on invasive species it was very interesting and impactful the way it affects our environment. I appreciate Commissioner Torimoto's presentation on the trails. I look forward to attending several events in the coming months as we gear up for holiday season.

Commissioner Dooley

Rick, I echo all the comments made by the commissioners this evening. You are a welcome addition to any subsequent future meetings. Thank you for explaining the way that you did. You know how to make sure the native species of plants has the best course of action for continual success and strengthen the current species out there in the parks. The monarch butterfly is a big passion of mine. The more milkweeds and butterfly bush we can put in Novi it gives butterfly's a great chance for success in the future.

Charlie, I echo your comments as well for the roles for next year. I know all of us will represent these committees to the best of our ability. Lastly, Harry is the model for presenting parks. The presentation was outstanding.

ADJOURNMENT

A motion to adjourn was made by Commissioner Joshi and seconded by Commissioner Riggins.

Voice Vote

Unanimous

The meeting was adjourned by Commissioner Dooley at 8:18p.m.

DATE APPROVED: _____

Jay Dooley, Chairperson

Charles Staab, Vice Chairperson