

PARKS, RECREATION & CULTURAL SERVICES COMMISSION

Thursday, August 20th, 2026 – 7 P.M.

Novi Civic Center – Council Chambers

The meeting was called to order at 7:05p.m. with Commissioner Staab presiding.

ROLL CALL:

Commissioners: Joseph (absent/excused), Bagley (absent/excused), Dooley (arrived 7:20), Gopalakrishnan (present), Riggins (present), Staab (present), Torimoto (present)

APPROVAL OF AGENDA:

Commissioner Gopalakrishnan motioned for approval of agenda and second by Commissioner Torimoto.

Voice Vote

Unanimous

CITIZEN COMMENTS:

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

It was moved that the minutes for the June 18th meeting be approved by Commissioner Gopalakrishnan and second by Commissioner Riggins.

Voice Vote

Unanimous

PRESENTATIONS

A.

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

A. Novi Parks Foundation – Commissioners Riggins, Staab & Torimoto

Commissioner Torimoto said there was a meeting last Wednesday. Much of the discussion focused on the results of Pour on the Shore which took place in July. The Foundation tried some new things including radio advertising, catering instead of food trucks, bartenders in place of volunteers, and a DJ. From a financial standpoint the results were not as good as they were in the past. There was plenty of data collected from surveys and social media responses to evaluate. A lot was learned with things to improve on for the future. The new Executive Director and Event Coordinator Marcel and Victoria did an excellent job planning and running the show.

Commissioner Staab reinforced that Executive Director Marcel Badia and Victoria Johnson did an excellent job planning and staging the event. We thank the support of Parks Recreation and Cultural Services staff for their manpower, assistance and resources. In addition, DPW and police were helpful. The initial response to the changes has been positive. The decrease in profit was anticipated with the increase in advertising expenses. We will digest the data in the next few months as we plan for 2027.

B. Active Mobility Committee – Commissioners Dooley & Gopalakrishnan

Commissioner Gopalakrishnan provided an update from the July 16th meeting where the key discussion topics were sidewalk and grant applications. The CIP budget was covered. Submittals are due in September. The city will estimate the cost for high-priority sidewalk gaps along Twelve Mile Road, Grand River, and potentially Napier Road to apply for the Access to Transit Grant. Next the roundabout and TAP grant for the

segment gap that exists between the proposed Nine Mile and Napier Road roundabout by Villa Barr. Currently it is the CIP mileage but being considered for a transportation alternative program.

The second big topic was E bike and E vehicle regulations. These bikes do not exist in the legal context of today's Michigan Vehicle Code. E bikes and scooters on sidewalks restrictions are up to the individual municipalities and cities. Motor bikes and mopeds remain strictly prohibited. Many complaints have been arising regarding E models at Lakeshore Park and ITC trails, modified class 1 bikes traveling up to 30mph. The police face difficulties enforcing rules because we do not have clear ordinance definitions in Novi. The committee has agreed that an outright ban is inappropriate. However, additional safety regulations are necessary. Potential strategies include age limits, helmet rules for minors, sidewalk radar signs, color coded class stickers, communication and seminars targeting local schools. The issue will be escalated to the Ordinance Review Committee to take further action.

The third topic was sidewalk repair and tree preservation in the prioritization matrix. Two new tier one assessment categories were added Access to Transit and Active Mobility Plan recommendation. The Chair, David Staudt, recommended adding an environmental impact category to weigh the cost of tree removal. Sarah Lucas, a resident representing West Ridge Downs Subdivision, presented a forty-one-signature petition protesting the removal of mature trees in the neighborhood. She advocated for alternative solutions citing Ann Arbor examples. David Staudt mentioned that this could be cost prohibitive and asked if the HOA would be willing to split costs for alternative preservation methods.

Finally, there were future infrastructure items mentioned. The staff will investigate sidewalk connectivity. The next meeting will be October 15th.

MATTERS FOR COMMISSION DISCUSSION AND/OR ACTION:

A. ITC Community Sports park Expansion Property

Director Muck and Commissioner Staab have met several times over the past year with ITC in efforts to secure new naming rights agreements with the city and Novi Parks Foundation for ITC Community Sports Park. ITC has agreed to donate \$50,000 each year for the next five years starting January of 2027. As part of the agreement, we discussed their desire to honor their former CEO Linda Aspey. She was a Past President of the Novi Parks Foundation. During that time, she was known as Linda Blair. ITC feels the best option is to name a new park area to be developed into a trail, open space with native plants such as Aspey Meadows. This would be the most beneficial way to showcase her career, positive impact on the park, her support of trails, and environmental enhancement projects. ITC's focus will be to have three or more education signs showcasing various aspects of Linda's engagement. First her career, background with ITC, support of women in engineering and management. Number two, Linda's direct impact on Novi Parks and the foundation. Third, her support of trails and environmental projects. Each sign would focus on a different aspect along the walking path. A rough concept of potential trail system and a prairie. The expansion property potentially includes connections to the ITC trail and existing community sports park.

Director Muck continued the naming rights will be finalized in the coming months, then it will go to City Council for approval. He is looking for input from the Commissioners, recommendation for Council and asked if they are in favor of the idea from ITC.

Director Muck explained that this concept is a very basic idea. He wanted input regarding the fundamental idea to secure \$250,000 and include recognition of Linda with signage, trail and prairie. Commissioner Staab agreed and recapped Director Muck's presentation and stressed that it was very basic concepts. There were additional comments from the Commissioners before motions to approve by

Commissioner Gopalakrishnan and second by Commissioner Riggins. Director Muck wrapped up this topic by saying the next steps are to finalize the verbiage with ITC, the City Attorney, and Foundation then it will go to City Council. The voice of the Commissioners that you are in agreement and to recognize Linda's contributions will be part of the information that gets incorporated into the packet.

B. 2027 Park Shelter rental Fees

Deputy Director Ringle explained that the department continually does cost analysis of fees for all of our programs and amenities. The Commissioners were given the current park shelter reservation information and proposed updates for 2027. Part of the city ordinances that fees need to be approved by a Council resolution for anything happening at Lakeshore Park. We are proposing to raise fees across the board for shelters and presenting this information to Commissioners tonight. Costs are increasing for staff and materials. The city is not able to absorb the costs and needs to pass along charges to those who use the amenities.

Half days are the exact divided cost of a full day because each half needs to be booked due to limitations with the registration software. In addition, half days are only available at Lakeshore Park due to that location having staff during the season. Prices are looked at comparatively to other communities. Novi park shelters fall in the middle range. Size, capacity and amenities are considered when calculating the cost. Deputy Director Ringle said comments and feedback from the Commissioners is requested before it is brought to Council for a resolution.

Commissioner Riggins believes the non-resident rate should be higher. Commissioner Dooley asked how the rates were determined between resident and non-residents. Deputy Director Ringle answered that for programs it is typically 20% unless the program is over a certain amount. Percentage can decrease with the price of the program. Commissioner Dooley also asked for more information about the utilization between Novi citizens and people from other communities. Lakeshore's shelter one is by far the most in demand because of the amenities. It was added that Civic Center rental cost could increase January 2027 as well.

Director Muck recapped that a recommendation from the Commissioners is requested. He asked for confirmation that the resident rate is acceptable, but staff is requested to reevaluate increasing the non-resident rate before sending it to Council. A motion was requested since the issue is timely. The motion was approved by Commissioner Riggins and second by Commissioner Dooley.

STAFF REPORTS

A. Administration Division – Director Jeff Muck

1. Park Project & Initiative Updates

Director Muck shared the great news that the Villa Barr Pathway Project is complete. It has made a difference getting around the pond with the very accessible concrete pathway. He thanked the Novi Parks Foundation for contributing \$12,5000 to the development.

The Bosco ITC Trail Connector project is still in progress. They are working on the boardwalk and approaches. Waiting on a date to begin paving. It will have to work around the soccer schedule but anticipated to be done this fall.

City Council has determined they are no longer interested in selling the Novi Ice Arena. The relationship with Suburban Ice will be continued for management. It is in the early stages of the most recent contract. City Council did direct staff to shore up contracts with entities that use the building including Novi Youth Hockey Association, Northville High School hockey team, Novi High School hockey team, and the Figure Skating Club of Novi. They have ice contracts in place however; terms need to be more defined for use of locker room and office space. There was also discussion about the CIP fund and

making sure money is set aside for future capital projects and reserving funds for a savings account.

Director Muck and Community Relations Manager, Sheryl Walsh toured the ice arena to study the branding. They want to make sure the city logo is prominent in the building and on communications sent by Suburban Ice for programs and services. They will implement some ideas and graphics quickly.

In the Commissioner's packets there was a sheet about several maintenance items that were addressed at the dog park earlier this month. The park was shut down for one day to cut tree limbs / branches, treat poison ivy, replace gravel, fill holes and other items. Thanks to the maintenance team. The work will be great for our passionate members. Northwest Park also had maintenance yesterday from a contractor that works on reestablishing the prairie. It is coming along very well for the first year.

B. Recreation Division – Deputy Director Tracie Ringle

Deputy Director Ringle said Recreation Supervisor John Gillingham is super excited camp has wrapped up. John and his team put their heart and soul into the numerous weeks of great experiences for the campers. There were twenty-five counselors this year with fourteen at Lakeshore and eleven at the Civic Center. 1311 registrations throughout all the weeks with 365 unique individual campers which is sixteen more than last year. Costs have increased the past few years. There is a \$20 fee for those who cancel or transfer between the two camps. This charge is a deterrent since registration is in March. Many parents just blanket the summer later they realize they do not need all the weeks that they registered for during enrollment. It is task intensive for staff to fill the openings. This year there was a higher number of withdrawals and refunds issued. It was harder to fill the vacancies in August since people have found other options. We ask numerous times for people to take their children off the waitlists to help the process. Everything with camp was fantastic with a lot of good feedback. John will be putting together a meeting with the head counselors for a debrief.

Deputy Director Ringle continued that soccer is underway. 945 players are registered. It has been harder to fill all the coaching vacancies this year. This might be due to the changes with the age groupings in soccer. Recreation Supervisor Steve Fellhauer and Sean Penndorf are reaching out and making connections to potentially recruit some high school players to coach the tiny tots.

The Sizzling Summer Art Series was presented by the DIA and Villa Barr artists. It gave us an opportunity to host a number of kids at a low cost. It also gave a lot of exposure for the Villa Barr residency program. 1684 people registered for the various dates of Sizzling Summer. However, 986 showed up. This being attributed to it being a free program with registration opening for the whole summer in April.

The dance and theatre camps went well. In addition to our day camps the department would like to add full day theatre camps to Novi next year. This should help with the pressure for full-day options and waiting lists for Lakeshore and Power Play. It will accommodate folks that need full-time care. Auditions for the big theatre production Matilda Junior will be held next week. It will be held December 3rd – 6th.

The Diwali Fest planning is on track for November 5th date. Novi Parks Foundation will assist with collecting individual donations for the event. Currently \$7500 has been received for sponsorship. The foundation has created a QR code for families interested in supporting this year and moving forward.

Deputy Director Ringle met with the Cultural Arts Advisory Board prior to this meeting. The group is making progress on a Cultural Arts Strategic Plan which is a goal for that committee. The plan will include opportunities that need funding, deciding what can actually be accomplished and should be recommended before reporting back to City Council. Then we will hear their feedback since this was a Council appointed committee.

C. Older Adult Division – OAS Manager Kit Keiser

1. Programs and Services

OAS Manager Kit Keiser started her report with social services. Open enrollment begins October 15th and will run through December 7th. We are working with Age Ways to host informational events in October and November at the Meadowbrook Activity Center. A Matter of Balance, a fall prevention class concluded July 20th. It continues to be a popular program which is very helpful. This particular group wanted to take the class again, therefore another session is starting this week. The deadline is tomorrow and it is very close to being full. A new fall prevention program hosted by Michigan Medicine's injury prevention outreach called Sloppy Slipper Swap will be held in September. Participants can trade in worn out slippers for a new pair with new grippy bottoms which reduce fall risk.

Social Services Manager, Sandy Fisher compiled a few highlights from the fiscal year about the medical loan closet. It was the busiest period on record with 1900 loans and returns of equipment. There were 260 donations of equipment and \$700 in monetary contributions. The closet is a wonderful resource for the community and keeps Sandy busy.

Recreation Supervisor Madison Lachance is back from her parental leave. She came back in July and is in full swing. Get Outside Novi wrapped up at the end of July. This year five different parks were highlighted. 167 visits were submitted. Power Park and the splash pad had the most visits followed by Northwest Park, Lakeshore and ITC.

August 18th Captain Theisen hosted the Buzz About Bees at the Bosco back thirty. The program was split into two time slots with smaller groups that were able to try on beekeeping gear to get closer to the hives.

The annual Perennial Exchange will be held on September 19th from 9:00-11:00 at Furest Park. Community members are encouraged to bring their native overgrown plants and flowers to share. Captain Theisen will present on the importance of pollinators in gardens. The Beautification Committee will also be on site for the event.

August 13th OAS celebrated National Root Beer Float Day with 50's Float Fest complete with root beer floats and golden oldies music bingo at Meadowbrook Commons.

Upcoming September 23rd there will be a Behind the Seen presentation by the DIA about the hidden meanings behind images of plants and flowers in famous works of art.

August 26th a large bus to take twenty-six participants to a Tiger's game. The group will be in the Tiger Club including unlimited food, air conditioning and prime seating. In the past the trip had regular seating at the park with a smaller vehicle. This year the trip was upgraded and still sold out. Senior Day at the Zoo is September 9th. Spots are filling.

Participants will enjoy live entertainment, informational train tours, animal engagement and their senior resource center. The next Travel Fair will be in the afternoon of October 6th at Meadowbrook Activity Center. The Mackinac Island Grand Experience trip is full. It will take place October 13th – 16th during peak fall colors.

2. Meadowbrook Commons 25th Anniversary

Older Adult Services Manager Kit Keiser continued her reports telling the Commissioners that this year marks the 25th anniversary of Meadowbrook Commons and the Meadowbrook Activity Center. We are excited to celebrate and invite the Commissioners to join us September 17th. The program will run from 4:30-6:30 before the Commission meeting. The doors open at 4:30, brief remarks from city staff, KMG leadership and Mayor Fischer at 5:00. The reception will follow with opportunity to mingle with residents, tour the facility, listen to live piano music, and snack on charcuterie plus dessert bites.

Meadowbrook Commons is a 55+ apartment community. The Meadowbrook Activity Center is an attached space where the city provides programs and services that are available to anyone in Novi and beyond. It is a very unique setup for a municipality. It has played a major role helping many residents age in place. The facility helps residents be independent and build community. They get many more amenities than other apartment communities such as massage, monthly visits from a podiatrist, and fitness center. It is called independent living but there is no continuum of assisted living or memory care. The rent is kept at an affordable rate compared to other 55+ apartment communities.

Invitations for the anniversary celebration were sent out by KMG, which will be organizing most of the event. All the residents are invited, and they will receive a gift. The OAS report finished with questions and further discussion about open enrollment. It was stressed that the counselors are independent volunteers not affiliated with insurance companies. They want to help people navigate the system.

COMMISSIONER COMMENTS:

Commissioner Gopalakrishnan

Thank you, Commissioner Torimoto, for the Novi Park Foundation updates. I like the ITC expansion plan, and honoring Linda is a good thing to do. Thank you, Director Muck, for the park project updates. I am looking forward to the trail connector being finished this fall. I look forward to going to Villa Barr to see how it turned out. Thank you for sharing the dog park updates. The pictures show the amazing before and after.

Thank you, Deputy Director Ringle, for all your updates. The OAS and recreation division had a very busy summer. There were some challenges including the camp registration which will improve next year. I am excited about all the new programs being offered. Our citizens are blessed to have so much offered. I did get outside every day for the Get Outside Novi and I attended a couple Sizzling Summer events. I am interested in attending the 25-year celebration as well. Overall, it was an amazing summer plus we have many more programs to go to in the fall. Thank you for everything.

Commissioner Torimoto

It is great to hear about the progress on the newer projects. We are fortunate to have a foundation base for a lot of the facilities and assets. The ITC expansion, with 945 players for soccer, will be a great opportunity. It is nice to dedicate a part to Linda plus possibly offer other services. The pathway, Bosco connector, and Northwest Park prairie are all newer projects expanded on what we already had it was absolutely great to hear about that. Lastly, the Sloppy Slipper Swap is something fun yet serious ensuring the safety and preventing falls. Thank you for everything you do.

Commissioner Riggins

I think it was a great meeting. I am glad we are not selling the ice arena. It was nice our furry friends got their dog park nice and neat so that is awesome. I am excited to come to the Meadowbrook Commons 25th Anniversary. I definitely have it on my calendar. Summer is winding down so make sure to get out and enjoy the last few weeks. Have a happy Labor Day.

Commissioner Dooley

It is tough to follow those great comments. I want to compliment Commissioner Riggins for questioning the park shelter reservation information until we understand the difference between resident and non-resident. She was spot on suggesting we reconvene once we get additional information.

I had an opportunity to call bingo last month. Madison Lachance reintroduced herself to the players and received a standing ovation. Madison is amazing and means so much to the department. I have been calling bingo for twenty-one years. It is amazing that this is the 25th anniversary. The complex is very clean, friendly with a lot of activity. There is always something going on from puzzles, reading books, book swapping, and games. It is an amazing complex. For the people who are lucky enough to get in it is a great place. Compliments to the City of Novi for making it all happen. I appreciate the fact the ice arena is in our welcomed hands where it is going to be the most successful and efficient.
Thank you all.

Commissioner Staab

I appreciate all the comments. I want to emphasize the 25th anniversary. I remember when it was first built. It took a piece of property that was an old ballfield and converted it to a beautiful facility with a lot of amenities plus pickleball. I am amazed how many people are there at all hours. This weekend there is a pickleball tournament at Vibe Showplace with amateur and professional players.

I am glad the ice arena is in our hands to navigate over the next twenty-five years. It has become a profitable entity with the debts retired. There has been many Olympians trained there too. It is something to be proud of. I am glad to see the city's branding being reinforced

Thanks, Jeff, for the presentation on ITC Community Sports Park and expansion. I appreciate your efforts working to get the commitments from ITC. In addition, commemoration of Linda's work with the foundation, parks and ITC.

ADJOURNMENT

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

Voice Vote

Unanimous

The meeting was adjourned by Chairman Joseph at 8:13p.m.

DATE APPROVED: _____

Joseph, Chairperson

Dooley, Vice Chairperson