

PARKS, RECREATION & CULTURAL SERVICES COMMISSION

Thursday, Feb. 21, 2019 – 7 P.M.

NOVI CIVIC CENTER – COUNCIL CHAMBERS

The meeting was called to order at 7 p.m. with Commissioner Thomopoulos presiding. Due to technical difficulties, the audio recording of the meeting began with agenda item 8 (staff reports), so limited detail is available regarding agenda items 1-7.

ROLL CALL: Dooley (Absent), Thomopoulos (Present), Joshi (Present), Muzzin (Present), Pratt (Absent), Staab (Present), Torimoto (Absent), Student Representatives Alex Fortsch (Present), Ananya Kamalesh (Present).

APPROVAL OF AGENDA:

It was moved that the agenda be approved by Commissioner Staab and seconded by Commissioner Joshi.

Voice Vote

Unanimous

CITIZEN COMMENTS:

Residents Gary Zack, Dorothy Duchesneau, Mike Duchesneau and Lakes Area Homeowners Association President Jerry Anderson spoke regarding Canadian geese.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

A. Approval of Jan. 17, 2019, minutes.

It was moved that the minutes for January be approved by Commissioner Muzzin and seconded by Commissioner Joshi.

Voice Vote

Unanimous

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

- A. Walkable Novi – Commissioners Muzzin & Thomopoulos
Commissioner Thomopoulos provided an overview. Per the Walkable Novi Committee meeting minutes, Director Muck provided updates on different PRCS projects. There was an update of the ITC Storage Building and Trailhead, that the team will be getting their TCO in the next few weeks and that signage and amenities will be added outside this spring, including solar panels, bike repair stations, etc. There was an update on the Bosco Fields project, including that the Right-of-Way agreement is still being finalized with the school district. The Committee discussed sidewalk Segment 29 on the west side of Beck Road with the goal of having a direct connect to Bosco Fields. There was also an update provided on the ITC Trail boardwalk, as there have been delays in boardwalk construction due to weather and materials, but should be starting soon. The goal is to have that project completed by the end of the year.
- B. Novi Park Foundation – Commissioners Staab & Torimoto
Commissioner Staab reported on the upcoming Pour on the Shore event and the Foundation will be considering requests for funding the Tim Pope play structure and pickleball courts at their March meeting.
- C. Grants Committee – Commissioners Dooley & Joshi
Commissioner Joshi said the meeting was rescheduled, so there is no report.
- D. — Parks Updates

MATTERS FOR COMMISSION DISCUSSION AND/OR ACTION

- A. PRCs Annual Report by Deputy Director Tracie Ringle
Deputy Director Ringle provided an annual report on the 2018 calendar year and asked commissioners to provide feedback by 2/27.

STAFF REPORTS

- A. Administration Division – Director Jeff Muck
 - 1. Park Project Updates
Director Muck said this is a big construction planning time for us. For the Lakeshore Park project, we've been told the engineering firm will submit plans to staff for our internal review next week. Those will be things like the fixtures in the building. After we've reviewing and commented internally as a staff, we'll send that back to them for them to formally submit to our Community Development Department in March and then it'll go through their full process. It'll go to the Planning Commission most likely in April. We're being told we're still on track for summer construction and our timelines can still be met. The ice arena is moving forward with approval from Council at Monday's meeting to install security cameras. This has been a long-time coming and is needed. What's there now is seven cameras and basically something you would do at home; a box system. The new system is integrated and will cover the ice sheets, the spectator bleachers, entry points, exit points, lobby areas and meet all of our retention standards that we need to follow. It'll really improve safety and security. Ice arena staff will have a monitor in the office where they can view multiple cameras at the same time and it'll enhance their ability to monitor the facility, as well. The ITC storage and trailhead building is getting ready to be completed. Our Parks Maintenance staff is eagerly awaiting their temporary certificate of occupancy, which should be coming in the next two weeks or so. We will be installing signage for the ITC Trail and other amenities possibly like a bike repair station as we move forward in the spring. Part of that building is also for use by the Novi Youth Baseball league so they can store some of their items there and we'll get rid of the containers on the north end that have been an eye sore for years. Rotary and ITC tennis courts we have put their re-surfacing and lining out to bid, which includes pickleball courts at ITC. Those bids will come back in March and then we'll bring those forward for approval, as well. Lakeshore and Pavilion Shore shoreline restoration bids will go out in March and will take place May-July for the shoreline restoration. For Lakeshore, that will include the emergency vehicle boat ramp for our police and fire vehicles, and handicap accessibility down into the water. Finally, we did have a Friends of Villa Barr meeting last Friday to talk about the future of Villa Barr and also recap things like our artist-in-residency program and the grand opening a lot of you attended. The thing that came out of that is the desire to start developing a strategic plan and master plan for that park. That park just opened, but there are a lot of people on that committee who are looking further ahead and want to discuss what that's going to look like in the future since it's a unique property and has so much potential.
Commissioner Thomopoulos asked whether there was a standard being used at the City buildings that would be used at the ice arena? Director Muck said we

do via Security Corps, who have security systems in place in a lot of our other buildings.

2. Rotary Park – Retention Facility Project Update

Director Muck said there's some activity out there and the project is now called the HRSDS Retention Facility, which stands for the Huron-Rouge Sewage Disposal System. This is the sewer system that serves 85 percent of Novi. The project is mandatory to remain in compliance with the City's sewage disposal contract. We've exceeded our contract capacity – our flow rate – a few times in the past. That's occurred when there's been heavy rain storms, when rainwater service runoff gets into the sewage system and causes issues downstream. The system will be automated to direct high-flow events into a retention facility to temporarily store it and then release them when the storm is passed. This is going to be a very small building installed for the pump station. You're going to have these underground storage tanks underground and extend into the park. When the storm water dissipates, these will extend and the water will go out. This is a mandatory project that water and sewer had to do. A year or two ago we had even talked about putting a large basin under the courts. This will be much better. It'll put up a small building, but it'll enhance the pathway. Where Roethel bends, it'll follow along up to Nine Mile and be brand-new crushed aggregate similar to Villa Barr. There will be a tree screening between that and the businesses, but you are going to see some tree removals out there; mainly scrub trees. This will be a construction process of 12 months or more, but not impact the park significantly. We're still renting the shelter, still having the tennis lessons and programs out there, people will be able to use the playground. All in all, this is something good for the City's water and sewer system.

Commissioner Thomopoulos said it sounds great, especially that we don't have to tear up the tennis courts. She said she believes we heard a presentation from the Rotary Club in the past where they wanted to do some signage or memorials and we were waiting for more information on this project, so does this help us get past holding us up so we can start to plan better? Director Muck said yes, this will allow us to open up discussions and look at benches. We had discussed putting some benches along that trail or looking at signage. Thomopoulos said the changes – especially new tree screening – will make it feel more like a park.

3. Canada Geese and Other Environmental Issues and Resources

Director Muck said there have been a lot of comments around the city not only about geese, but also on social media about coyotes around the city. We got together with the Community Relations Department to create a page with some of the measures we take and also some information with the community members. If you go to Parks and Recreation Facilities, there's now a link called "Environmental Issues and Resources" that can also be found under our Community Development Department. As you scroll down through this, we've put some information out on Canadian geese, which includes a link to the DNR's management practices and FAQs. We understand in the city there is a Canadian geese issue. It isn't just a city issue, but a regional issue and state issue. The geese population has continued to expand. This isn't just a parks issue; it's a golf club issue, HOA issues, everyone's issue across the state of Michigan. We know there's an impact on our parks, not only at Pavilion Shore, but at Fuerst Park, the sports park, out back at Power Park, basically anywhere with green

space and access to water. We've seen them at Links of Novi. The week before Christmas there was a flock of 100 on the fairway at Links of Novi, then a mile up the road at the corner of Taft and Nine Mile there was a flock of 30 in somebody's backyard. It's a citywide issue. Our Parks Maintenance staff have a really unique machine we bought. It's the only one we're aware of in the area. Our staff go out and are constantly power washing the walkways, pavilions and patio areas on a daily basis in the spring and summer. We invested in a Goose Sweep machine. We had a contract with this company years ago and, when the company decided to go out of business, we bought the machine from them. As far as we know, we've the only local community that owns this. If you picture the old-school lawn basket that you drag behind your lawn mower and it grabs the clippings up, that is what this does. Staff takes it out to Fuerst Park before a Sizzling Summer performance or programs, and is out at Pavilion Shore all the time. We've attempted to put up barrier fencing at Pavilion Shore to keep them from coming in and out of the water, but it isn't that effective because the geese just fly into other areas of the park or literally just walk around it. Regarding nest destruction, we at the City have not received any reports from citizens of specific locations of nests on public property. The only one we're aware of was a swan's nest on the beach at Lakeshore two years ago. That's the only one we've ever been made aware of that's on public property, so we encourage citizens who find them on public property to report them to us so we can mark them and know exactly where they're at. Historically, nest and egg destruction on private property has been the responsibility of local homeowner's associations or individual residents. We do know Liberty Park received Council approval last April to use a contractor for their nest and egg destruction. Typically, the Council has approved those on private properties. Dogs and other deterrents have been proven to not be effective. They're not an effective long-term solution by any means. We're in constant contact with our colleagues. Three times per year we have meetings with the regional directors and Muck said he has brought up geese countless times and we've said dogs and other deterrents don't work. Roundups at the DNR have said they don't work and are only a short-term solution. Reducing the population falls under the DNR's Wildlife Division, so we've included a link to the Wildlife Division if any of the citizens would like to weigh in on that. Everything the DNR has said is roundups, dogs and other deterrents are not effective. That's why staff do not recommend that to Council. We do not feel research has shown that's something we should be investing our money in. We understand it's a big problem, a big issue, but we've elected to do is monitor and continue our parks maintenance practices. Our Parks Maintenance team goes to seminars, goes to conference. Our Parks Maintenance superintendent was just at a seminar out west and came back and there are no deterrent products that anybody is saying is an effective product. If you Google sprays and chemicals, you'll get 100 website hits of different products and none of them are effective as a long-term solutions. People are putting things out all the time about lasers and drones, and we stay in touch with the DNR staff and they have tried things and just reported that that stuff does not work. Muck encouraged people to go out and read up on the DNR management FAQs. This talks a lot about what can land owners do. It talks about what scare devices, fencing, hunting and why are geese on these. It gives information on if people want to go through the nest and egg destruction, what are the steps to do that. It says Canadian goose roundup is not effective. We talked about it internally, if

we round up the 30 geese at Pavilion Shore, then what about the 100 at Links or the 30 at Nine Mile and Taft? It's not going to affect them, they're going to fly into Pavilion Shore. They're migratory animals. Pavilion Shore, Power Park and ITC CSP are stop offs, so a roundup is not going to be effective. Encourages people to go look at the Department of Natural Resources. The best practice is the preventative maintenance we're doing now. If residents want to approach City Council about what else they think we can do, that's certainly they're prerogative. We had a neighborhood association in 2015 petition for swan nest destruction due to some of the same reasons, e.coli issues in the lakes, and Council didn't approve that. Even if we recommended as a parks staff or a parks maintenance staff a roundup or nest destruction, there's no guarantee Council would approve it. They may have a different philosophy or opinion on that, as well. Back to some of the coyote issues, we do have some info on living with coyotes. They're everywhere now; everyone in the city, spread out into South Lyon. Commissioner Thomopoulos said they're not eating geese apparently. Muck said living with coyotes, we encourage not to feed them, not to leave small pets outside at night, don't leave garbage out, cover your garbage, clean up dog and cat food outside overnight. We've gotten reports of coyotes in Rotary Park as people are running through Rotary Park. Some people consider them a nuisance, as well. There's also some suggestions on what to do about those. We wanted to talk about invasive species and also what our staff has done. At Rotary Park, we've taken out some Japanese knot weed and buckthorn, and also done some controlled burns at Lakeshore Park to control some of the phragmites, which are around the city, as well. This gives the public an opportunity to identify some of the common invasive species you might find and other resources. We hope this can be a resource for citizens.

Commissioner Thomopoulos said it's great to have all that information in one place and that people can share it on social media. Director Muck said he doesn't know if Community Relations has shared it on Nextdoor yet, but will follow up with them.

Commissioner Thomopoulos said removing eggs from nests is an approved strategy. If you can do that, it'll reduce the population growth, not the existing population. There are theories that there are nests on the Shawood Lake park property and down the Rouge River there may be nesting going on. For years, Walled Lake homeowners have hired Goose Busters to come and take these eggs. She said she thinks private homeowners have done a good job with Walled Lake, but sees the population is still significant? Asked how could that be addressed? Should residents go to City Council and ask if the company could be hired to look at it or are photos of the nests as proof needed first before asking for approval? Director Muck said there's a couple of things at play. One concern is there's a park ordinance stating you may not hunt, molest, harm, frighten, kill, trap, pursue, chase, tease, shoo or throw any object at any animal, wildlife or bird. We already have an ordinance that you may not do that at a City park, so the citizens would have to have City Council agree that they would waive that ordinance and allow that. If you can prove there are nests out there with photos and specific locations, then the proof is in the pudding and that opens up that discussion. If you go forward and say that, there's still guarantee they would agree with it, based on the history with the swan's nest in 2015. A little bit different Council, but you don't know. It's a complex topic across the state, but we wanted to get the information out and list why we follow DNR and their

recommendations. Thomopoulos said no one has said not to follow DNR, we're just addressing part of the acreage and maybe the missing link is another part of the acreage. She said she hasn't seen a nest for sure, so she can't be sure even though she said it seems like there probably are.

B. Recreation Division – Deputy Director Tracie Ringle

1. Program & Services

Deputy Director Ringle said coming up is the Mother Son Hoedown 3/1 at the Civic Center, the Novi Ice Arena is offering Try Hockey for Free this Saturday. Information for that can be found at noviicearena.com. Soccer registration is going on now. It doesn't start until April, but we encourage people to register as soon as possible. Camp Arctic Adventure was held this week during Novi schools' midwinter break. It again sold out this year with 21 kids per day at Novi Ice Arena. Participants had the opportunity to skate and actually play in the snow this year. They were happy and excited about that. We had "Lion King Jr." auditions, which is our next show in May. They were overwhelming fantastic. We cast 115 actors in two casts. It's going to be quite the weekend the first weekend in May. We encourage you to put that on your calendar and attend because they do a great job. Villa Barr has a new resident arriving in March for a four-week stay. That is Jasmine Dreame Wagner. She is a poet, playwright and author who will be working with Novi Schools' Black Box Theater and creative writing class. That's a great connection between us and the schools. She's looking to spend time with Michigan Legacy Art Park up on the property at Crystal Mountain, which we've had a partnership with Villa Barr the entire time. That's a good mix for that, as well. We'll be making an offer for a summer artist in residence who is a sculptor from Scottsdale, Arizona. He didn't want to come in winter. He'll be leaving a piece here to add to our collection. The March-June edition of "Engage!" is scheduled to hit mailboxes next week and our summer camp registration starts 3/1. Our team has done a lot of work to make sure our programs go off without a hitch for spring and summer.

C. Older Adults – Older Adult Services Manager Karen Kapchonick

1. Program & Services

Manager Kapchonick said she wanted to go over some programs we haven't talked about much in the past year, which are our craft groups. Our craft individuals come to Meadowbrook Activity Center to socialize and do their hobbies. One of those is All Things Yarn, which is knitting and crocheting. That's every Tuesday and Thursday from 3-4 p.m. We also have our Novi Needlers quilting group who meet Wednesdays on the second and fourth Wednesday from 10 a.m.-1 p.m. And then our In Stitches group who loves needlepoint, embroidery and cross-stitch meet every Friday from 1-3 p.m. We have been fortunate to take their pieces of art work and have it on display here at the Novi Civic Center. It's a great opportunity to socialize and some of the individuals have also taken their artwork to Providence's cancer center and sold the items there. It's something giving back to the community and we're providing that opportunity for them. We do have technology with our Bits N Bites Café who meets the third Thursday of each month. Our manager of KMG Prestige who runs Meadowbrook Commons sits down with residents and answers any questions they may have. They'll go over iPods, iPads, the Internet, their smartphones and that group continues to grow. The residents over there are very excited to be

able to go to the front desk and Casey will help them out, even with the TVs. They start clicking around on their remotes and then lose the channel, and Casey has been a lifesaver for many individuals not just there at Meadowbrook, but for Novi residents who come. We do have Monday movie matinees once per month, which is a great opportunity to see some newly released movies, some older movies. That's 1-3 p.m. for \$1 to watch the movie, and we also provide popcorn and beverages. We also have our Ladies Lunch Brunch group who explore the city and meet once per month at different restaurants around the city. Flyers are on the website. Our Novel Book Club meets every other month. They pick a book, have a month to read it, then come together and share their thoughts about the book. That's co-sponsored by the Novi library. Those are some other things going on besides our regular activities.

CITIZEN COMMENTS:

Resident Dorothy Duchesneau of 125 Henning said geese like water, they swim, they do not walk three miles to get to Walled Lake lake. They're accessing Walled Lake through canals and rivulets where they can bring their little goslings who don't fly yet and feel safe in the water there. It's fine and good to say, if you see a nest, report it. You can report it and you have a two-week window. Goose Busters is an approved company that was authorized by the state; the first one in the state to be authorized in the goose roundup business. They'll go in with kayaks, go along the marshes and find the nests in areas where people can't go hiking. She said she doesn't go hiking in waders or hip boots in 3 feet of water and marshy areas where the geese feel safe. This company can do that. There are companies out there and that's how they do it. You have a two-week window. Getting the play area in Pavilion Shore Park went fast, but she said if she reports a nest to the City, she has a specific two-week only window that she's able to destroy the eggs in the nest. The DNR decides those dates; you don't get to pick. If we have an ordinance regarding the animals, maybe what the residents need to do is saying or asking if this ordinance can be modified for the two weeks the state would allow us to help take care of the problem. Two adult geese can get 8-12 eggs. That's a lot of young who are going to come back every year and multiple. That's how we got into this problem. Destroying the nest and eggs tells the adult parents this is not a safe area to raise a family and to go elsewhere, preferably back to Canada.

Resident Gary Zack of 359 South Lake Drive said he appreciates the City is putting up resources to educate people on the geese, coyotes and he may add, the deer. He said the deer will eat everything around your house and leave reminders, too. With all these things, there are no predators, so we're starting to run into problems. We have a mix of people and animals and we have to let the animals have their space, but it's not good for the animals either if there's an overpopulation, so we have to start thinking about dealing with those problems. He said he's a little disappointed that the City isn't looking to dig into the problem. He would like to see the City work with Goose Busters to see if there is a problem and, if there is, what their recommendation would be. Ideally, it would be nice if the Parks Commission could back residents up in going to City Council in saying we'd like to modify an ordinance to perhaps deal with this problem. It'd be nice to have both sides working together. That may not be the way the Parks Commission sees it, but he would see it as a good way to approach it. First, see if there is a problem out in Lakeshore Park. It takes an expert trained in finding these nests to really know to look. None of us would be effective in that and probably the City

employees would not be. He suggests getting with Goose Busters as soon as possible and start thinking about that.

Resident Mike Duchesneau of 1191 South Lake Drive said he wanted to thank the Parks and Rec Commission for following up on the Canadian geese concerns of the residents. Director Muck's presentation was outstanding. It's really the first acknowledgement as a resident of Novi he's seen that there is an issue and the City is doing things and is concerned. He's glad the links are also added to the websites. The DNR needs pre-approval to go out and destroy the nest eggs. What you're finding is the homeowners associations, as they identify areas where the nest and eggs are, populate and repopulate themselves, have taken it on their own to get with the DNR and City Council to get them removed and destroy the nest and eggs during that two-week period allowed by the DNR. We do need to have pre-approvals. Right now, the area we are aware where geese like to nest and repopulate is Shawood Lake. At least half of the lake itself is City property, so he recommends getting the focus on our permits to remove the eggs from Shawood Lake. Director Muck also indicated there may be other areas known to harbor Canadian geese and likewise, if those are known and identified, those should be included. He said he agrees with the parks ordinance that says don't mess with the birds, don't harass them. However, the DNR says there's an issue and they're supportive of nest/egg destruction and, as Director Muck stated, all other measures don't work. He appreciates what this group, as well as City Council, is doing and will be doing to support the residents in controlling the geese population within the areas we can.

COMMISSIONER COMMENTS:

Commissioner Muzzin said thanks to the Parks and Rec Department, specifically Manager Kapchonick. Muzzin said she met a new resident of Meadowbrook Commons at the library last week and she was gushing about how she felt welcome by not only the programming, but by the staff and Meadowbrook and the City has offered her a home. We convinced her to move back from Fort Lauderdale. Thanks to all.

Commissioner Joshi said she has no comments.

Commissioner Staab said he appreciates the report on the geese, coyotes and some other things. He said he has a coyote in his neighborhood that has been seen in the past week, but this is good information to know how to handle it, what you should and should not do, and to make everyone aware of what's going on. The 2018 highlight report he'll delve into at a different time.

Representative Fortsch said he's glad we have these resources because there is a coyote in his backyard and his dog is very scared of it, so he's glad he knows what to do now.

Representative Kamalesh said she hasn't had a coyote recently in her backyard, but there was last year. There's been a bunch of deer and her dog loves the deer. He's obsessed with them. About a week and a half ago there was the 50th anniversary celebration and she attended for the school newspaper. It was pretty fun.

Commissioner Thomopoulos thanked staff for a great update and the fantastic work they're doing. Thanks for addressing the topic that's been raised here and at City Council over the past couple months of the geese population. She said she thinks we're starting a dialogue and that's what we need. Many of us wildlife. Even if there's coyotes, but if we're respectful, we should be able to live together. The same goes with Canadian geese. There's something wonderful about Canadian geese, but the issue we're trying to address is an overpopulation of Canadian geese brings a lot of bacteria

into our lakes. It hasn't happened recently, but a few summers ago we did have to close Lakeshore Beach several times during a summer because there was too much bacteria from Canadian geese. The City is doing a remarkable job considering the population, cleaning up the geese matter. However, it's not 100 percent and can't be. So we're still walking in it and worse, when we're trying to picnic and put down your blanket and there's a lot of matter to deal with is very unappetizing. It's a good dialogue we've started, but she doesn't think we've concluded. She said she realizes this commission is limited authority and is really an extension of City Council, but doesn't have the authority of City Council. She thinks the discussion needs to go to City Council. She personally likes the suggestion to ask City Council to remove the restrictions in the ordinance about nest disturbance for a period in time that the DNR recognizes for geese egg disturbance, and that we authorize this company that is DNR-licensed to do that. However we need to make that happen, whether citizen comments to City Council or if we want to think over the next month whether we want to make a motion to recommend City Council do that, she's open for all suggestions. We do need to continue the discussion and the issue. She agrees it's not just Pavilion Shore, but that is the most visible because the number of geese there and the number of people who try to enjoy that park in that way with blankets, etc. on the grass. It is throughout the city, we do have to start somewhere to address it. The website is fantastic, but we do have to keep the dialogue going.

ADJOURNMENT

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

Voice Vote

Unanimous

The meeting was adjourned by Commissioner Dooley at 8:07 p.m.

DATE APPROVED: _____

Jay Dooley, Chairperson

Shelley Thomopoulos, Vice Chairperson