

PARKS, RECREATION & CULTURAL SERVICES COMMISSION

Thursday, February 20th, 2025 – 7 P.M.

Novi Civic Center – Council Chambers

The meeting was called to order at 7:03p.m. with Chairman Joseph presiding.

ROLL CALL:

Commissioners: Joseph (present), Riggins (present), Dooley (present), Gopalakrishnan (present), Staab (present), Tolkacz (present), Torimoto (absent/excused)
Student Representatives: DiDomenico (present), Sid (absent/excused)

APPROVAL OF AGENDA:

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

Voice Vote

Unanimous

CITIZEN COMMENTS:

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Commissioner Staab corrected the spelling of his first name which was misspelled several times in the January minutes.
It was moved that the minutes for the January 16th meeting be approved by Commissioner Staab and second by Commissioner Riggins.

Voice Vote

Unanimous

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

- A. Novi Parks Foundation – Commissioners Joseph, Riggins, Staab & Torimoto
Commissioner Staab said the meeting was on Tuesday night at Lakeshore. He thanked Director Muck for arranging the warm and accommodating room. There was discussion about naming rights and opportunities at various parks and assets. In depth talks about Villa Barr parking lot expansion, studio development and public classes occurred. Ideas concerning ITC were kicked around specifically installation of metal signs with a QR code directing people to Parks Foundation information and a donation page. The viability of that topic will be discussed further with administration.
The next meeting is Tuesday March 18th at the Civic Center.
The link to get tickets for Pour on the Shore is active. Donors have already committed.
- B. Active Mobility Committee – Commissioners Tolkacz & Dooley
No update due to the Commissioners not being able to attend the meeting.

MATTERS FOR COMMISSION DISCUSSION AND/OR ACTION:

- A. Introduction of Recreation Supervisor – Arts & Events, Jenneva Kayser
Deputy Director Ringle welcomed Jenneva Kayser to the podium. The new Recreation Supervisor for Art and Events started in November. Previously she worked for the City of Mesa, Arizona in the parks department, Mesa Arts Center, as the manager of the ceramic's studio. Jenneva Kayser continued that her background is on the education administrative side of the arts, but she is also a practicing artist. Five galleries represent her work, including three in Michigan and two out of state. She sees both sides of the art world being the administrator / programmer and the artist.

Recreation Supervisor Kayser said in addition to the thriving dance and theatre programs she hopes to continue to grow the visual arts side. The Villa Barr Art Park is her passion project. It is the reason she took the job. Working with the Board they have agreed to expand the Artist in residence programs in 2026. It will include the three visiting artists who reside in the house as well as three local artists who will use the Red Barn Studio. There will be a push to market the program to local Southeast Michigan artists. It will connect Michigan artists and Novi community with the visiting artists.

Recreation Supervisor Kayser mentioned that Director Muck has been working on the expansion of the accessible pathways. This will help those with wheelchairs, walkers, and strollers access the back of the park.

She explained that she was a bit late for tonight's meeting because of the Diwali Festival meeting prior to this meeting. The committee is enthusiastically preparing for the big event.

Recreation Supervisor Kayser is spending a lot of time on giving Sizzling Summer a refresh. There will be three Friday night dance parties featuring performances by different cultural groups. Feedback from last year's events had great response to the partnership with the Detroit Institute of Arts. Therefore, it will be beefed up. Three hands-on drop-in events will be led by the DIA and three will be run by Jenneva. The details will be in the next Engage.

- B. 2025 Park Reports Schedule

Director Muck said the park reports are a key component of the Commission. It is something the Commissioners enjoy and are passionate about. From a staff perspective it is great to get feedback to be able to pass it on to park maintenance. Internally we try to make changes based on Commissioner's thoughts and observations because the staff cannot get to every park as often as desired. Director Muck emailed a rough draft of the parks schedule with some notable changes. Several park properties have been added, and some have been cycled out. Northwest Park, Water Tower RC Raceway, and Jessica's Splashpad are new on the rotation. The most popular parks will remain including Lakeshore, ITC and Ella Mae Power Park. The Commissioners were allowed to trade, swap and make suggestions.

STAFF REPORTS

- A. Administration Division – Director Jeff Muck
1. City Council Input Session & CIP Updates

Director Muck said City Council met on January 21st to discuss large initiatives including police and fire buildings, recreation / senior center, Beck Road, and ITC Community Sports Park. The community center discussion was robust, centered around possible amenities and location. In addition, what Novi Schools plan for facilities with their November bond is being considered. Cost recovery on operations and breakouts for specific features were areas for more research. The immediate and most pressing needs are gym space, multipurpose meeting, activity and gathering space for seniors. Council asked for cost estimates and comparisons from other facilities with specific amenities such as fitness centers, gyms and pools. City staff are currently working on that report and plan to take that back to Council within the next month or two.

ITC Community Sports Park will have a new direction to incorporate the property expansion and the associated cost estimates. The consensus was to combine these individual projects and improvements into the CIP plan. Which will be part of the CIP milage renewal if Council decides to approve in 2026. This will provide more flexibility in stages. Staff will start working on details and potentially engage a consultant to assist with site planning and cost estimates. Most of the components from the original plan will remain.

The Capital Improvement Program Committee met on February 12th. That committee consists of three Council members and three Planning Commission members. The CIP plan was approved and will go to Planning Commission for review and approval. In the next three years several projects are planned. Reconstruction of the asphalt pathway, parking lot rehab, and drainage issues will be corrected at Power Park in the fall of '25. The pedestrian bridge replacement at Rotary Park that was originally built by an Eagle Scout is scheduled. Jeremiah, who developed the concept of the RC Raceway adamantly said shade and accessibility is what is needed at that park. The project will include a new driver's stand, shade and handicap seating which is inexpensive in the grand scheme. Playgrounds have a twelve-to-fifteen-year life cycle. The south playground at Lakeshore Park near the trailhead is scheduled to be replaced. Rotary Park parking lot will be reconstructed in this three-year cycle. These are the items in the budget, however, that can change.

At the January 27th City Council meeting Mayor Fischer requested staff bring back plans to pave the pathways at Villa Barr to increase handicap accessibility. He suggested using \$75,000 in funds received from the sale of OAS transit vehicles plus other savings in the OAS budget since transitioning to People's Express. Cost estimates and options are being developed for Council's deliberations at an upcoming meeting.

On February 10th City Council approved selling approximately three quarters of an acre at the RC Raceway Water Tower Park property for \$68,000 to a neighboring business. This was recommended by the Parks Department because it has no impact on the raceway. Mayor Fischer recommended the proceeds be allocated to the Villa Barr pathway project.

Council approved the purchase agreement for 329 Elm Court. It is a 5.43-acre island located in Shawood Lake. Once acquired the existing structure will need to be demolished. The exact use of the property is to be determined.

The ITC Trail connector to the Bosco property is moving forward. In the spring of 2026, it will provide greater access to Bosco Fields from the neighborhoods along Beck Road.

Commissioner Staab mentioned that the Novi Parks Foundation will be issuing a check toward the purchase of the property on Shawood Lake. The Pavilion Shore Conservancy will also be contributing money towards the overall purchase price.

2. Diwali Festival

Director Muck said the committee is made up of very engaged community members. They have already done a lot of leg work. The official name of the event is Diwali Fest 2025 Lights, Culture and Community which will encapsulate the entire festival. It is scheduled for October 16th. The timeline is 5:00 socialization, food, vendors, 6:00-6:30 ceremony, 6:30-7:30 performances, 7:30-8:30 DJ, dancing and food, 8:30 fireworks. Recreation Supervisor Jenneva Kayer said it will be a big party. Her role will be securing contracts with the various vendors and performers.

The committee is bringing the vision, and the parks staff is supporting that vision. Commissioner Gopalakrishnan said he is excited to be part of the coordinating committee. They meet weekly, putting the framework together. There will be a sponsorship package for this annual event. It is not funded by the city. Everything will need to be funded through sponsorship. Director Muck is confident the committee will be able to reach out to the community to get the funding.

B. Recreation Division – Deputy Director Tracie Ringle

1. Programs & Services

Deputy Director Ringle started with highlights of upcoming spring programs. Spring soccer registration ended today; 1,000 players are expected. The spring NFL Flag Football registration ends tomorrow for the season beginning in April. April 8th summer camp registration opens for residents. Non-residents will begin a week later due to the priority registration initiative for Novi citizens. Camp Invention with art, science and STEM projects will be held during spring break. Registration is now open for tennis lessons, leagues and T-Bolts (youth tennis team). Shelter rentals are 43% full at Lakeshore Park on weekends from May 30th – August 30th.

168 people have registered for the Mother Son Dance on March 7th. The traditional dance recital (ballet, tap, contemporary and hip hop) will be held May 3rd at the Berman Center which is part of the JCC. The spring theatre show, Once Upon a Mattress will be held at the Civic Center April 24th – 27th featuring more experienced kids. The younger actors will be in a production called The Claw which will take place March 14th & 15th.

720 people attended the Daddy Daughter Dances. The event happened without a hitch, thanks to the hard work of Recreation Supervisor John Gillingham. He implemented feedback he received the prior year to make the dance a success. There are three weeks left for winter basketball and volleyball games for youth.

Due to less issues of Engage information will be communicated frequently through social media, email newsletters and a QR code in the editions of

Engage. The QR codes will help people get accurate information due to edits, adjustment and enhancements to programs. The PRCS staff, library and Community Relations feel comfortable with these decisions.

C. Older Adult Division – OAS Manager Kit Kieser

1. Programs and Services

OAS Manager Kit Keiser started with support services. The 460 AARP Tax Aid appointments are filled. This happened three weeks sooner than it did the previous year. On Thursday, February 27th OAS is hosting the Veteran's Resource Fair. 250 people attended last year with over 450 expected for this event. Twenty people have registered for Cutting the Cord. This popular program advice folks how to move from cable to streaming services.

Nature Nurture Novi has many upcoming programs. Rick Meader, the city's landscape architect, will be presenting How to Create a Butterfly Pollinator Garden in Your Yard on 2/25. February 28th Farmington Hills Community Stargazers will be at ITC hosting a stellar nursery stargazing night. March 25th Captain Tyson will present a program called Buzz About Bees at Lakeshore Park. He will share his beekeeping experience, explain the life of a honeybee and share honey fresh right from the comb. The week of April 21st many events will occur to celebrate Earth and Arbor Day including a guided hike with tree facts along the trails, environmental challenges presented by Novi Youth Council and the week will end with an Arbor Day celebration on April 26th. It will feature tree saplings giveaways, informational tables from local organizations, tree plantings and the annual Garlic Mustard Pull.

Another new program called the Wisdom Exchange will begin March 10th. A prompt given by a facilitator will be given to two people that would not ordinarily have a conversation. Topics include school experience, career advice and cultural history. Each session is designed to foster mutual respect, understanding, enriching the participants with their diverse perspectives. March 14th OAS will be hosting the Blarney Bash St. Patrick's Day Celebration which will be held in the evening. This should attract a broader audience. The participants will receive an Irish meal from Moe's on Ten, watch performance by the Motor City Irish Dancers and their musicians.

The travel program continues to grow. March 27th a motorcoach will take fifty-five people to the Detroit Institute of Arts for Melodies at the Museum. The Spring travel fair will be held April 8th. The travel companies can showcase their upcoming trips and present how their company operates. Every company is different with what they specialize in from local day trips to once in a lifetime overseas adventures. The Mackinac trip was filled, three months earlier than last year. Taking two buses in the future is being considered.

OAS oversees fitness classes. There are many ongoing legacy programs which are consistent for the participants. Three new programs are beginning soon; Hatha Yoga, Balance Fit and Pickleball Edge. Pickleball Edge is a training program for racquet sports aimed at preventing injuries. It will only be held in the off season.

Parade entries are currently being taken.

Additional questions, comments and clarification regarding the topics OAS Manager Kit Kieser presented occurred.

COMMISSIONER COMMENTS:

Commissioner Gopalakrishnan

Welcome to the new Recreation Supervisor Jenneva Kayser. Thank you for your updates and the report on the Diwali festival. It is great to have you on board. Director Muck presented a lot of capital improvement projects to happen this fall at Ella Mae Power Park, raceway upgrades with the sale of the property which generated some money, Lakeshore south playground. A lot of construction will be happening between 2025-2026, that will make the parks even greater. The ITC Bosco link is tabled for late next year but still in two years' time. Five different parks are getting a lot of upgrades which is awesome to see.

I am super pumped about the Diwali Festival. I am meeting every week as part of the committee. Everyone is very enthusiastic about coming to the weekly meeting and usually go over the scheduled hour. Everyone loves the festival, and it brings people together. I am thankful for the City of Novi to partner to bring this to the community. Deputy Director Ringle mentioned some spring programs which look awesome. I am a big fan of Engage. I read it from page to page. I hate to see it go to three issues a year but understand why.

Commissioner Tolkacz

A great update all around from everyone. Welcome to Jenneva. Great work in such a short time.

I was excited to hear about the land purchase for park property. It will be great to see the opportunities with that property.

I was also interested in the Diwali update. It sounds like a great program, especially the fireworks.

Commissioner Staab

I took a lot of notes and there is a lot of great stuff going on in the city. I started the meeting with the Foundation report with a lot of good things going on there. One more plug for Pour on the Shore. Tickets are now available on Eventbrite.

Good things are going on with the CIP update. It is great to see our parks being maintained to the high quality Novi has always had. The activities, including Pickleball Edge, are very interesting. Basically, great updates from everyone!

Student Representative DiDomenico

The Diwali Festival is very important for a city as culturally diverse as Novi. It is such a great thing to have, and I am definitely going to head out to it.

Great updates.

Commissioner Dooley

Kit and Tracey, you amaze this commission with the incredible number of folks that are participating in all the activities Novi has to offer whether it is youth or adults. The numbers are staggering, and it is a tribute to the vibrancy and diversity of this city. I think it lends itself to people wanting to be a part of what Novi has to offer. Thank you for continuing to amaze the Commission with all the great work the department does.

Jenneva, welcome to the team. You are going to do great things. Thank you for your introduction today. I agree that you immediately got your feet running. I am very happy to see the Novi Ambassadors have a connection website that has been made available for the City of Novi. Being a graduate of the program it is great to have a connection with future and subsequent classes. It gives the opportunity to get involved in the city in some capacity as a commissioner, various boards or attend council meetings. Ambassadors want to give back and participate. I agree with the Commissioners about Engage. I like to see them frequently but understand why we need to go to three.

Commissioner Riggins

Thank you for your presentations. It sounds like many great things are happening. I want to be part of the Wisdom Exchange. I am excited to be going on the Mackinac trip but I will miss the Diwali festival. I am glad to hear it will happen every year. So, I will attend next year. Everything that we offer in the City of Novi is just awesome so if you're not participating you should be.

Chairman Joseph

Welcome to the team Jenneva. I appreciate the citizens putting up with our slap happy atmosphere this evening, but it is easy to have a lot of fun when we have such great programs and things to speak about. Without the hard work the four of you do on a regular basis it would not be as much fun.

ADJOURNMENT

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

Voice Vote

Unanimous

The meeting was adjourned by Chairman Joseph at 8:05p.m.

DATE APPROVED: _____

Joseph, Chairperson

Dooley, Vice Chairperson