

PARKS, RECREATION & CULTURAL SERVICES COMMISSION

Thursday, October 17th, 2024 – 7 P.M.

Novi Civic Center – Council Chambers

The meeting was called to order at 7:00p.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 (absent /excused), Sid (present)

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 suggested adding that the next Novi Parks Foundation meeting was October 16th.

It was moved that the minutes for the September 19th meeting be approved by Commissioner Gopalakrishnan and second by Commissioner Tolkacz as amended.

Voice Vote

Unanimous

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

- A. Novi Parks Foundation – Commissioners Joseph, Staab & Torimoto
Commissioner Staab said the net profit for Pour on the Shore was \$10,380. The date for 2025 will be changed to July 18th. This is due to a conflict with the Beer Makers Guild annual soiree that is the last Friday in July.
There is a candidate for the executive director slot. The next step is interviews with two of the board members. Commissioner Joseph added that the ranks are dwindling, and the foundation is looking for a few new board members. The bylaws state that there needs to be five – fifteen members. Currently, there is quorum but there is opportunity for others in the community to join. The next meeting is December 17th at Joe Kools.

- B. Active Mobility Committee – Commissioners Tolkacz & Dooley
Commissioner Tolkacz recapped the meeting that occurred tonight explaining the continuing saga of the pilot sidewalk project that began with Meadowbrook Glens. The main discussion topic was creating a hold harmless agreement. If a resident wanted to keep a tree in front of their house, they would agree that the homeowner would be responsible for all damage the tree could cause.

Maintaining sidewalks in the city is a complex issue. The sidewalk repair program in its second year has strategically tackled a few neighborhoods. The pilot program has been a success. The team has done a great job of researching, presenting, and benchmarking other communities.

C. Parks and Facilities Update

1. Villa Barr Art Park – Commissioner Joseph

Chairman Joseph said he had the opportunity to go back to Villa Barr. He visited in the spring, summer and fall and took photos which he presented. On the day he visited this fall there was a city vehicle and an individual walking a dog. The sign at the entrance displayed upcoming events, showed the park system and how it connects with the trails. While walking around the facility he remembered the audio tour that describes the artwork and botanicals. Commissioner Joseph suggested QR codes to make the self-guided tour easier to access. He mentioned that the park was extremely clean. A porta potty has been added in the last three years, which is helpful. There was signage regarding the Barr family closer to the home and signs placed at strategic locations throughout the park that explain the art pieces. Additional pictures were shown of the sculptures, ducks, back of the house and path. Artwork from the DIA was mentioned, it is also displayed at Civic Center (and around the city).

A few areas of improvement were noted including weeding the dandelions in the beds, the fountain not working along with overgrowth, water piling, and an unlocked gate.

Deputy Director Ringle clarified the artist in residency program. There have been artists from around the world staying six – twelve weeks. The program is open April through December depending on the applications. She also noted the QR codes were supposed to be on the signs and probably peeled off. Also, the fountain can be turned on and off to fill the pond. Director Muck pointed out that two of the structures were made by residents that stayed at the facility.

MATTERS FOR COMMISSION DISCUSSION AND/OR ACTION:

A. Commission Chair, Vice Chair Nominations & Committee Appointments

Director Muck explained this is the most important part of tonight's agenda. Every year the commissioners are very kind and do not want to overstep anybody in different roles. Chairman Joseph, Vice Chair Dooley and the Parks Foundation members agreed to stay in current roles. Commissioner Dooley and Tolkacz decided to stay on the Active Mobility Committee. Commissioner Staab said he would serve anywhere as needed. It was mentioned that more could be part of the Parks Foundation because they are looking for members. This will go into effect next month and carry on to October 2025. Commissioner Riggins motioned for approval. Commissioner Gopalakrishnan seconded the motion. Director Muck expressed thank you on behalf of the staff to the commissioners for their leadership roles, serving on committees, and volunteerism.

STAFF REPORTS

A. Administration Division – Director Jeff Muck

1. Summer Park Projects

Director Muck announced that Wildlife Woods reopened today. He suggested the commissioners visit the park to see how great the new parking lot and courts look. There are a few punch list items to complete including staircase rails, bench repositioning, striping the old parking lot plus fence and gate work. The contractors were working on those items today. In the next few weeks there might be some temporary closures but nothing long term. Director Muck added that the projects are finished for the season. Some additional discussion and questions occurred amongst the Commissioners.

2. Strategic Community Recreation & Master Plan

Director Muck presented the Strategic Community Recreation Master Park Plan that was in the commissioner's packets. It was a draft of the goals and objectives of the five-year master plan. These were based on public input, City Council goals, an internal staff survey and team strategic planning. The common themes include increasing communication and marketing, facility and park improvements and utilizing technology. The PRCS team reviewed these goals yesterday to provide feedback to the consultant before the final draft is released to the public on October 24th. The commissioners and student representatives were asked to review the plan when it is released October 24th. The homework is to be prepared to discuss it in greater detail at the November 21st meeting. Comments can be emailed to Director Muck prior to the meeting. Currently, staff are putting in comments to the consultant before the tight turnaround to get the draft posted. During the November meeting a significant amount of time will be dedicated to the presentation and discussion of the plan. The commissioners can comment, make suggestions, then recommend it goes to Council. The plan does require a public hearing by the city's highest governing body, City Council, which will be held on November 25th. City Council will be requested to adopt the plan. Pending the adoption, the consultant, Spicer Group will work on final edits before it is submitted to the DNR by January 1st. Additional discussion regarding trail connections and pocket parks occurred.

B. Recreation Division – Deputy Director Tracie Ringle

1. Programs & Services

Deputy Director Tracie Ringle mentioned it is a very busy weekend coming up on the recreation side. Saturday, the Jack O 'Lantern Jubilee will take place at ITC Community Sports Park. The Concert Band will perform at 4:00 at the Civic Center. All weekend the Great Lakes Hula Retreat with the Polynesian dance group will be at Lakeshore Park. The group is hosting instructors from Hawaii. Sunday is Day of the Dead; a free community event will take place at the Civic Center. This event is led by the Mexican Lindo Ballet Folklorico performance group. The event includes dancers, a mariachi band, and food for purchase. Tickets are on sale for Anastasia. The performance with In the Mitten Productions will take place at the Civic Center November 13th – 17th. The cast includes students from third to twelve grade. Tickets for a smaller performance for young actors (K-4th) who are new to performing will go on sale on Monday. Nerf Night is coming up on October 25th at the Civic Center. This event will be broken into two age groups. Registration is open for Lunch with Santa on December 14th at Lakeshore Park.

Adult softball wrapped up last night. Youth basketball and volleyball began practice this week.

Deputy Director Ringle was pleased to announce a new Recreation Supervisor for arts and events has been hired. She has a fantastic resume as a working artist with municipal experience. She will start on November 12th. She will be either at the November or December meeting to be introduced to the commissioners. Director Muck was inducted to the American Academy for Parks and Recreation Administration earlier this month. 137 active members across the country make up this esteemed group. A minimum of fifteen years of high-level administration, demonstration of leadership in professional organizations with writing, speaking and displayed a deep interest in advancing public parks and recreation are requirements for membership. He earned a crystal triangle plaque which is displayed in his office.

Director Muck said he was surprised to be nominated. His recommendation was by Ron Olson, the second in command at the DNR, in addition several letters of support were received including from former Novi Director, Randy Auler. He said, "this is not just for me, it is for Novi!"

C. Older Adult Division – Director Jeff Muck

1. Programs and Services

Director Muck provided the update because OAS Manager Kit Keiser was on the Mackinac Island trip with mParks. Fifty-six travelers are on the Grand Experience at the Grand Hotel. Madison and Kit are leading this group. The trip continues to be very popular. Registration opened in early spring and was full with a waitlist by June.

OAS ran a successful Pinochle Tournament on October 5th. Forty-five people traveled to the DIA for Melodies and the Museum. Seventeen people attend a sleep education program by MSU Extension. Nearly thirty seniors registered for Medicare 2025 What You Need to Know that took place October 10th. The One-on-One Counseling sessions are already filled. Both programs were presented by Novi Medicare Assistance program counselors John and Megan. As a reminder to everyone Director Muck said open enrollment started October 15th and runs through December 7th.

Upcoming events include a fall concert featuring the Choralaires at Meadowbrook October 21st and an adult pumpkin painting event at the Lakeshore building on October 24th. OAS will be hosting a Thanksgiving luncheon from 12:00 - 2:00 at the Meadowbrook Activity Center November 21st.

The Veteran's Day Celebration is scheduled for Thursday, November 7th from 1:30-1:00 at the Civic Center. Commissioner Dooley will be serving as the Master of Ceremonies. Lunch will be provided by Mission Barbeque, who is a great supporter of veteran events. The ceremony includes a welcome by Mayor Fischer, presentation of colors by VFW Post 1519, the National Anthem and a melody of military branch anthems will be performed by the Novi High School Choir. Musical hits from the 60's – 80's will be featured by the Oil Can Larry Band. Director Muck provided a brief update on the transition to People's Express. A few more details are forthcoming, and OAS Manager Kit Keiser will provide a detailed report with statistics and data at the November meeting. There has

been an 85% increase in rides for residents in the first quarter compared to last year. This includes seniors and anyone fourteen and over.

COMMISSIONER COMMENTS:

Student Representative Sid

First and foremost congratulations to Director Muck on the impressive achievement. I have seen People's Express around town a lot more often and have a few friend that utilize the service.

I did not know the art park was actually a thing. The school news ran a segment on it too. It was really cool to learn about all the art there. I never knew about the sculptures and will need to check it out.

Commissioner Dooley

The Villa Barr presentation was great tonight. That park should be better attended because there is true artistry there. I would love to see volunteers out there cleaning up the weeds which would add to the charm if it was done. Potentially high school students, boy or girl scouts.

This weekend my wife and I attended an event in Redford which was a craft fair and chili cookoff. My wife was a judge. It was a nice event and something for us to consider. Jeff, congratulations, it is so well deserved for your hard work and how much you care about the city and department. I am glad Tracie brought the award to our attention.

Commissioner Gopalakrishnan

Congratulations Director. Very good reports today on the Novi parks update and active mobility. Awesome presentation on Villa Barr. I stopped there and spent some time. It is a wonderful peaceful place.

I would like the upcoming events to be listed in the packet. It was another great meeting and a lot of good things happening.

I want to mention on Halloween this year the Festival of Lights, Diwali will occur as well. Diwali is India's major festival similar to Christmas. We light firecrackers, wear new clothes, make desserts and exchange gifts with family and friends. Novi has a lot of Indian's so there will be a lot of firecrackers. A lot of restaurants have buffets. I would be glad to accompany the commissioners to a buffet to try Indian food.

Commissioner Tolkacz

I would like to congratulate Director Muck. It is a great achievement and a testament to the work you and the team have done here. It is an outstanding program and facilities top to bottom.

I really enjoyed the Villa Barr presentation it was very enlightening.

I really appreciate the objectives of the plan, and I am well aligned with everything. I really like the idea of pocket parks and creating these in the neighborhoods.

Commissioner Staab

Congratulations to the Director. Being 1 of 137 is quite an honor. It is neat that you were recommended by a past director.

The Villa Barr presentation was excellent. The foundation has an honorarium for each resident. That is the foundation dollars at work.
Congratulations on having a new arts supervisor.
I would like to encourage people to attend the Veteran's Day program. I have worked at the event in the past and it is great.

Vice Chair Riggins

I want to congratulate the director.
The report on Villa Barr was very nice. I remember when I did that park presentation. It was nice to see all the artwork.
I want to thank you for my homework. I will be excited to get the link and go through the plan.

Chairman Joseph

The tough thing about going last is everything has already been said. I will make one final plug for the Parks Foundation as we are looking for board members. I like Commissioner Dooley's recommendation of using the December meeting as a meet and greet and linking in some past Ambassadors. Congratulations to Director Muck. That's incredible not to the same level as CAPRA accreditation but similar.

ADJOURNMENT

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

Voice Vote

Unanimous

The meeting was adjourned by Chairman Joseph at 7:57p.m.

DATE APPROVED: _____

Joseph, Chairperson

Riggins, Vice Chairperson