

PARKS, RECREATION & CULTURAL SERVICES COMMISSION

Thursday, August 17th, 2023 – 7 P.M.

Novi Civic Center – Council Chambers

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

ROLL CALL:

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

APPROVAL OF AGENDA:

The Lakeshore Park presentation was moved until further notice.
Commissioner Staab motioned for approval of agenda and second by Commissioner Tolkacz.

Voice Vote **Unanimous**

CITIZEN COMMENTS: None

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

It was moved that the minutes for the July 20th meeting be approved by Commissioner Riggins and second by Commissioner Joshi.

Voice Vote **Unanimous**

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

- A. Walkable Novi – Commissioners Dooley & Tolkacz
Commissioner Tolkacz said there is no update because a meeting was not held this month. Director Muck believes at the next meeting there will be a presentation from the consultant who is working with the planning staff on the Non-Motorized Plan.
- B. Novi Park Foundation – Commissioners Joseph, Joshi, Staab & Torimoto
Commissioner Joseph commented that the weather held out for Pour on the Shore. Rain occurred throughout the day, but it was just warm and humid during the event. The official numbers are not in yet; however, an additional sixty tickets were sold at the door. It was a well-attended event, and everyone had a great time. An update will be provided once the final numbers are reported. Vice Chair Staab provided more details. Just under 400 tickets were sold, sponsor money was \$21,400, and expenses were \$19,800. In kind donations were not factored in those numbers.
Chairman Dooley summarized that the purpose of Pour on the Shore is for people to have fun and come together. This mission was accomplished. He recognized

the commissioners on the Parks Foundation and the board. They did a tremendous job. It was a very successful event.

C. Grants Committee – Commissioners Joseph & Riggins

Commissioner Riggins said there was not a meeting and there is not one on the schedule. Director Muck added that this is a down time for the Grants Committee. There will most likely be a meeting later in the fall.

D. Parks and Facilities Updates

1. Lakeshore Park – Commissioner Joseph – tabled to September.

2. Pavilion Shore Park – Commissioner Tolkacz

Commissioner Tolkacz continued with the same historic theme he used during the Fuerst Park presentation last month. The area where Pavilion Shore Park is located previously was the Walled Lake Amusement Park and night club. Numerous bands played there including Stevie Wonder. It was also common to have military displays with tanks and Humvees. A short video showing the area during that time period was shown.

Commissioner Tolkacz talked about the many aspects of the park including the nice fishing dock, reading center, and bike trails. The pavilion is very reminiscent of the previous night club styling, it is a tribute to the past. The facilities are in great shape especially the landscaping, restrooms, and tables. The final picture was taken of the beautiful sunset during Pour on the Shore.

Director Muck confirmed that the style of the pavilion was intentional. He worked alongside Deputy Director Ringle and the architects for the design to hearken back to the old dance hall. Old pictures were researched when planning the park. Underneath the pavilion is a history board.

MATTERS FOR COMMISSION DISCUSSION AND/OR ACTION:

STAFF REPORTS

A. Administration Division – Director Jeff Muck

1. Park Project Updates

Director Muck began by saying when driving by 11 Mile or Beck Road a big blue privacy fence can be seen around the construction area of Jessica's Splash Pad. The irrigation system and pedestrian bridge for the parking lot have been started. Continued work will be done on the splash pad and building's concrete. The ice arena roof replacement project is done. It came out excellent and the site has cleaned up well.

The land swap with the schools is complete. Staff from our team, Parks Maintenance and the schools will be working on transition of the property, signage, and equipment. The website and maps are being updated. The address for Wildlife Woods has changed.

The parking lot expansion and addition of four pickleball courts at Wildlife Woods is in the design and engineering phase. There was a meeting with consultant, Spalding DeDecker last week. We are hoping to put both the Meadowbrook Commons and Wildlife Woods pickleball projects out to bid this winter with

possible construction starting summer of 2024. Starting when school is not in session is ideal due to using the parking lot for staging and moving things in and out, especially with adding the parking lot.

Our staff met with the Spicer Group last week to review the comments about the ITC Community Sports Park Master Plan discussed at the last commission meeting. They will be incorporating the commissioner's comments and staff feedback into a final concept with cost estimates to present to City Council this fall.

Director Muck finished by saying the window replacements at Meadowbrook Commons will start immediately after Labor Day and will take about a month. The completion of the project before the winter weather will be good for the residents.

B. Recreation Division – Deputy Director Tracie Ringle

1. Programs & Services

Deputy Director Tracie Ringle said the September - November Engage is now online and will be in homes the week of August 28th. Everything about PRCS and the library for fall will be included.

The last day of Camp PowerPlay and Lakeshore is tomorrow. There are very accomplished and tired camp counselors. A record number of counselors in training participated this summer. This is a program that has been around for years where early teens work with the camps to potentially become counselors in the future. It is a feeder program but also an opportunity for the kids to accumulate volunteer hours for National Honor Society and other organizations through school.

The Youth and Teen Division is partnering with the Novi Library to offer a new Read and Rec program. It is a bingo card that encourages people to look at the read boxes in the parks, use the makerspace in the library, find a bench to have a great read and relax. The program will start September 1st.

Recreation Supervisor Jeff Johns is working on new and returning vendors for Jack - O 'Lantern Jubilee which will take place on October 21st.

Cultural Arts wrapped up Sizzling Summer Art Series last week as well as dance and theatre camps.

This week the Novi Civic Theatre and In the Mitten Productions are hosting a fundraiser show with THUMMp which is an award winning acapella group. The Polynesian group is having a benefit show to support the residents of Maui to help with recovery from the devastation.

Rehearsals have started for the Choralaires and Concert Band. Auditions for the Choralaires will be on the 12th and 19th. The Concert Band welcomes new members to join rehearsals on Tuesday evenings at the middle school.

Deputy Director Ringle continued her update with sports. Soccer has 100 more players than ever before and keeps growing. Traditionally we have hosted a number of Pistons Camps and those continue to grow with 255 players this year. These are a great feeder for our fall and winter youth basketball program. The only thing inhibiting a larger program is gym space.

The summer adult softball leagues are wrapping up and fall leagues start after Labor Day.

2. Villa Barr Strategic Plan Update

Deputy Director Ringle explained back in 2018 the city took possession of Villa Barr Art Park and opened it to the community. One of the priorities was to continue to enhance and expand the reach of our programs to the region. There is a good group of volunteers, Friends of Villa Barr, Cultural Arts Advisory Board and PRCS staff that is dedicated to continuing the legacy of David and Beth Barr. In 2021, a strategic plan was created which is updated annually with what was achieved related to the main categories; educational resources, means of connecting, community convener, preserving the legacy and sustainable funding sources. She went on to highlight a few of the things accomplished this year. Eastern Michigan University graduate student, Sarah Kowalski completed an inventory of forty boxes. Some of the items went back to Villa Barr and others were put on display at the library for a month. The library has committed to dedicate a month each year to Villa Barr allowing a display to promote the park. Kau'I Dalire was a resident at the site, in June she put on programs at Villa Barr and Lakeshore Park. Abby Marchessault performed Heartstring Lullaby, a dance dedicated to Beth Barr and family. Kevin Brophy just left Villa Barr; she hosted a twine computer programming session at the library that was attended by a number of young adults. She also installed an absence monument sculpture and took it upon herself to organize and clean the showcase in the studio.

The two decks were replaced with composite board and made more accessible. A number of sculptures were power washed and some repainted. The gardens that David and Beth cultivated continue to be enhanced. Native trees and bushes have been planted throughout the park and invasive species removed.

The Novi Parks Foundation was able to raise \$2,000 from a generous donor. Those funds will go to the residency program. Another award of \$750 from Keep Michigan Beautiful was used towards supporting the gardens. The staff and Friends of Villa Barr continue to seek grant opportunities to support the park and residence.

C. Older Adult Division –

1. Programs and Services – Director Muck

Director Muck presented the update for OAS since Kit Keiser was not in attendance. Programs, events, and late summer fitness classes are running with robust enrollment. Some upcoming events are Sip Sip Hooray at Lakeshore Park on August 24th. An ice cream social will take place at Meadowbrook Commons on September 15th. Oktoberfest returns to Lakeshore on September 21st. Planning has started for the Veteran's Day celebration. The USO style event will take place on November 9th and will be held at the Civic Center. It is free for all veterans. The ABC sisters will be returning for entertainment and the food will be provided by Mission Barbeque.

Sandy Fisher provided social services highlights from '22-'23 at last month's meeting. Director Muck added a few more. Thirty-seven people attended support groups for hearing loss and grief. 165 participated in expert advice programs including Ask the Lawyer, Estate Planning and Medicare/ Medicaid Assistance. 214 resource information referrals were given on topics such as senior housing, food assistance and home repair services.

The week of September 17th is Fall Prevention Awareness Week. September 19th the popular Cutting the Cord Program is back. September 20th a new program with the Area Agency on Aging called Dementia Friends. The aim is to build awareness and empower family and community members to become better friends to those living with dementia. September 22nd OAS will be working with Ascension's Injury Prevention Department to host A Matter of Balance. A new transportation driver will be starting on August 21st to bring the total to four new employees over the last two months. There is still a need for more. Director Muck explained the Older Adults Needs Committee that has been meeting biweekly to discuss everything older adults related in the city from programs – services – transportation. There have been presentations from police and fire, the Area Agency on Aging, library, and other senior centers in the area. The committee will now have focus groups for adults fifty and over. The groups will have two commitments in September, an initial discussion then breaking into four age categories for further conversations. The groups will consist of people involved in programs, residents, but not council or commission members. The participants will receive a stadium blanket, dinner, and gift card to a restaurant. Topics will include communication about programs and services, why or why not they attend, the possibility of a senior center and what it would look like. Following the focus groups a community survey will take place.

COMMISSIONER COMMENTS:

Commissioner Tolkacz

I agree with Deputy Director Ringle that it is sad to see the summer go. It takes long to get here but goes so quickly.

Villa Barr is such a unique park resource. It amazes me that we have it and the cool things with the artwork and theme there. It is just awesome. I am glad to see the progress on the splash pad.

It struck me that we have a great seat here to see all the activities in the planning stage before they occur. We get updates during the events and then the wrap up. It is great to see it in full circle. Every event was highly successful, and I want to thank you and the staff for the great job you do.

Commissioner Joseph

It was great to hear the summer was another record breaker with programs and events. It is good to hear about the groundbreaking at the splash pad. I am very excited for it to get up and running for spring of next year.

I wanted to give a special thanks to Melissa Agosta, the director of the Parks Foundation. A lot of the brunt of Pour on the Shore fell on her shoulders, especially at the end, from scrambling for additional sponsors to set up.

Commissioner Torimoto

Seeing the shovel in the ground at the splash pad and hearing about Villa Barr shows the variety of facilities for every interest that we could possibly serve is pretty amazing. I did meet someone playing tennis. His family just moved from another city. He wanted to live in Novi because of the services and activities he could engage in to meet people. He is involved with tennis and pickleball. Great job by the professional staff.

Deputy Director Ringle kept saying feeder program, this gives the opportunity for people to pursue things they are really interested in. It is a great opportunity we are providing.

Commissioner Joshi

Thank you for the presentation. I am always interested to know what is happening at Villa Barr. It is a unique park and has come a long way since 2018. Thank you for all the work from everyone tonight.

Commissioner Riggins.

I appreciate the update on Villa Barr. I had a lot of fun when I presented it. I am also interested in seeing the Spicer Group when they come back this fall and what they come up with. Commissioner Tolkacz' s presentation was awesome. I like going back to how it was before, the then and now. Great job. I hope our residents participate in the focus groups. Maybe we can get that senior building.

Commissioner Staab

I appreciate the notes, minutes, and hard work from last month's meeting. I look forward to the final conceptual plan that will be presented to City Council in the fall. I also love to see the shovel in the ground at the splash pad, the robust activities this summer and the update on Villa Barr. I remember being part of the focus group for Villa Barr before COVID. It has become a jewel of the city and really rounds out our programming. We should be really proud because it separates us from other cities. I agree with the other commissioners that Melissa Agosta was the glue that really put everything together for Pour on the Shore to make it a smashing success.

Student Representative Raghunathan

I really enjoyed the presentation about Pavilion Shore Park, and I liked the before and after pictures. I did not know it was an amusement park so that was pretty interesting.

Student Representative Bheemineni

I would like to say I thought all the presentations were very visually entertaining. There is so much history in Novi and Pavilion Shore that I did not know before. It is actually very interesting. I could not imagine tanks rolling around in Novi. Also, Villa Barr looks great.

Commissioner Dooley

I wanted the student representatives to speak last for something we do as commissioners and are very proud to do again. We had two very talented and passionate student reps that partook in our monthly meetings. You got your fingernails dirty, had great comments, presented one of the parks. You are insightful and brilliant students. We wish you nothing but the best as you take your talents to the next level, going to college, hopefully at your school of choice. The commissioners would all agree that we are very proud of the two of you.

I would like to present each of you with a certificate. We would like to give you a very warm thank you very much.

ADJOURNMENT

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

Voice Vote

Unanimous

The meeting was adjourned by Commissioner Dooley at 7:51p.m.

DATE APPROVED: _____

Jay Dooley, Chairperson

Charles Staab, Vice Chairperson