

**PARKS, RECREATION & CULTURAL SERVICES COMMISSION**

**Thursday, September 19th, 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 (present)  
Student Representatives: DiDomenico (present), Sid (absent/excused)

**APPROVAL OF AGENDA:**

Chairman Joseph changed line item 6C1 postponed the Villa Barr presentation. Commissioner Dooley motioned for approval of agenda and second by Commissioner Riggins.

**Voice Vote    Unanimous**

**CITIZEN COMMENTS:**

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES:**

It was moved that the minutes for the August 15<sup>th</sup> meeting be approved by Commissioner Dooley and second by Commissioner Riggins.

**Voice Vote    Unanimous**

**COMMITTEE REPORTS:**

- A. Novi Parks Foundation – Commissioners Joseph, Staab & Torimoto  
Commissioner Staab said the Foundation members had a get together to recap Pour on the Shore on August 19<sup>th</sup>. The profits were more than in 2023 primarily due to managing expenses which were lower than the previous year. A decision was made to pursue an event coordinator to assist, be the point for coordination and handle the planning in the months of May, June and July. Thanks to Kit for the contact with People's Express and the tight security at the event. Commissioner Staab spoke to the Mayor yesterday and he thanked the Foundation for Pour on the Shore. The next meeting is October 16<sup>th</sup>.
  
- B. Active Mobility Committee – Commissioners Tolkacz & Dooley  
Commissioner Tolkacz recapped the meeting that took place last week. The predominate agenda item was reviewing the sidewalk program. There was a nice report on the Meadowbrook Glens project which was the trial for the city due to it being the oldest neighborhood in Novi. The report included a comparative assessment of other cities for funding of sidewalk projects. Assessments do not work because the money is hard to collect because a lot of the damage is caused by trees which are the responsibility of the city. Many communities are using millages to fund. It was interesting

for Commissioner Tolkacz to see the city side of the issue because he already had experience with the resident side.

### C. Parks and Facilities Update

1. Villa Barr Art Park – Commissioner Joseph – Tabled to October.

2. ITC Community Sports Park – Commissioner Tolkacz

Commissioner Tolkacz said it is a benefit being on Parks Commission because he gets to rediscover the city. He spent many hours at ITC watching soccer and baseball, revisiting the park was interesting. It is an awesome park.

The presentation was structured by the lower right to the lower left. The first area he discussed was the obelisk by David Barr which provides a tribute to Novi's roots. Next was the Tim Pope play structure with a sign which was nicely done with quotes from prominent Parks and Recreation committee members, and Director Muck. The shelter, Tim Pope playground and area are commemorated with good history. Pictures were shown of the Tim Pope Memorial Playground which has climbing apparatuses for different ages.

The tennis / pickleball courts are in good shape except for a slight crack that would not impact play. The park is going green with the use of solar panels on the storage building. The baseball fields were mowed and look great despite the lack of rain this month. The parks maintenance team is doing a great job.

Commissioner Tolkacz brought his bike and rode a good distance on the ITC Trail. He remarked about the butterflies.

The soccer fields were tremendous they have improved since his children played. A lot has been learned about drainage and irrigation. He was also impressed with the second playscape at the north end of the park.

A few opportunities that he mentioned were replacing a drinking fountain, rust stains in sinks, filling soap dispensers, and repairing a walkway. Commissioner Tolkacz is looking forward being part of the vision for the Gen Two of ITC Park.

### **MATTERS FOR COMMISSION DISCUSSION AND/OR ACTION:**

#### A. Staff Recognitions

Director Muck began by explaining the city's quarterly lunch when new employees are introduced, years of service recognized, and special recognitions occur for employees who go above and beyond their normal job duties. Wednesday there was one of these events. Four of the PRCS employees were recognized.

OAS Manager Kit Kieser received an award for her efforts with People's Express. This was a real collaborative effort she fostered across multiple departments including fleet, community relations, integrated solutions, and finance. She helped existing drivers and riders make the transition by making sure they received information, felt comfortable and supported.

Director Muck continued by recapping Deputy Director Tracie Ringle's outstanding performance by dealing with the parade of Recreation Supervisors over the last three years. The turnover has been due to a variety of circumstances. Tracie was deserving of their honor because after every one of the departures she had the burden of taking on that person's responsibilities which is not an easy task. Then she had to hire and train the new employee. The department has been in a constant state for three years and the city

acknowledge all the efforts it takes.

Torry Yu was welcomed to the podium as Director Muck talked about his dedication. Torry has a full-time teaching job. He is known as Swiss in the department because he is like a Swiss army knife being of many talents, jobs and tasks. The reason he received an award is because for the last two summers the facility person left prior. Torry came in to work full time during the summers to help with facilities, cultural arts, splash pad, and scheduling. He helped significantly with the two openings in the department.

Torry Yu said he has worked for Novi for twelve years because it is something different everyday and never a dull moment. Another aspect that is close to his heart is recruiting his former students to work as Event Specialists and seeing them grow over the years.

Director Muck had Jason Nunez come to the front as he explained his award. Jason has been working for us for six years. He gets the recycling and cleans, always with a smile on his face. He works with the Community Relations team documenting the Library and PRCS Commission meetings. Recently he expanded into video production with a project with Rick Meader on pollinators and one on recycling. The videos can be found on the city's Facebook page and YouTube.

Jason Nunez exclaimed that yesterday was amazing, I was so surprised when I heard my name from Director Muck. Thank you for giving me an award.

B. Summer Camp Report – Recreation Supervisor John Gillingham

Recreation Supervisor, John Gillingham spoke about the camp summary that was in the commissioner's packet. This information was shared with City Council. The report explains how quickly spots were filled and field trips. The field trips included Michigan Stadium, Greenfield Village and a Lug Nuts baseball game. At the baseball game a camper caught a foul ball, and it was many of the children's first experience at a game.

Recreation Supervisor, Gillingham pointed out some significant statistics. 1275 camp participants, Camp PowerPlay had 127 unique individuals, Camp Lakeshore had 240 unique individuals that attend camp. Bon Voyage camp took thirty campers which fifteen did not attend either of the other weeks of summer camps. Novi served 382 families throughout the summer. The waiting lists still had up to eighty people.

Ten Counselors in Training logged 900 hours of volunteer work. Three or four could apply to be Junior Counselors next summer. Most of the staff plans to return next year.

The survey to parents had great responses. One pointed out that both of her kids cried on the last day, and they loved every second of camp. Another one put in all caps that it was the BESTEST summer camp, and they were so happy with what the counselors taught the kids. The constructive criticism included wanting more pictures posted, more shade at the playgrounds, and the registration process. John said "I'm super proud of camp. It could not have gone better for my first year. I've started to reflect on how I can improve and make the camps better. I want to give credit to my staff; they are the ones working with the kids."

Recreation Supervisor Gillingham spoke about his upcoming programs. October 3<sup>rd</sup> mParks is putting together a programmer's workshop in Howell which he will be a part of a camp roundtable. October 19<sup>th</sup> is Jack O 'Lantern Jubilee and October 25<sup>th</sup> Nerf Night Halloween Edition. Plans are being made for Lunch with Santa December 14<sup>th</sup>. Santa and Mrs. Claus have been hired pending background checks and contracts. There will also be a six-day camp over winter break at Lakeshore.

Information was provided on how priority registration will affect camp registration. It will still fill quickly; however, Novi residents will be served first.

### C. Commission Chair, Vice Chair Nominations & Committee Appointments

Director Muck explained the nomination process for chair, vice chair and the committee appointments. This is the thirty-day notice. Historically, a heads up is given, an interest form will be sent out, returned to Director Muck if you are interested. At the next meeting the survey results will be revealed, discussion will occur, then a vote, and the results will be announced. Representatives would begin at the November meeting. Two committees, Active Mobility (two) and the Parks Foundation (unlimited) need to be filled. Additional committees could be formed through City Council.

## **STAFF REPORTS**

### A. Administration Division – Director Jeff Muck

#### 1. Summer Park Projects

Director Muck said it has been busy rushing to complete many of the projects before the fall. Wildlife Woods pickleball courts and parking lot are in really good shape because the weather has cooperated. A few minor fencing and gate access point are being modified. Concrete work for fencing and net posts has been completed. The parking lot was paved but still needs to be marked. The courts still need to have the acrylic coating and lines painted then cured. The project is definitely on track for an early October opening. The parking lot has greatly increased the number of spaces. Final punch list items are being completed at Meadowbrook Commons including final landscaping, placement of a picnic table and screening of the Port-a-John. These courts are being used heavily.

The Rotary Park tennis courts were resurfaced, and cracks sealed. Director Muck was impressed with how they turned out. The new vendor did outstanding work and was \$10,000 lower than any other bid.

The ice arena's exterior was painted last week. The HVAC replacement was approved by City Council. It will take place in late spring 2025. The project will require a two-week shut down of the facilities.

The splashpad was winterized Tuesday. The ITC Trail/ Bosco Connector engineering work has been approved by Council. The next step is to finish the design and estimate the cost before it goes out to bid. Work with the watermain in the southwest portion of the city which goes through ITC will be done. It will complete a loop that supplies city water. The wells will be capped then fixtures in the bathrooms can be addressed. This project will probably happen in the winter.

#### 2. Jessica's Splashpad 1<sup>st</sup> year operations report

Director Muck presented the report put together by Torry Yu and Recreation Supervisor Milah Loose. The grand opening was May 18<sup>th</sup>, most of the park commissioners attended. The splashpad opened for the season Saturday, May 25<sup>th</sup> and recently closed September 2<sup>nd</sup>. The hours matched Lakeshore Beach of 10:00am - 8:00pm. The maximum capacity is 100 people on the splashpad surface. The duties were a team effort with park's maintenance taking care of the maintenance, stocking the facilities, restroom, and mechanicals. The site supervisors led by the professional staff and Torry handled the customer service, enforced the rules and policies, headcounts, light cleaning, some chemical testing and opening and closing the facility. A few pictures of opening day and the mechanical room were displayed. It is required that inspection reports along with three daily water tests be reported to Oakland County every month. Director Muck continued to explain the daily numbers that were tracked, midsummer

the weather began to be recorded as it affects the daily counts. Closure occurred due to weather, mechanical and staff issues a few times during the summer. The most attended time was 11:00-12:00 and 5:00-6:00. The least attended time was right after opening and the hour before closing. Wednesday was the busiest day averaging about 304 people per day. The least attended day was Monday. Large groups and buses especially from other communities were discouraged due to concern for Novi residents access. Only about ten large groups came without notice, but it did not trigger capacity issues. The front desk staff received many calls about rentals and trips which were discouraged.

A formal weather policy was never established besides the lightning standard practice based on sports. Closures did occur several times due to low temperatures and lack of visitation. A hotline was established which is simple for staff to update and helps the public know when the splashpad needs to close unexpectedly. A step ladder and grabber were bought to remove items being thrown into the bucket. Other items that were added after opening were a knox box for splashpad keys, a table, shade structure for staff. The UV sanitizer was really touchy. It is not necessary to operate but gives another layer of protection. A few additional punch list items will be handled this fall.

Staff members will be making some considerations and recommendations based on what was learned the first year such as establishing an official weather policy, large group / field trip policy, food and outside toys. Now that there is some data, we can make more decisions, including hours of operations.

Frequent requests were more shaded areas for visitors.

Director Muck concluded that he was extremely pleased with how it went this year. The mechanical issues were very minor, capacity barely bumped maximum, no behavioral issues or accidents. It was a very smooth summer, and he appreciates the community's support. Additional discussions and questions occurred amongst the commissioners regarding food, school in session hours, and rentals. The splashpad will reopen Saturday May 24<sup>th</sup>.

## B. Recreation Division – Deputy Director Tracie Ringle

### 1. Programs & Services

Deputy Director Tracie Ringle mentioned that her report is shorter because Mr. Gillingham already spoke about youth and teen. Unfortunately, there is a vacancy in the office with the arts and events position. There are some good applications which are still being accepted. Initial virtual interviews begin on the 27<sup>th</sup> to touch base with the top candidates.

The November theatre show is Anastasia. 100 kids are in two casts which is typical numbers for that program. The lighting system in the Theatre Quarter will be replaced before the show. The current lights are outdated, parts are hard to replace, and it does not function to full capacity.

The Friends of Villa Barr are reviewing the applications for 2025 residents. The Atrium Art Exhibit 2025 applications are due October 1<sup>st</sup>. The applicants will be notified by the end of October if they are selected.

The Hawaiian and Polynesian Dance Group will be hosting the Great Lakes Hula Retreat at Lakeshore Park October 18<sup>th</sup> -20<sup>th</sup>. A Hawaiian hula expert will teach Midwest area instructors. It is the second year the event will be in Novi. The recital for this program is December 8<sup>th</sup>.

The traditional dance classes, ballet, tap, jazz and contemporary will have their recital on December 7<sup>th</sup> at the Civic Center. Novi Concert Band will have a performance at the Civic Center on October 18<sup>th</sup>. The Choralaires will perform at Meadowbrook Activity Center on Monday, October 21<sup>st</sup> at 7:00.

Deputy Director Ringle continued with soccer which she discusses every meeting. Saturday is Dooley Dog Day and picture day at Bosco Fields. This great annual event is supported by Commissioner Dooley. Recreation Supervisor, Chase Root is working on securing the high school field in November for an under the lights game. It will be a great experience for the younger age groups to play on that field.

Cornhole registration is open. Registration numbers are lower for the fall basketball program. This was by design when we implemented the resident priority registration. Northville took the opportunity to offer additional basketball programming. Having ten fewer teams will provide our residents a better experience due to more gym space to practice.

Recreation Supervisor, Fellhauer has been in Novi nearly one year. He is analyzing the good and constructive criticism from the softball league and will be adjusting for next year.

#### C. Older Adult Division – OAS Manager Kit Kieser

##### 1. Programs and Services

OAS Manager Kit Kieser highlighted some past and upcoming events. A Matter of Balance returned September 9<sup>th</sup> with a full roster and long waiting list. It is a fall prevention program presented by Ascension Acute Care Rehab Services. The first adult square-dancing program in partnership with MSU Tollgate was on September 12<sup>th</sup>. Participants had cider and donuts and learned single and partner dances at the Tollgate barn. September 17<sup>th</sup> OAS hosted an ice cream social featuring live music by Jim Duprey.

Novi Parks is excited to collaborate with the Beautification Committee and Oakland County Parks for a perennial exchange. Fire Captain Tyson will be leading a program on the role of pollinators in our community. Oakland County will provide native plant giveaways. The date is September 21<sup>st</sup> from 9:00-11:00 at Fuerst Park.

Powerful Tools for Caregivers is back and will run September 24<sup>th</sup> through October 29<sup>th</sup>. Sleep education is a new program that will be offered on October 1<sup>st</sup>. It is presented by MSU Extension. October 28<sup>th</sup> People's Express will provide an informational session at the Civic Center on how to navigate their service. A quarterly report will be given next month to the Parks Commission about the uptick in transportation services.

Open enrollment runs from October 15<sup>th</sup> through December 7<sup>th</sup>. The two important Medicare navigation programs offered by OAS were explained by OAS Manager Kieser. Medicare 2025 What You Need to Know is on October 10<sup>th</sup>. Individual counselling sessions for part D are being scheduled with John and Megan. Limited spots are available.

The travel programs are thriving and have surpassed pre-pandemic numbers. This is with both the travel companies and the in-house trips. After discontinuing the partnership with a low performing company, two different businesses were brought in and already are making an impact on the numbers by providing better service and diversity of trips. The OAS trips have had capacity registration. Thank you to the drivers that stayed with Novi. Highlights include trips to the DIA, Detroit Zoo and Tiger's game. There will be a Travel Fair October 8<sup>th</sup>. People can talk directly to the companies and see presentations

about upcoming opportunities. The Mackinac Grand Experience trip is set to depart on October 15th. It is fully booked with fifty-six people.

### **COMMISSIONER COMMENTS:**

#### Student Representative DiDomenico

Great reports. Great presentations. I was at the splashpad for a few shifts to work. My luck I was there on the day nobody showed up, so it was interesting. It was nice to see summer camp was very busy. Plus, the other great events are going to happen.

#### Commissioner Dooley

Congratulations Torry it was a well-deserved recognition. It is amazing what you do, and I think the nickname is under appreciated. This award is richly deserved because you are a selfless type of person and very humble about it. I want to compliment Joe on his presentation this evening. It is interesting to get a different perspective. When we all visit the various parks in the city to do presentations it is neat to see a different angles. Thank you for giving that perspective I learned a few things about ITC Community Sports Park. For those watching tonight it is the beauty and passion at looking at the various parks in our city that gives a better appreciation of what Novi has to offer. Thank you for a great meeting tonight.

#### Commissioner Gopalakrishnan

It was a wonderful meeting tonight where we had full quorum and lots of great updates. One of my favorite parks in Novi is ITC. I can walk there from my house to enjoy the whole park.

Thank you for the presentation.

Congratulations to Tracie, Kit and Torry for the employee recognition. Awesome job and well deserved.

It was amazing to see the Jessica Splashpad stats and how much it is getting used. I visited one time on a hot day and knew it was a hit as a great add for the community.

Summer camp stats were awesome as well. It sounds like it was a big hit and huge demand overall. I think we are doing a wonderful job for the citizens. Thank you for the great update and meeting tonight.

#### Commissioner Tolkacz

I want to add my congratulations to Kit, Tracie and Torry. Every month we see the great work that you do so it is nice to see you recognized. Thank you, Director Muck, for bringing this to our attention. I loved the splashpad report, hearing about it for months, being at the opening, then seeing the data. It was a beautiful summary.

#### Commissioner Torimoto

I want to repeat everything said. Congratulations to everyone and a special call out to Jason.

#### Commissioner Staab

I would be remiss if I did not mention the people who were recognized here tonight, Tracie, Kit, Torry, and Jason. Good job. I really appreciate the effort you put in and balancing so many balls. I am sure you are looking forward to the addition of the new fine arts person sooner rather than later.

I appreciate the comprehensive study and presentation of ITC. That park has changed so much over the years. I remember when it opened with no power now it is lush and beautiful. It is a great gem of the elevated Novi Parks system.

Great first year for the Jessica Splashpad. I was able to take my grandkids there several times. It was well attended, and I did notice many squirt guns. I see the People's Express vans once or twice a week while I am out and about. Thanks for all the hard work.

Vice Chair Riggins

Much has already been said. I want to congratulate everyone on their staff recognitions. The team players are helping each other out, Swiss working the summers, everybody coming together to make it happen is a wonderful thing. It was a great meeting today. I am looking forward to seeing the quarterly numbers for People's Express.

Chairman Joseph

The only thing I would add that has not been said is the priority registration associated with basketball. Northville recognized that there was an opportunity for them to expand their programs. It was an unintended consequence that worked out in our favor especially with limited capacity. Congratulations to Jason, Kit and Tracie, all well deserved.

**ADJOURNMENT**

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

**Voice Vote**

**Unanimous**

The meeting was adjourned by Chairman Joseph at 8:20p.m.

DATE APPROVED: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Joseph, Chairperson

\_\_\_\_\_  
Riggins, Vice Chairperson