

**PARKS, RECREATION AND FORESTRY COMMISSION**

**THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 14, 2008 – 7:30 PM**

**NOVI CIVIC CENTER – COUNCIL CHAMBERS**

**DRAFT**

The meeting was called to order at 7:32 PM with Commissioner Schwarzlose presiding.

**ROLL CALL:** Dooley (Present), Goyal (Present), Kristock (Absent), Policicchio (Absent), Radcliffe (Present), Schwarzlose (Present), Staab (Present), Wingfield (Present), Zyczynski (Present).

**APPROVAL OF AGENDA:**

Approval of agenda.

Moved by Commissioner Radcliffe, seconded by Commissioner Dooley

**Voice Vote**

**Unanimous**

**AUDIENCE COMMENTS:** None.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES:**

Approval of December 13, 2007 meeting minutes.

Moved by Commissioner Staab, seconded by Commissioner Zyczynski.

**Voice Vote**

**Unanimous**

**TEAM REPORTS:**

**A. ADMINISTRATION – Randy Auler, Director of Parks, Recreation and Forestry**

**1. Strategic Plan Initiatives – Quarterly Progress Report**

The 2007-2010 Strategic Plan identified ten initiatives to achieve over the next three year period. These have been reported using the scoreboard process. The items in green are on track or ahead. The items in yellow are slightly off pace to achieve. The items in red mean we are significantly off pace to achieve. Every item with the exception of one is green. The one that is yellow is simply because we have spent a little more money than we estimated but we have generated more revenue than we anticipated. We are on track for our key initiatives. We are at 68% for on line registration. We are over half way to achieving our alternative revenue funds goal through sponsorships and advertisements. This is from the efforts of team members Susan Cusick, Tracie Ringle, Nancy Cowan, and other department members. There are 15,337 volunteer hours through the first six months of the year. At about \$8.50 an hour that is a significant dollar amount toward our programs and activities. We are building on our strengths, demonstrating results, communicating with our citizens and building our brand which will attract more support and continue to move us toward our ultimate goal of becoming accredited nationally and also receiving the National Gold Medal Award for being one of the best parks systems in the country in terms of management, operations and service.

## 2. Goals and Pre-Budget Meeting Report

On January 19, 2008 the City Council met in a work session and the staff had an opportunity to attend. There was good discussion throughout the day. He stated that he included a copy of the report that came out of those activities. One of the main strategic themes is to enhance parks, recreation and cultural services.

There are four priorities established by City Council.

- The first priority, which was a unanimous selection, is to acquire property and develop a signature park. This would include a community recreation center, performing arts center, senior center, community center, active recreation and natural areas as well as being able to hold festivals and events.
- Develop a plan for the Fuerst Farm property and begin implementation.
- Update the Parks five-year master plan.
- Explore valuation of the Landing property.

The first priority is very significant for this community, Commission, department, City Council and the Park Foundation. What the City Council discussed and identified is the need to have a community gathering place and a focal point for the community. Some of the discussion revolved around the City acquiring property financially or through a partnership opportunity. The Park Foundations role would be to market the naming rights program around a vision and a message for this signature park to raise the money to put the bricks and mortar on the site. This will be a focus for us for the next few years.

We are holding a series of focus groups and community input right now. We are hearing a significant amount of interest to have a community center. In every focus group held so far, that theme has been strong. It is not a strong theme to be placed on the Ten Mile Road and Taft Road property because of the size of the property. One of the things Director Auler will be working on for the next thirty to forty-five days is crafting the vision and the mission for this type of project and putting together some strategies. This is where the committee structure and Park Foundation structure kicks in.

To develop a plan for the Fuerst Farm property and begin implementation the City has contracted with McKenna and Associates and has polled a series of focus groups. There are also opportunities for citizens to give input as relates to the property on the City's website through a five minute survey as well as a display in the atrium and also Director Auler's e-mail address which has been published in the newspaper. Community input is very important as it relates to driving a vision for a signature park or Fuerst Farm property or anything that we do. The goal is to come up with a series of recommendations and maybe two concept plans for the best use of that property with the cost that is associated and what the potential return on the investment would be and how the funding might come into place. We will hopefully have that report finalized by the end of February or the first week in March and get it to City Council, up on the City website, to the Commission and to all of the participants in the focus groups.

The update of the five-year Park Master Plan is one item that has been included in our budget request this year. Our five-year Community Recreation Plan

expires in October of 2008. The Recreation Plan serves as a guide for capital improvements, park development, and operations for programs and park maintenance and planning. It needs to be on file, approved by City Council and adopted by the State of Michigan. This enables the City to be eligible for State and Federal Grant funds. In the last four years, because of completing this plan, we have received in excess of 1.2 million dollars in grant money. It is important that we have a good plan in place and be able to stay on target for the goals and objectives in the plan. In 2003 we had ten objectives and nine of those objectives are complete. The only item that is not complete is acquiring 80 to 100 acres of active park land. We see that coming to the forefront now in the discussions with the community during discussion groups and also with City Council. One of the things to include in the budget request is to contract out with a consultant who specializes in the area of this plan. The last time the staff did it internally and it takes a lot of time to be able to pull the information together and complete it. The staff will still be doing a portion of this but with the significance of item number one and working toward strategy, fundraising, and vision we will be very stretched with our resources.

The last item is to determine the current fair market value of the Landing property, which is approximately thirteen acres adjacent to Walled Lake and Thirteen Mile Road and South Lake Drive. City Council requested that we determine the value of that property and provide that information. We are currently in the process of providing that information.

### **3. Master Plan for property at Ten Mile Road and Taft Road (Fuerst Farmstead)**

We have had between 100 and 125 people attend the focus groups at this point. We sent out over 630 invitations to citizens in the community and it has been on Channel 13 on an Update Novi segment, on a bulletin board, on the City's website, the Novi News, The Free Press, The Detroit News, in the atrium area and at the Homeowners Associations breakfast. He feels we are doing a good job of notifying the public. We are getting good feedback that we can use and begin the study process and prepare a report with recommendations to bring forward for Commission and City Council consideration and discussion.

Director Auler asked if there were any questions.

Commissioner Wingfield stated the Community Recreation Center is a tremendous idea. He believes that this came from City Council through some of their meetings over the last six months. He feels that there are three or four sites that could be identified in the community which would be realistic. What does \$45,000 buy us?

Director Auler replied that as it relates to the budget request there is funding proposed in there to begin to look at doing a survey document and a feasibility study. This will determine what the Community's interests are and if they are willing to support such a project as well as the corporate sector.

Commissioner Wingfield then stated that the Landing property has come up every few years and in reality it is a valuable piece of property. He then asked that if the price was right would we sell it.

Director Auler stated that he could not speak for City Council but he believes that the discussion is around what the value of the property is.

Commissioner Wingfield stated that the viability of it being active park land is not there and to develop it into a natural area would be too costly.

Commissioner Zyczynski asked how the Landing property was zoned.

Director Auler stated that on the Master Plan for land use it is green as park land.

Commissioner Staab asked why the Saturday focus group meeting on the Fuerst Farm was cancelled.

Director Auler stated that only four people had signed up for that date and all of the other sessions had filled up. We contacted the four people and let them know that and gave them the opportunity to attend one of the other sessions as well as the survey documents. It then gives us the ability to utilize that time for McKenna and Associates and allocate that toward potential work session with City Council to gather all of their input and/or a work session at the High School to gather High School and teen input.

Commissioner Staab asked if we are going to do a focus group at the High School.

Director Auler stated that it will be one or the other and if we don't do it through the High School process we can get input from the Youth Council.

Commissioner Staab stated that he has always embraced the Recreation Center proposal but the only thing that he has a problem with is wording "...and *require* the Park Foundation to raise funds." The "require" part he questions because he believed that the Park Foundation has to remain at arms length.

Director Auler stated that he doesn't see that. He thinks the Park Foundation would take it under consideration to raise the funds and proceed with that process.

**4. 2005 Michigan Natural Resource Trust Fund (MNRTF) Grant**

We applied for and were awarded a grant to acquire two separate parcels of property. One is on the east side of Meadowbrook Road and one is on the west side of Meadowbrook Road both between Nine Mile Road and Ten Mile Road. Essentially that equates to 51 acres of park land. There have been two issues at hand since that grant was awarded. The first issue is the valuation of the property, especially the 36 acre parcel. The question was if the 36 acres would have a high enough fair market value to use as our donation match. The question is there because there is a very restrictive conservation easement on the property that already exists. It is so restrictive that you can't even put a sign up on that property, let alone build a trail or have public access to it and DNR requires public access as a major focal point. We have worked through that issue.

The second item has been the public access to that parcel of property. DNR staff felt that a complete trail system would be warranted and DEQ would be required to amend the existing conservation easement so that public access trail could be constructed and maintained. MDEQ has been unwilling to do that. However, after three years of working on this he is pleased to report that we now have approval from DNR to construct a crushed limestone pathway in an existing sewer easement along that parcel of property and it is included in the packet. This may raise other concerns down the road but we are now proceeding with the acquisition and hope to have that complete in the next ninety days. Once that is complete we are then obligated to have our trail system, our accessible fishing pier, our signage, pathways and everything done in the first ninety days following closing. We will be on an aggressive timeline. There will be more discussion as this moves forward. The good news is that after three years we have approval to proceed with the acquisition and he will keep the Commission informed on the priorities for that.

- B. RECREATION SERVICES– Nancy Cowan, Superintendent of Recreation**  
Superintendent Cowan stated that it is always busy in recreation programming. The annual Daddy/Daughter Dance was held this past weekend at the Civic Center. We had over 500 young ladies bring their dads, uncles, or grandpas to the dance. It was a very successful event. Derek Smith was the team member in charge of the event and did a fantastic job. The Novi News had a great spread in the paper today including on the front page. We had a lot of new partnerships and sponsorships as part of this event and we are really proud of that event and how it is coming along. We expect it to continue to grow in the coming years.

We are hard at work planning for summer even though the weather outside tells us it is a ways away. We have over 20 new camp offerings planned for this summer. Last year we had approximately 10. We are up to 30 for this summer. The new offerings include things like cricket, bowling, nature camp, mountain biking camp as well as some returning favorites like Camp Lakeshore, soccer and Oakland County camps. We have also increased our partnerships working with Michigan Mountainbiking Association, Oakland County, Michigan Cricket Association so there are many great camp offerings. There are so many of them that we are putting out a new camp publication at the end of this month that Tracie Ringle has been working on. We are also working with the schools to see if we can get it out to the schools and also to our database. We have great Theatre camps coming back as well as a new Circus camp. We are one of the few in the area to be able to offer that camp.

We have fantastic Theatre here in Novi and we are getting ready to move forward with our “Father Bingo” production which opens on March 7<sup>th</sup>. She encouraged the Commission to check out the website for more information. It is going to be a fantastic show put on at Novi Middle School. A professional set will be part of the production. The show itself is now being considered to go to Broadway. We are the first community theatre to have this show and it is quite an honor.

Currently we have Class software for registering people in our classes, programs and leagues and it works well for that. It does not have a ticketing module. We have been looking for an option that would take our Theatre to the next level as far as ticketing goes, allowing our residents and customers to be able to buy their tickets on line as well as at our box office. Currently, they can just walk up and

buy them at the box office. We have been researching some systems. There is one that we are thinking will be a great solution for us. It will allow us to do e-tickets as well as sell tickets to people who come in for them. Beyond the ticketing portion it will also be a great marketing tool for us. We will also be able to create a really strong database from that and do e-mails and track our customers. It has been a team effort working with communications, Rob Petty in IT, Debbie Lannen from the Theatre and Marina Newmaier from Finance. We hope to have that in the next month or so and move forward with that process.

Commissioner Dooley stated that he is hearing great things about "Father Bingo". With a production like this, do you foresee people from surrounding communities coming to this production or do you say more exclusively to Novi?

Superintendent Cowan replied that from the database we do have, we have quite a few individuals who are cast members from places like Northville, West Bloomfield, Commerce Township and even farther out than that. She expects it to be a regional kind of production and draw more interest.

Commissioner Dooley asked if from a listening audience perspective, say radio, TV, she would foresee this type of information getting out to the local Detroit stations.

Superintendent Cowan confirmed this and stated that they have already been working on press releases. A nice professional poster was delivered to the office the other day that will be seen going up around town and outside of town as well.

Commissioner Zyczynski stated that she attended one of the sessions on the Fuerst Farm on Tuesday. One of the things that she heard a couple of times at that meeting was that we need more activities for High School students who are not good enough to make the varsity teams. She remembers Scott Wagner who used to be a student representative was very enthusiastic about that. She asked what was happening with that.

Superintendent Cowan stated that as far as athletics go, in the winter it is very difficult for us to get gym space. We share gym space with the Novi Schools and are able to use some of their facilities and do have strong youth leagues of volleyball and basketball. Outside of that we are not able to get any extra gym space to be able to do open gyms or other leagues and that type of programming for Middle School and High School which we would love to be able to do. Mallery Wethers is working with Derek Smith, Ashima and some of the youth from Youth Council to still look at programming for teens. They love the one time events. So we are looking at doing a one time event for them. We have a Middle School Eco-teen program which is focusing on green and environment but also having a good time with that. We are also looking at some three on three basketball tournaments and some flag football. We did put a flag football program out there in the fall and we just didn't get any interest from the High School group. They seem to be a "drop in – come at the last moment" group. So we are trying to target programs like that for them.

Commissioner Wingfield asked if we had an intramural High School basketball for boys last year which was pretty successful.

Superintendent Cowan stated that she did not have the history but seeing the brochure she did not see anything like that last year. It might have been through the High School. We were not even able to secure enough gym space this year for our adult volleyball league.

Commissioner Wingfield then asked if we are able to use the field house at the High School.

Superintendent Cowan stated that we are not because it is full with just the High School activities.

Commissioner Zyczynski asked if there was, at one point in time, talk about having some access to space at Catholic Central if it ever materialized and what happened.

Superintendent Cowan replied that there have been some space issues because they also have a strong athletic program. With the Novi Schools we have a discounted rate for using the facilities. With Catholic Central there is a high charge in order to cover custodians and use of the gymnasium. In order to be able to use that space we would price ourselves right out of the market.

Commissioner Radcliffe stated that this is another reason why we need a Community Center.

Superintendent Cowan stated there was a very strong opinion on the subject at the focus session she attended last night. Teen focus, adults and being able to use gym space were hot topics.

Recreation Supervisor Wendy DuVall stated that the High School basketball program was offered again and they did not come in as teams. They wanted to have a drop-in program.

## **C. PARK OPERATIONS – Matt Wiktorowski, Superintendent of Parks**

### **1. Brookfarm Park Pedestrian Bridge**

Superintendent Wiktorowski stated that during routine park inspections on January 17<sup>th</sup> there was a concern with the pedestrian bridge at Brookfarm Park. In a report following the memo submitted on February 11<sup>th</sup> to Director Auler, in photo number 7 you can see some of the concerns. There is a hole on the park side of the bridge where there is an erosion issue leading to some potential safety issues. After consulting with the engineering department, we found it would be best to contract out the job to Anderson, Eckstein and Westrick. A certified bridge inspector came to the site and generated the report which is attached and made some recommendations. On the last written page of the report they offer four bullet points to go ahead and fix the bridge to make it functional for the remainder of the year. Some of the quick fixes are to shore up the area and take out some of the poles that are adjacent to the bridge, both east and west. Some of the fencing needs to be cut away which may be obstructing the water flow under the structure. On the page before, the recommendation is to consult with our City Attorney about some of the logistics of the bridge and its potential restriction of water flow during the spring and fall season. This is to

make sure it doesn't inhibit any insurance the City may have for flooding as it relates to City property. This is something the department will do. There will be a follow up report that will explain the outcome of that meeting. We also have a plan to do a hydraulics study to make sure the creek isn't changing course. Even though it is engineered to flow straight, water will take its own course. We want to make sure that any structure that we put there in the future is legitimate in the first place and does not impact the flow of the stream.

## **2. Power Park Lift Station**

We noticed last fall that there were some small issues with pumps and so we had our water and sewer department come out and take a look at the duplex station and their recommendation to us was that the station can be made functional throughout the year but should be considered for maintenance in the near future. We had Kennedy Industries come out and take a look at it and they gave us a verbal estimate to fix the structure and the preliminary is between \$30,000 and \$40,000 that day. We thought we would take it a step further and contract out with Spalding DeDecker to come out and give us some options, timeframes, and pricing as to what we could do to fix that structure given that we have activities starting down there in early April and the structure would need to be operational no later than April 14<sup>th</sup>. Given that timeframe, the option we are left with is to fix what we believe to be a break in the line that leads out of that structure and over to Orchard Ridge. That repair will cost about \$2,500 if it is just a break and we will not have to replace any of the line. If we do have to replace the line it will cost around \$15,000 to replace the line and then go for an actual station upgrade in the fall of 2008. This will be roughly \$40,000 less the \$15,000 if we replace the entire line. The reason we have to wait for the upgrade is because there is a lead time of about 60 days on the pumps that are required at that station.

## **3. Capital Improvement Project Update**

In previous meetings we talked about working on 31 projects. He is happy to report that since the last meeting when we were at 50%, we are now at 66% of those projects being complete. We have two additional projects that have been upgraded to significant progress made and the other nine projects are in progress. The details are in the packet. For Power Park phase 2, which is the lighting, the preliminary plans have been submitted to Community Development. We went to bid on the 12<sup>th</sup>. Planning and Building will be reviewing those plans and getting back to us and we hope to have a bid in the very near future.

The atrium seating replacements has gone out for proposal. We look to have new furniture in the atrium as well as a conference table to the right, when you walk in, within the next 30 days.

Our Community Sports Park maintenance facility is nearly through Building department review. We need to have that structure functional no later than May 1<sup>st</sup>.

One other project which is significant and is nearly complete is the Civic Center Fire Alarm. We are simply waiting on the monitoring panel to be installed so we can have it monitored by an outside vendor and awaiting final inspection by the Fire Department.

Commissioner Zyczynski asked a question and Superintendent Wiktorowski replied at a time when the audio tape ended and had to be turned over.



Commissioner Wingfield asked if the project of the lights at Power Park will interfere with the softball season which starts around the 20<sup>th</sup> of April.

Superintendent Wiktorowski replied that the direction to the consultant was to continue with the softball season and try to install the new lighting while keeping the existing lighting up. We would do a transition. In a worse case scenario, we might need to take out a week or so that the old poles can more efficiently be removed. Hopefully it will be a smooth transition possibly between softball seasons.

Commissioner Dooley asked if the pedestrian bridge at Brookfarm Park was closed. He also asked if the bridge will be functional before the soccer season starts.

Superintendent Wiktorowski replied that the bridge is closed and by the end of this month they hope to initiate the temporary repairs so that the bridge is fully functional. When we get the hydraulic study back and get a better understanding from our attorney as to what our options are with the bridge for possible replacement or enhanced repair we can begin with construction.

Commissioner Dooley stated that he was thinking minimal cost for anything that would need to be replaced.

Superintendent Wiktorowski stated that he would not necessarily anticipate that. It may be fairly significant.

#### **D. CONNECTING WITH THE COMMUNITY – Tracie Ringle, Communications and Resource Development Supervisor**

##### **1. Connecting (Communication) Initiatives**

Supervisor Ringle stated that it is very important to connect with our community and how central it is right now to be viewed as a central service with the current City Council goals and the things we hope to achieve in the future. One of our challenges is changing the views of parks, programs and services from output into outcome for our community. These are the benefits of what we do. In the Commission packet there are five benefit messages with the top five things that we do that affect our community members. We promote healthy, active lifestyles. We enhance economic development. We are stewards of the environment. We create safer neighborhoods. We instill a sense of community.

She stated that she likes to think of these as five fingers connecting in a handshake. This is a perfect start to connecting with the community. Some of the ways we do that department wise on an annual basis is in the Recreation Guide. The Recreation Guide is a highly anticipated and most used source of information for our department. Most of our registrations come out of the Recreation Guide. The Guide was recently updated and highlights the same five benefits mentioned before. The Recreation Guide is about to go through a change for the better. We are going to make it more comprehensive by including programs and services from other City departments. We believe that this will assist us in our connection process. An e-newsletter is something that she wants to get completed by the end of this quarter. We have an extensive database of program participants through our Class software. We have been doing program based e-mail to those registrants. The e-newsletter will be hot topics, program

information, benefit statements, study information, etc. The newsletter is also available for Homeowners Association leaders. Numerous Homeowners Association leaders have asked us for information to put in their newsletters. The website is another highly utilized tool for our department. We are currently missing some opportunities in the way that our website is laid out. We have some opportunities to change that to increase connection and customer service. As Superintendent Cowan mentioned, we want to add the Theatre ticketing on line. We would also like to add Adult Softball standings and schedules. We are going to rework the site to the best of our ability to highlight the five benefits and get more information out and categorize how our programs fit into those benefits. For television we have SWOCC and we need to be doing something on it. Right now we are doing bulletin boards. Rachel Zagaroli and the Senior Center do a monthly television show. We need to do that ourselves and are looking at some options.

The Novi News has been excellent to us lately. They have included a My Parks and Recreation section. Superintendent Cowan noted that the Daddy/Daughter Dance was featured. "Father Bingo" has also been mentioned. We have increased our number of press releases significantly.

Numerous Commissioners have asked how they can help us connect with our community. We have come up with some thoughts but we would like some feedback as well. We encourage you to attend events. In the packet is a three month calendar of things we highlighted that are coming up which would be great opportunities for you to attend and have interaction with our participants.

Another thought is to have a table or booth encouraging feedback at some of the events. Get active in your own Homeowners Association. She knows that Commissioner Wingfield and Commissioner Zyczynski were part of working at the Homeowners Leaders breakfast. She knows that Commissioner Dooley and Commissioner Schwarzlose were there. Another way to connect is to get verbal in the community. There are a number of civic organizations and community groups that you can help carry our message to. Some of these are Scouts, Lions Club, Rotary Club and the like. She and Director Auler would be happy to help the Commissioner get involved and started in the process. Supervisor Ringle stated that she will be at every Commission Meeting reporting on the progress that has been made and goal that have been achieved.

Commissioner Wingfield stated that the five points with pictures are well put together and make you want to read them. He then asked if these pages are in our brochure.

Supervisor Ringle replied that these specific pages are not. In the brochure we do tie in some of these things.

Commissioner Wingfield stated that these would be great to go out to the corporate or business community. He stated that Supervisor Ringle had done an excellent job.

Student Representative Goyal asked if there is a place on the website where people can put their comments.

Supervisor Ringle stated that is something she is looking at doing. The Economic Development portion of our website has a place where they can share

stories. We are going to add that to our portion so that we can get real person stories and where they can also contribute photos.

## **MATTERS FOR COMMISSIN DISCUSSION AND/OR ACTION**

### **A. Approval of Recommendation to City Council for the 2008-2009 Capital Improvement Program**

Director Auler stated that we put together a Capital Improvement Program which exists over a six year period. Capital improvements are fixed assets with a life span of five years or longer and a minimum investment of \$25,000. This is provided in the packet. We submit the budget to the City administration. The Capital improvement projects are also reviewed and voted on by the Capital Improvement Committee which consists of two Planning Commissioners and two City Council members. He believes that Committee met this evening prior to this meeting but he does not know the outcome of that meeting. The Capital Improvement Plan is also reviewed and approved by the Planning Commission and then is moved forward to the City Council for their consideration during budget deliberations. As part of that process, as it moves toward City Council, the City administration provides recommendations in terms of priorities for funding, if any funds are available. Under the Parks section, items numbered 83 through 90 are the seven projects which we submitted in this year's total Capital Improvement request. That total request is about 1.2 million dollars.

The first priority is the Power Park phase 3 project which involves the removal or updating the existing concession/restroom/maintenance/score facility which is in the center of the complex as well as additional walkways, paving and other items to complete that park project. We are beginning to get a return on the investment on that park not only with our local adult league programs and all of the positive comments we have but the actual return of being considered for a national tournament by two ASA organizations. We will be working to put bids in for additional tournaments. The economic impact of a large national tournament for the community during a three day weekend is around 1.2 to 1.7 million dollars. We are being considered because the investment has been made previously as well as our operations in terms of maintaining and our service. Last year we hosted our first ASA tournament in quite a while. If you go to the Metro Detroit ASA site it is our complex that is now featured on that website on the home page.

The second item is the Power Park Lift Station which Supervisor Wiktorowski spoke about earlier. It is simply a project which must be done. If that is not done we will eventually end up with porta-johns and no concessions or restroom operation.

The third item is the feasibility study for the development of a recreation center. That is to delve into the details in terms of survey and feasibility study. We do not want to do things that the community does not support or where we do not get a return on our investment. We need to pay our way and that process will enable us to take a strong look at that.

The fourth item is the Tim Pope Memorial Play Structure, a significant investment which is about eleven years old. The downfall of this type of play structure is that they last only eleven to twelve years. They are built with wood that is treated with CCA and in the long term that causes other issues. This would involve

removal of the structure, replacement of the structure and also include a poured in place surfacing which would minimize operation cost in terms of replacement and maintenance of wood carpet annually for safety of the youth.

The fifth item is the Power Park Play Structure. There are two play structures at Power Park. One was replaced two or three years ago. The play structure for children from 2 to 5 years old is about ten years old and needs to be replaced.

The sixth item is the ITC Community Sports Park Irrigation Pump House Upgrade and is something that was in the Capital Improvement Budget last year as well. The irrigation system and pump house had some improvements to it; however, we have frequent repairs needed to that system and operation resulting in down time, lost hours and additional cost.

Our entry way signs, as part of our whole image, need to have a consistent and branded look that ties to the City. The entry way signage plan being discussed will identify it as a Novi Park.

These are the some of the projects submitted in priority order. In the past and this evening we have asked the Commission to consider those to be approved to provide a recommendation to move forward to City Council for the budget deliberation process.

Commissioner Dooley asked if Director Auler would take the Commission through some of the steps and research done to insure that the field renovations are done right.

Director Auler stated that with the contribution that has been made, as with all of our other contribution and donation dollars, we want to leverage those dollars to get additional dollars. The money from the donation made by ITC really is to be leveraged toward the signature park property and not necessarily to be dedicated to ball field improvement or soccer field improvement. We would like to leverage that with other corporate donations and Foundation donations as well as City Council during the budget process. That would enable us to achieve that goal of the City's Park Project. We also are in discussions with partners about paying their way. This is one of the City Council goals under maintaining a fiscally responsible government. In the past we have not been able to cover our costs. We need a true cost user fee. As an example, to prepare a ball field is \$87.11. Currently our users are paying \$35. That is a significant jump in one year. At the Ice Arena it is self operating ice just as our ball fields, shelters, meeting rooms, etc. need to be. We are looking to leverage our funds with grant dollars. As it relates to soccer field improvement and the research and the process that goes in to that, he will refer that to Superintendent Wiktorowski.

Superintendent Wiktorowski stated that the logistics of the soccer fields' renovations as it relates to the priorities for this Capital Improvement budget is multi-fold. We are planning to do a soccer renovation in the fall. You can take out one field and you will be left with limited space for an already over crowded system. If we put another field on the budget and take another field out and we start putting them back to back, that may be a strain that could be put on the program. Another factor is the way the priorities rank out in the department and

how we prioritize things with our renovations for athletic fields. We know there is a need there but what extent of an upgrade might there be? We are looking at a project coming up in the fall to land balance to put in some underground drainage, irrigation module and sod. That may be the best option for the types of programs we run versus putting in some type of synthetic turf which may require fencing, and some additional maintenance. We want to research if the field we are putting in might be the best alternative for our department. If the field we put in is what we really need to get by with the program that we have with possible acquisition of further land in the future then we are ready to go.

Commissioner Dooley stated that what he liked about those answers is that they are not quick fix, standard sorts of solutions. They are a long term solution. You want to get things done right.

Commissioner Wingfield stated that when he got the packet he was a little surprised. He had not been to a Commission meeting in a few months. First we were going to take the \$8,000 or \$10,000 and fix the Tim Pope Play Structure. Now we are going to tear it down and spending \$300,000. If that is what needs to be done that is fine, but is that the only option?

Supervisor Wiktorowski stated that one of the options is to spend \$40,000 and fix the structure. What that does for us is potentially buy us another four or five years. It replaces some of the wood that is CCA treated. It doesn't replace the footing, which is definitely known for decay over time. It is a fact that it is going to happen and once your footing starts decaying it starts getting gaps between the decks and becomes an entanglement hazard. We do not feel that is the right option to recommend. As a nationally certified playground inspector, he sees some concerns with that structure. All of his classes recommended taking a really good look at any wood structure in the community and start plans for replacement. These structures, though sold to last 15 to 20 years, typically last 10 years. A metal structure's longevity is 10 years. A wood structure is much more dynamic because it warps, bends and decays. To say you would get 15 to 20 years out of a wood structure would be under optimal environmental conditions. Sealing the structure every year would help with the leaching of the CCA which would potentially limit any health concerns. That is not a risk he is willing to take or to recommend to his director. There is no scientific evidence that states that sealing does stop the leaching of the CCA. He would like to recommend the complete replacement of the structure, retaining the name and legacy.

Director Auler added that the \$300,000 includes a poured in place safety surfacing. You see those when you go to indoor playgrounds at a McDonald's. It is the rubber, permanent safety surfacing. He is assuming that is about 50% of the cost. The other option is to take that part out and go \$150,000 and lay down wood carpet. Wood carpet is what we have at our play structures now and they would need annual replacement.

Commissioner Wingfield stated that if this is what we feel is best for the community but obviously Commissioner Dooley would like to see maybe \$160,000 for a soccer field and he would like to see \$65,000 for a baseball field. He thinks these are very important because of the groups they are in

respectively. You are taking a third of your total proposed budget and tearing down two playgrounds and putting up two new ones. He agrees that the one in Power Park is very antiquated and there are not many options for that one for safety reasons. He then asked if there were safety issues with the playground in Power Park.

Superintendent Wiktorowski stated that there are safety issues with any structure that is 10 years of age or older. In the monthly and weekly inspections that are done on all of the play structures they have noticed gaps in the decks, gaps between the slides and the deck and safety surfacing concerns. These are things that are addressed in the regular maintenance program and in capital outlay in budgeting for safety surfacing to be blown into the structures to bring our levels back up to where they need to be. Maintenance is scheduled to have the seasonal staff enter the structures on a daily basis and rake the wood carpet back underneath the slides, swings and other areas. Employees may go out and do this at 8:00 in the morning and if a group of kids comes in for a school function, after they leave it looks like it was never touched. That is one of the disadvantages of the wood carpet. The poured in play surfacing enhances accessibility and is the only true accessible surfacing in play structures.

Commissioner Wingfield stated that he supports what is presented. He is involved in Novi Youth Baseball. For a while we were fixing a soccer field and a baseball field every year and have gotten away from that. Now Novi Youth Baseball is going to step up and give some money to fix another field. The way this is proposed we will not see a baseball field or a soccer field fixed with City funds for three or four more years. That does bother him a little bit.

Commissioner Schwarzlose stated that the one thing this does concentrate on is the general fund and doesn't concentrate on the current and future partnership potential that we have as far as development of fields. We are really looking at the specific General Fund at this point.

Commissioner Staab stated that he can embrace the Capital Improvement Plan except for the Tim Pope Play Structure and this is for personal reasons. The structure was community built eleven years. \$100,000 was raised and no money was spent by the City to build it. Hundreds of people helped build it and thousands of people have used it. If we had deposited \$8,000 in an account with just simple interest we would have about \$25,000 to \$30,000 to spend on refurbishing to maintain the structure. He and Superintendent Wiktorowski got together back in September and talked about the play structure and at that time he came up with a "to do" list. This list included contacting members of the project when it was done and to do an audit of the refurbishment or replacement of the play structure. At this time he has not seen the findings of that audit so he has a hard time agreeing to the displacement of the structure.

Superintendent Wiktorowski stated that three companies were contacted and only one was willing to come out and do an audit. Two of the companies thought that it would be a waste of our money to perform an audit. He stated that he was not sure if the other two companies did not come out because it would be in their best interest to sell another product or not. He does not have the exact dollar amount of the audit that was done but he thinks it was around \$3,500 and then

there was air fare, hotel accommodations, etc. As he discussed with Director Auler, to have this done and as it relates to the potential \$40,000 that Commissioner Wingfield brought up to get us another 4 or 5 years out of the structure, if that is even possible, was not something he felt comfortable recommending. He felt that it would be best to recommend enhancement and/or replacement. It is important to us because of the legacy of Mr. Pope in the community that the structure kept the name. We still recognize the donors and the help that was part of the initial build. That is something that is important to us and will not be forgotten. He hoped that answered Commissioner Staab's question.

Commissioner Staab replied that it did to some degree.

Director Auler stated that the other companies are not going to come in and evaluate or do an audit on the wood play ground due to the EPA component and any exposure that may bring. When companies come in and do an audit they bring in a person who has been certified through the national program. Superintendent Wiktorowski has gone through that training and acquired that certification. We may repair the structure but in another 3 or 4 years we are going to be back to fixing it again. The EPA component is significant. He has worked in communities that have had these playgrounds before and he has been through this. It is a tough thing to do.

Commissioner Staab stated that he appreciates that but since the 12<sup>th</sup> of September he was anticipating an audit. He thought there would be some discussion on it. He has another constituency to answer to on this. Northville built their play structure within a month of ours and they have closed theirs down 2 or 3 times since it has been built to refurbish it and bring it up to code. It was done last summer for a week or two. His concern, because of the vision when it was built, was to put the \$8,000 away so that repair and refurbishing could be done. We have not had the opportunity or chosen not to go that route and have now painted ourselves in to a corner and now have to look at a new structure. His concern is that we knew that eventually the wood would deteriorate but you need to maintain it and that is what they wanted to do. He stated that at this time, without knowing more, he could not support leaving that part in.

Commissioner Schwarzlose asked that on the Capital Improvement Budget listed under other projects and is for Parks, Recreation and Forestry; there was an item called software sponsorship. The numbering system is off. It is actually in the year 2008-2009 so is that being proposed for this year as well?

Director Auler stated that he would like to address that and one other. One of the items that is listed under other projects is also the relocation of the Township Hall. That is going to be a significant investment as well. We have recommended that under the other project category. The Library construction is going to require that Township Hall be relocated and that is estimated to cost between \$150,000 and \$200,000. That is part of the whole Fuerst Farm Study process. The second item, brought up by Commissioner Schwarzlose, is software to help us manage a sponsorship and fundraising type component. As you go back to the scoreboard we are at about \$40,000 in sponsorship and advertising revenue through the first six months of this year. Our target is

\$75,000. We are going to be undertaking, with the Park Foundation hopefully, a significant fundraising effort toward the Naming Rights Program and the Signature Park Project. There are a number of software programs that can help you manage that process, which is one stop shopping. We currently do not have that ability. We are working from access database and Excel spreadsheets. Supervisor Ringle has done the research on this and what it means.

Supervisor Ringle stated the software would be a one stop shop. Right now we are meeting extensive numbers of people in the community. We have Excel spreadsheets, active databases, Outlook contacts and we have to go through and make sure that we are invoicing and receiving correctly and seeing those relationships build. Some of the software does that connection for you. It tracks relationships and allows you to do things like that internally. It reduces staff time, does thank you letters, and does everything as a system.

Commissioner Zynzycinski asked if Superintendent Wiktorowski was, in fact, renovating one of the soccer fields this spring or fall. Is the plan to see if the process that is used is adequate and whether or not it will be used in future renovations?

Superintendent Wiktorowski confirmed this.

Commissioner Zynzycinski then stated that the soccer fields have been an issue for over a year now and the need for additional soccer fields as well as the upgrading of the others. She feels that he is doing the right thing, that he hasn't forgotten the soccer fields, and that it will take time to work through this process. She hopes that in next years Capital Improvement Projects that we are able to move up another soccer field or two because there is a huge need there.

Commissioner Radcliffe asked a question during the time the tape was being changed. The question was lost.

Superintendent Wiktorowski stated that out of 5, with 1 being the worst and 5 being the best, before our season will start that the fields are a 3 or 4. They are not the best soccer fields in town and that is attributable to a number of factors. He does not believe that they were necessarily designed properly nor are they built to accommodate the amount of use they receive. The staffing we have, given the use the fields get and the weather conditions they are played on provide us with huge challenges to keep these fields playable. He can not say enough about the staff that work on the fields on a daily basis to make sure that these fields stay in use for the community. For the event we had last fall the fields looked like a cow pasture. By the following spring they were better. This speaks to his staff and their dedication in trying to make something work out of something that was given to us as a mediocre field. He hates to throw out the time frame of 10 years, but an athletic field goes by that same standard before it needs renovation. Those fields are now ten years old. There is a wear pattern and the soil becomes displaced and in some areas the holes become bigger and bigger. We can add soil and that gets displaced. Pretty soon you end up with a field that looks like a "W". If you look around our complex now that is somewhat what we have. We are doing the renovation on field A and we will see how well it works out adding some more sand and topsoil so we can mend our clay soil a



little bit. If this is the road we think is best then we will definitely take it to the Commission and to City Council for approval and hopefully they will support us in our endeavors to enhance our athletic fields.

Commissioner Radcliffe stated that like Commissioner Zyczynski she feels that we are doing the right thing as far as the fields it just needs to be out there for the public to hear. The feasibility for the Recreation Center is a fantastic idea. She had a recent occasion to visit a Recreation Center in another city and was amazed at what a hubbub of activity it was. It would not only be good for the citizens of Novi but it would draw people from other communities.

Commissioner Wingfield stated that that he feels he could support the Capital Improvement Plan as it is being proposed now but he thinks it is a shame for the money put on two facilities when you could upgrade two more soccer fields and two more baseball fields. He agrees with Superintendent Wiktorowski that the fields were bad from the beginning. We are trying to correct a problem that will take time. The field conditions need to be addressed. His children will be in college before we get a couple more baseball fields done. For the last three summers all he has heard is about the fields. He doesn't want to see these go on the back burner.

Director Auler stated that these are all really good discussions and we are all really saying the same thing. Our challenge is that we have many projects and not enough revenue. We are now placed in this situation because we have too much use and not the foresight and planning and funding to acquire other properties and to develop other facilities. There has been a lack of reinvestment in to the park system and he has spoken to that issue for the six years he has been here. We had a 22 year old softball complex where the fences were falling down and the lights were inadequate. We have had user groups not paying their way and that is a decision that has been made over time but at some point it catches up with you. That is where we are today. We need to fix soccer fields and we need to build more. We need to fix the ball fields and we need to fix the playgrounds. We can't lose sight of what got us to this point. Our job now is how to best deal with that. Through our Recreation Plan, our Strategic Plan, the Park Foundation, and through partnerships how do we not let this happen again so we don't have this same discussion ten years down the road? Our facilities are not the level that the community expects. We do not have the resources. We have three full time park maintenance people taking care of 900 acres of park land and 40 some sports fields. We count on seasonals but they get here at the end of May and leave the first week of August. We all know that if the sun pops out in March for two days that baseball, soccer and softball want to use the fields. When spring hits and the grass is growing we have a lot to do with three people. Other communities have dealt with this and he will continue to use Northville as an example where user groups pay their full cost including capital improvements. For what ever reason, we have not done that. Our job is how to position ourselves so we are not in this situation in the future. We are doing that at a time when State Revenue sharing has been decreased, we know the condition of the local economy and we know we are not going to increase the millage rate. We have to be creative and figure out strategies of how we come together to address the issues. We need to fix many things. We could put them all in one year but we're probably not going to get the seven projects funded, when you look at the

past and the situation we are in. Novi is blessed with location and we are probably the best city in the state in terms of economic growth right now. The budget is tight so we have to decide what comes first. More importantly for this Commission, is how to plan and position ourselves for the future so we are not having these discussions. That is our challenge and that is what we need to focus on through our committees, our Recreation Plan, our Strategic Plan, our partnership discussions and the Park Foundation. These are all reasons we established the Park Foundation and began discussions with partners. This has been healthy discussion tonight. There are many projects that need to be done and we need to prioritize them some way. How will we fund those that don't get funded? How will we be creative and bring additional resources to the table? We know it is not going to come from the General Fund. We are already getting a jump on things that are pretty significant. Our General Fund subsidy last year, counting Capital Improvements, was \$1.4 million. At some point that General Fund subsidy may not be there and what impact that would have. That is the discussion we need to have on a continuous basis and direct our strategies around that. If we did the projects all in one year we would still have to prioritize them. Our priority is first safety issues and then returns on investment. He stated that if there is a difference on priority issues he is open for discussion. This is where we need to spend our higher level thinking time and not on specific items but strategy of how we are going to position ourselves for the future and fund ourselves for the future. How do we get to the level we all want to get to with the resources we have and how do we create additional resources. The staff has been working hard at that as is displayed on the scoreboard.

Commissioner Schwarzlose asked if there was a motion concerning the budget.

Commissioner Wingfield asked that if there was a motion to pass the 2008-2009 Budget or for all of the years.

Director Auler replied that in the past what the Commission has done is to recommend to City Council the projects in that particular fiscal year budget. You certainly have the option of the whole thing but what he has heard tonight indicates that there is not a willingness to do that. He would support that as well. He would recommend that the Commission decide on the 2008-2009 fiscal portion.

Commissioner Wingfield stated that in his personal perspective he could approve the 2008-2009 Budget. He would like to review the ones farther out.

Commissioner Wingfield made a motion to approve the 2008-2009 Budget as stated in the priority listed. It was seconded by Commissioner Zyczynski.

Commissioner Staab stated that he will be voting against the 2008-2009 Budget because of the Tim Pope Play Structure. He would vote for it if an amendment was made to fix the play structure for \$30,000 to \$40,000 dollars and divert other funds to other capital improvements projects.

After no other discussion a vote was taken.

**Voice Vote**

**Motion carried**

**5yea -1nay**

**B. Consideration to submit a 2008 Michigan Natural Resource Trust Fund (MNRTF) Grant (development and acquisition)**

Director Auler stated that there are two grants to bring forward tonight. Councilman Mutch brought forward to City Council a potential land acquisition parcel that is included in the packet. It is a parcel adjacent to Lakeshore Park that we could submit for a land acquisition grant. Additionally, MNRTF has a Park Development Grant that enables you to put up a certain number of dollars for match. If you are successful with the project you receive money and can do a development project. We have talked a lot tonight about the budget, leveraging funds and partners. He believes that we should submit a grant for acquisition and a grant for development. The grants are due April 1<sup>st</sup> and this is February 14<sup>th</sup>. There are two things that he wants to bring out. There is a time and a need for a Commission and the team as we go through the five-year plan process to look at what potential grant opportunities and specific projects there are and develop a five-year grant program plan. Every year we are thrust in to the grant arena and we should pursue grants. We received \$1.2 million dollars in the last four years through grants. So we have been successful. We need to have a more strategic approach to this process. The only way for us to pursue these grants this year, and he mentioned this to City Council as well, is that we must out source the grant writing for these two grants. They are due in Lansing on April 1<sup>st</sup> which is six weeks. Speaking to the 2005 grant, we did that in four weeks. It can be done by staff. Doing it by staff in four weeks means that everything else is dropped including capital improvement projects, program opportunities, partnership opportunities, etc. He would recommend that we proceed with two grants, an acquisition grant and a development grant. He has not identified what that development grant will be. He is not prepared to identify it. He will say that it is an opportunity to match the grant development criteria to a capital improvement project and try to leverage some money. In order to outsource this we need to identify some criteria that we can submit to firms, get some proposals back from those firms, identify the project and get them moving. That process realistically can be addressed in two weeks so that is why we have to outsource it. It may require additional funding to outsource this and if you go back to our budget we do not have any money allocated to this. His recommendation to the Commission is to pursue two grant applications through outsourcing and that City Council allocate the funds to enable this to happen. In 2005 it took 4 key staff people and 2 volunteers to focus on the grant for 30 days to get it done. It really needs to be in by the April 1<sup>st</sup> deadline, there is an August deadline, because that gives you the opportunity for three or four months to make connections with the MNRFT board and build that relationship and convey what your project is and why it is so important. It also gives our staff an option to review the grant and application and allows us to make additional submittal information or changes to the application before the August 1<sup>st</sup> deadline. He would seek a recommendation from the Commission this evening to pursue the two grants provided funding is allocated to outsource the grant writing process.

Commissioner Staab asked what the cost of the outsourcing might be.

Director Auler stated that he does not know the cost. That is what we would find out through the proposal process. He would estimate between \$3,500 and \$5,500. It is something we would have to take out of our cash balance.

Commissioner Staab asked if it could be funded another way, possibly by donation or partnerships.

Director Auler stated we certainly could if friends of the Novi Parks step forward with a commitment to fund it.

Commissioner Staab stated that when he attended the focus group on Tuesday night there was mention of some people at that meeting who were willing to write grants.

Superintendent Cowan stated that she does remember and that they were speaking specifically about Fuerst Farm and historical preservation at that time. And she believes one of them was Terry Croad who is of McKenna and Associates.

Commissioner Staab made a motion that we consider the grant proposal only if the writing can be outsourced and funded. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Wingfield.

**Voice Vote**

**Unanimous**

**AUDIENCE COMMENTS:** None

**COMMISSION COMMENTS:**

Student Representative Goyal stated that even though there are problems like the bridge at Brookfarm Park it is good to see that the City is taking action to fix the problem and also putting out new programs for the people to be involved in.

Commissioner Radcliffe stated that it is great to see the Parks and Recreation department represented on both the Strategic Plan initiatives and on Capital Improvement.

Commissioner Zyczynski had no comments.

Commissioner Staab stated that last Friday night he attended a Choralire Senior Center Valentine's Day concert. It was standing room only as it always is. He will attend one tomorrow night at Fox Run. Director Auler brought up some good points when discussing the Capital Improvement Plan. We do need to stay focused on the ultimate goal and not the parts. First and foremost should be building a signature Park and acquiring land. Lets do it right the first time. That is the key and will alleviate 90% of the consternation we have. We did not do many things right in the past.

Commissioner Wingfield stated that he has spent a fair amount of time in the Ice Arena and has had a great response on the new flooring. It looks nice and people are commenting on it. It is more practical and looks better.

Director Auler added that all of the carpet has been removed from the facility and a new rubber floor surface has been installed. It is low maintenance and long term.

Commissioner Winfield asked why you would do anything else because it is so practical for and Ice Arena.

Commissioner Dooley stated that he personally appreciates what Superintendent Wiktorowski does for the families and children of this City in the care and upkeep of the playing fields. He stated that he also liked the five key initiatives presented by Supervisor Ringle. Doing things right is so important and so is what Superintendent Wiktorowski does by keeping the fields in order and a plan in place. When 2010 and 2011 roll around you will have something in place so that we will not have to sit and talk every spring and fall about how the fields weren't done right as they were originally.

Commissioner Schwarzlose stated that he would like to take this opportunity to thank Director Auler and his staff for all of the great information they bring to each meeting. It was a great presentation tonight. Based on the nature of what we have and the issues we have going on right now and the direction the Parks and Recreation Department has going forward we are at a critical point in this community and it takes everyone's involvement and direction. It is very telling, as Director Auler mentioned the Parks plan and the ten goals that we had in the last plan, that we are on the last or tenth one of them. We are rewriting the plan now and we are laying out realistic goals and visions which are attainable. The fact that we have been able to do that with this group of Commissioners and your staff just goes to tell the professionalism of this Commission and staff.

Director Auler stated that there is one other project he would like to bring up. He would like to end the meeting on a really good note. If you notice there are a lot of changes to the Council Chambers. This also speaks to the quality of our team. A lot of work has gone in to this to make it happen. Part-time staff was involved as well as full-time staff. There is new carpet and new chairs but when you came in to the room tonight you saw the new City logo etched in to the glass. That happens because of the commitment of not only our team but of a particular individual in the Department of Public Works department. Ryan Trainor did this for us and did an excellent job. If you were to outsource this work it would have cost a couple of thousand dollars. Ryan, Joe Bell, Steve Tillman, Tim Zylka, John Neff and others all contributed to making that happen. Ryan's expertise brought that project home. He wants to make sure that if you get an opportunity to see Ryan or any of the others to convey your appreciation because they did an excellent job. Ron Valente, Matt Wiktorowski and many of our part-time staff also contributed. We are not finished in here. There are still a few more things to resolve but there is a significant difference in here from the point where you enter at the door all the way in.

**ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting was adjourned by Chairperson Schwarzlose at 9:36 p.m.

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Signed, Reagan Schwarzlose, Chairperson

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Signed, Karen Zyczynski, Vice Chairperson