

PARKS, RECREATION & CULTURAL SERVICES COMMISSION

Thursday, July 20th, 2023 – 7 P.M.

Novi Civic Center – Council Chambers

The meeting was called to order at 7:02 p.m. with Commissioner Dooley presiding.

ROLL CALL:

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

APPROVAL OF AGENDA:

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

Voice Vote **Unanimous**

CITIZEN COMMENTS: None

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

It was moved that the minutes for the June 15th meeting be approved by Commissioner Joshi and second by Commissioner Riggins.

Voice Vote **Unanimous**

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

- A. Walkable Novi – Commissioners Dooley & Tolkacz
Commissioner Tolkacz said there was no meeting this month. Last month was a pretty active meeting and plans were reviewed. The only update is that Lindsay Bell sent an email indicating that they will be soliciting community feedback for the active mobility preliminary plan. There are a couple events planned, including one tonight at Lakeshore Park to get community feedback on what has been proposed.
- B. Novi Park Foundation – Commissioners Joseph, Joshi, Staab & Torimoto
Commissioner Joshi mentioned at the last meeting details for Pour on the Shore were discussed. Volunteers over the age of 21 are still needed to help with pouring. As of Monday, 142 tickets have been sold. Including the sponsor tickets the number is 250. Commissioner Torimoto added that the revenue just from sponsors was probably one of the highest ever which covers the cost of the event.

C. Grants Committee – Commissioners Joseph & Riggins

Commissioner Riggins said that there was not a meeting, therefore, nothing to report. Director Muck added the interlocal agreement and invoice for \$150,000 reimbursement has been submitted to Oakland County for the Meadowbrook Commons Pickleball Project.

D. Parks and Facilities Updates

1. Lakeshore Park – Commissioner Joseph – Tabled to August

2. Fuerst Park – Commissioner Tolkacz

Commissioner Tolkacz presented Furest Park last year as well when he showed the park through the seasons. This year he took the historical approach to show what the park was used for back in the day. The park is at the corner of Ten Mile and Taft. It has great access to the high school and the library. The location is one of the great attributes for readers and students to go there to relax.

Commissioner Tolkacz showed a PowerPoint highlighting the history with pictures of the views and gardens. Many of the pictures were taken after the last meeting in the middle of the air quality issues. Fuerst Park began life as Furest Farm. During his research many familiar names were noticed. The farm was bought in 1918 by Jacob and Rebecca Fuerst of Greenfield Township. Novi was known as a fruit growing area between the Irwin, Simmons and Fuerst families. In 1973 the surviving daughters sold the property to the school district for public use. In 1997 the farm was purchased by the city.

The park was spotless when Commissioner Tolkacz visited, which was amazing considering the recent thunderstorms. The trial design and shrubbery up to the peak of the hill were in the spirit of the farm scheme. The butterfly habitat was created in the interest of our friends. The monarchs are making a comeback which is a tribute to areas like this. Photos of the artwork featured creations by David Barr.

Furest Park is a nice mix opposed to ITC Sports Park which is event and game focused. Furest Park has a different vibe, it is a relaxed and chill type of place. The opportunities for improvement that were pointed out were painting the building, a bit of litter and replacing the tables with a composite indestructible surface.

Commissioner Tolkacz asked if there were any plans for the open space. Director Muck answered it is part of the land swap agreement which will be updated later tonight. It will most likely continue to be a festival ground area. For example, this Sunday the Festival of Chariots will be taking place, which he recommends stopping by. The library, Sizzling Summer, and movies have used the open space too.

MATTERS FOR COMMISSION DISCUSSION AND/OR ACTION:

A. ITC Community Sports Park Conceptual Plans

Director Muck introduced Recreation Supervisors Greg Morris and Chase Root who spearheaded this effort. Greg Morris took a moment before introducing the consultant to say the project has come a long way. Tonight, encompasses

months of work not only by our team but by the consultant. Three conceptual plans will be shown which are in no way final. Greg Morris said "we want your feedback on what you think about each of these drawings. Cindy Todd will lead you through what we have been working on and where we are going from here. We look forward to your feedback on these drawings".

Cindy Todd with the Spicer Group said it has been an honor, fun and enjoyable to work with your team as we move forward to prepare a great outcome. The first step was an online survey which asked questions to get feedback from the community. From the 865 surveys taken the Spicer Group began gathering information, generating options and opportunities at the park. In addition, stakeholder meetings were held with pickleball, tennis, soccer and baseball groups, OAS, and Cultural Arts Advisory boards. Many notes were taken from the information received. A site walk was completed, and the current condition of the facilities were evaluated. Evaluation of the shape of the buildings and what needs to be improved from a renovation standpoint.

An ariel photo and description of the ITC park was provided.

Three sketches have been put together which Cindy Todd outlined using a PowerPoint and large display boards. The first design makes the least number of changes, the second a little more and the last one makes even more changes. It goes from least expensive to most. In all three sketches an additional access drive was added off Napier.

In the first drawing the existing baseball and softball fields remain in the same location but the recommendation is to update. The soccer fields will be reorganized. During conversations with the Jags it was said they would assist with adding turf fields. In all of the sketches at least two full sized turf soccer fields are recommended as well as eight pickleball, eight tennis courts, one or two basketball courts. The existing playgrounds remain in all the options. Shade was very important to all the stakeholders. The trail system was also important. There were conversations regarding concessions; the plans show options within the buildings as well as opportunities for food trucks. Electricity hookups would be available so the food trucks could be staged within the park. All of the options identify a distinguished ITC tailhead.

Cindy Todd went through the details of each sketch to gather information from the commissioners on what ideas work best. The consultants will create a final plan to pull the elements of everything that was liked.

The difference with the second and third sketch is a roundabout which will help with traffic flow and parking. Sketch number two features a large pavilion which would be a multipurpose area. The proposal in all the sketches is the parking lot would be paved. A lot of the costs for the project would be in the road and parking systems.

Sketch three featured a pond. Currently the pump rejuvenates every other day, however, irrigation should occur daily. With the pond the areas could alternate. The pond would be shelved and lined. The cost would be over \$300,000. Other considerations would be geese, children near the water and money could be put into more recreational value items.

General cost estimates were shown for the various areas of the project. The Spicer Group adds 20% because the construction market is hard to predict.

Chairman Dooley thanked Cindy Todd for the comprehensive preparation in presenting these sketches. The commissioners shared initial comments regarding the presentation.

Commissioner Tolkacz echoed Chairman Dooley's comments. He said he moved here in 1992 when ITC was just going in. This is a once and a generation opportunity and he is excited to be part of it. He said he has a favorite and there are parts of the other sketches he likes. He does not see the value in the pond, it is a negative for the reasons suggested. Commissioner Tolkacz mentioned option three's second access road being central as something he liked. From option one he liked the fact that the trail goes near the pond through the woods in the south part of the park. He asked about the area to the east and adding a nature walk interpretive center. Director Muck answered that was part of the original conversations, but staff recommended against it due to the escalation of costs of building a boardwalk and being less visible to park users.

Commissioner Joshi likes how the ITC Trail loops around the whole park. She does not like the parking situation in sketch one since tennis and the playground would be fighting for space. In terms of cost, it would be nice to merge sketches two and three. The big pavilion in sketch two looks great.

Commissioner Riggins likes sketch two the best but actually likes the pond in sketch three. She also liked the multipurpose pavilion area and the roundabout.

Commissioner Riggins asked if there could be room for a community garden.

Commissioner Joshi asked about the traffic problems. Director Muck explained the issues especially during large tournaments. "I think some additional traffic calming measures are warranted in the design." Commissioner Joshi added there is definitely a need for more parking.

Commissioner Torimoto said these are really great concepts. One of the things I learned in the planning process / survey results was how much people use this park other than a sports park. It is actually a neighborhood park. People talked about the amenities especially with the connection to the trail. So, it is not just a sports park but a community park / trailhead area. The turf fields and tennis courts have been pinpointed and people are concentrated in one area. He asked if the number of soccer and baseball fields has decreased due to expanding pickleball and tennis. It was confirmed that the number is actually the same. Current usage does not warrant more fields. The focus of baseball was to improve existing fields by covering dugouts, better amenities, enhanced grounds, and lighting. Discussion occurred regarding drainage and irrigation. Director Muck read the statements from Commissioners Staab and Joseph since they were both out of town. Commissioner Staab indicated that he liked conceptual plan number two the best of all submitted guided by the tennis and pickleball courts not located by the play structure. He also liked the multipurpose pavilion. He would like more time to study the plans. Commissioner Joseph stated the three viable options presented their own merits. Sketch number one was his least favorite yet the most cost effective. He does not like the removal of the basketball court or the grouping of soccer, pickleball, basketball on the southwest corner. He prefers the segmented layouts by sports activity for parking ease for other sports when heavily used by soccer. Sketch two was his first choice. This capitalizes on the addition of pavilions due to the demand of rentals across the parks. The segmentation of sports and cleaning up the baseball

diamonds seems much more efficient. The pond in the northwest corner feels unnecessary. His recommendation would be sketch two given the current designs.

Chairman Dooley shared his thoughts. When he arrived tonight, he liked sketch two the best because everything is segregated by sport and has its own distinction. He likes the idea of the rotary to control traffic, speeds and it can be used as a compass going from one area to the other. The rotary in the middle gives it identity and people would respond to that compass where all the different fields are located depending on the sport. He also mentioned the organization of the cricket and baseball fields.

Director Muck summarized with bullet points for the Spicer Group of common themes from the commissioners:

- Renovate baseball instead of complete redesign.
- Agreement of the roundabout for traffic calming being located towards center of the park.
- Segmenting of sports and activities into different areas.
- The large multiuse pavilion.
- Paved parking expanded.

Additional conversation also took place regarding food trucks versus concessions.

Director Muck said it was a very robust discussion today with great input from the commissioners. Cindy Todd will take the information back to her team to develop one conceptual plan that encompasses all of this feedback. The team will also put harder costs into the new conceptual. Our city's engineering firms will do the same, so we have a double check on the cost estimates. At that point we will take those back to city council for consideration. Another concern is not displacing the soccer and baseball players for an extensive period of time. A full re-design of the baseball fields would necessitate the NYBL seeking fields in other communities. Option 1 that the Commissioners preferred would be the least disruptive to their schedule. Kudos to Greg and Chase for spearheading this effort. We are starting to see the finish line. It has been a pleasure to work with Cindy and her team. We are getting to a point to take to council, start having serious discussions about cost estimates, timing, funding, and other details.

B. Parks and Recreation Month Recognition

Director Muck started by saying July is parks and Recreation month. I would like to read a short statement of recognition and then offer the commissioners an opportunity to share thoughts on the importance of parks and recreation to the Novi community.

Parks and Recreation is an integral part of Novi. It promotes health and wellness, improving the physical and mental health of our residents. Parks and recreation promotes time spent in nature, which positively impacts mental health by increasing cognitive performance and well-being and alleviating illnesses such as depression, attention deficit disorder, and Alzheimer's. It encourages physical activities by providing space for popular sports, hiking, biking trails, and many other activities designed to promote active lifestyles. Parks and recreation

increase a community's economic prosperity through increased property values, expansion of the local tax base, increased tourism, the attraction and retention of businesses and crime reduction. Our parks and recreation areas ensure the ecology, beauty of our community, and provide a place for children and adults to connect with nature and recreate outdoors. The City of Novi has always realized the benefits derived from parks and recreation resources and does recognize July as parks and recreation month. Chair Dooley and commissioners on behalf of the entire PRCS staff thank you for your ongoing support and being advocates for parks and recreation year-round.

Commissioner Riggins reiterated the question "what does parks and recreation mean to me?" What was read really encompasses a lot of what it really does mean because I feel parks are where you can go with your family, have a picnic, grill, have community, meet other people in the neighborhood, have fellowship and talk about what you like to do such as biking and trail walks. It is really good for mental health to get people moving and talking instead of being on social media. I think parks are a place we really need. With the upgrades and development, I feel it gets more people involved.

Commissioner Joshi commented in the spirit in everything Director Muck said I think it is wonderful to be part of the Novi Parks Recreation and Cultural Services Commission. Just being with all the wonderful people is amazing. Without you it would not be possible. Thank you all.

Commissioner Tolkacz remarked that what Director Muck said was awesome. I'll just say amen.

Commissioner Torimoto stated the last couple of years have shown the importance of being able to connect with people and nothing is easier than through parks and recreation. Connecting with nature, family and community means a lot and has been very important the last couple of years.

Commissioner Dooley said all I want to add to the great comments that have been made tonight is we cannot do this without this department. It is your award-winning department that is recognized throughout Michigan and United States. You share what makes Novi so great with others. We are just servants that meet every third Thursday of the month. We are servants to you, and you are the ones that make this so great and easy for us to do. We applaud you.

C. Parks and Recreation Professionals Day Recognition

Director Muck transitioned into Parks and Recreation Professionals Day Recognition by saying for many years and months he has been able to receive accolades from the commission. Our professional team is not here each month but are behind the scenes doing what they do to make our entire department look good. Tonight, they are here, and each will come up and give a quick introduction of who they are and what they do.

Derek Brooks Account Clerk essentially working at the front desk. "It is great to be here tonight since I take the minutes, so it is great to see the meeting in action." Madison Lachance said she has been here for just under two years. She recently transitioned from being the Recreation Supervisor for Older Adult Services into the Recreation Supervisor for Cultural Arts. Now she will be overseeing dance, art, theatre, atrium art and help with Villa Barr.

Greg Morris said he has been in Novi for eleven years overseeing adult and youth sports with Chase. He also makes weather calls frequently and acts as a meteorologist April through November. Greg added It has been a great run here in the city. He always enjoys attending the commission meetings and feels really good afterward.

Chase Root stated he is the other half of the sports team and has been in Novi for a decade. He is really proud of the growth of soccer from a handful of teams to twenty-nine select teams and 700 players overall for fall. The growth of tennis continues with over 1,000 registrations in 2022. Starting the youth tennis team has been a fun experience. His son participates in the program and will be playing in a tournament next week.

Jeff Johns has been in Novi for just over a year. He is the Recreation Supervisor for Youth and Teen which encompasses special events throughout the year and summer camp. This year over 300 different participants have come through the camp program. In the month of July all of the campers spent over 150 hours outside. He has enjoyed being part of these programs and seeing the staff grow year after year.

Sandy Fisher has been with the department since 2009 and has worked as the Social Service Coordinator since 2011. She facilitates the loan closet which has grown significantly, nutrition programs, support groups, health and wellness programs, such as massage, volunteers, and lifelong learning classes. Currently she is trying to develop technology programs to help people learn about technology and close the digital divide. She is proud of everything she does but the relationships that have been built are the highlight. She is also the answer lady, Meals on Wheels, protective services, and the Novi Police department often contact her for input.

Director Muck provided a conclusion.

From tonight's staff reports the Parks recreation field is a diverse and comprehensive system that improves personal, social, environmental, and economic health and helps make Novi a desirable place to live, work, and visit. Novi supports the skilled work of parks and recreation professionals to strengthen the community, connect people with nature and each other, and provide and promote opportunities for healthful living.

It also values the essential services that our parks and recreation professionals and volunteers perform to provide recreational and developmental enrichment for our children, youth, adults, and older adults. To ensure our parks and recreation spaces are clean, safe, inclusive, welcoming, and ready to use.

Tomorrow July 21st, 2023, we will be recognizing Parks and Recreation Professionals Day in Novi. It is an honor and pleasure to work with the PRCS staff. Please join me in thanking them for their dedication and service.

STAFF REPORTS

A. Administration Division – Director Jeff Muck

1. Park Project Updates

Director Muck began by saying it is July and we are in the heart of construction season planning. He started with Jessica's Splash Pad. The contractor began moving dirt on July 6th. Underground work has begun, and the foundation

started. We are waiting for an updated timeline from the contractor. The City Council approved design engineering for the parking lot at Lakeshore Park on July 10th. The Motor City Mountain Bike Association is planning to add a changing facility at the trailhead. In a separate project in advance of the new facility we have recommended reconstructing the southern end of the parking lot to eliminate the existing cul-de-sac, kiosk and create additional parking spaces to service the trail system, playground, and Shelter 3. This will go out to bid when engineering is complete. Next spring is targeted for construction of the parking lot.

Expansion at Wildlife Woods was brought forward by Mayor Pro-tem Staudt at the June 26th council meeting. Parking has become insufficient for the heavy use of the park due to the pickleball, outdoor exercise equipment and access to the ITC trail. Council has asked for updated pricing information. Cost estimates will be provided at the July 31st meeting for consideration. Details and estimates for four additional pickleball courts will also be provided. The council will have a decision to make.

The contractor for the ice arena roof replacement has had several weather delays and ran short of materials. The project is nearly complete, and they will be onsite this week to finish. The final walk through is scheduled for next week. The contractor for the Meadowbrook Commons window replacement is on schedule. They anticipate starting in five weeks and should take a month to complete. The new windows should be installed before fall.

An update for the Five-Year Strategic Community Recreation Master plan is due next year. The request for proposal is currently being developed. The process will take place all next year.

Lakeshore Beach has been closed several times this summer. Twice for aquatic weed treatments which are coordinated by the Walled Lake Improvement Board. These closures occur several times a year. The closure on July 7th was for high bacterial levels. Closure for this same reason also occurred in 2015 and 2018. Oakland County is testing Lakeshore once a week. Closures have been occurring across the state including five today in Oakland County. This is not unusual. When we are notified that the beach is required to close signs are posted at the beach, through social media, and on notice the city's website are updated.

The land swap and final closing with the school district is going to occur next week.

B. Recreation Division – Deputy Director Tracie Ringle

1. Programs & Services

Deputy Director Tracie Ringle provided a quick report since the Recreation Supervisors were here and shared a few tidbits about what is going on in their areas.

The design phase is complete for Northwest Park. Spalding DeDecker designed and engineered what that park will become. Our engineering team is now working on putting an approval motion sheet together for city council to approve the construction firm that will construct the pathways and clear the area for the playground. The nature-based playground was confirmed. It is

anticipated that both projects will start in August. The contractors will work together to have the best outcome.

Kevin Brophy is the current artist in residence at Villa Barr. She has created whimsical pieces which will be a surprise. Two are temporary to be photographed, and one will stay in Novi for a number of years. Locations for final installation of the artwork will be discussed tomorrow. There has been an increase in the number of applications for the artist in residence program in 2024. The Friends of Villa Barr made up of David Barr's colleagues, friends, and family will be reviewing applications, making recommendations, and reaching out to solidify dates. We are excited to continue to host more residents at Villa Barr. A candidate has accepted the position of Facilities, Events Recreation Supervisor. She will start August 7th. This is a much-needed part of our team with behind the scenes work for the Civic Center, beach, and Lakeshore Park to ensure operations and staffing.

C. Older Adult Division – OAS Manager – Kit Kieser

1. Programs and Services

OAS Manager Kit Kieser began by saying that she feels privileged to be able to quantify some of the things Madison and Sandy have done before she took the helm of OAS just a few weeks ago. Tonight, will be a good time to talk about the impressive numbers from the 2022-2023 fiscal year.

Social Services Coordinator Sandy Fisher had over 1500 interactions for the medical loan closet with a record setting 174 in June. 401 pieces of equipment were loaned out and 201 donations were received. Sandy is currently working with Meals on Wheels to communicate the program changes. There have been some increases in the prices of the meals. In the fiscal year nearly 39,000 homebound meals were delivered and 5400 daily lunches served. 303 food boxes were distributed to seniors through Focus Hope. Eighty-eight households received emergency food assistance through TEFAP. Critical work has been done by our volunteers, which was a 500-hour increase from the previous fiscal year. The total number of volunteer hours was 3500, which has a market value of over \$110,000.

OAS continues to offer programming to close the digital divide among older adults. One-on-One technology assistance for people to get their questions answered about mobile phones, laptops, and tablets. The Cutting the Cord program helps older adults move away from cable and make use of streaming services.

Last year OAS made nearly 10,000 contact points through our social programs including cards, travel, special events, and luncheons. There were 2300 registrations for fitness classes within the last fiscal year. In the fall we will be adding learn to play classes for Mahjong and Rummikub. Madison will continue to lead the Happy Trails walking group encouraging folks to take advantage of the great trails in Novi. Notable events coming up include Sip Sip Hooray, Oktoberfest Celebration and Veteran's Day. Kit Kieser concluded that she will be leading the OAS Advisory Board meeting on August 1st.

COMMISSIONER COMMENTS:

Commissioner Talkacz

As I said earlier, I am happy to contribute to ITC Community Sports park 2.0. It is very fulfilling, and I certainly appreciate having the opportunity. As we have said multiple times thank you to the Director, Associate Director, Older Adult Manager and all the staff. Without you there would not be us, I certainly appreciate it. Thank you.

Commissioner Joshi

Just echoing the same comments. Thank you to all of you. Without you this would not be possible. Great meeting and discussion. I am looking forward to the next step.

Commissioner Riggins.

This was a long one today. A lot of things were discussed, and great things are happening as usual. Thank you, all staff, for staying with us this late. We really appreciate it. The Fuerst Park presentation with the history displayed was pretty awesome.

Commissioner Torimoto

I just feel the ITC Sports Park is not just a sports park anymore. I think of it as a community park. How appropriate that it is parks and recreation recognition month while we talk about this for its impact for the entire community. I thank you all for coming in today and what you do every day.

Commissioner Dooley

It is going to come to an end very soon. One of these sketches or a combination of what everybody likes in all three sketches will come to fruition soon. So, your rewards are going to be justified. The merits of what you have done, including the way you connect with citizens is truly remarkable. We are very blessed and lucky to be a part of this.

Commissioner Dooley asked about any upcoming reappointments. Director Muck clarified that Commissioners Joseph and Torimoto were just reappointed.

Commissioner Dooley finished the meeting by saying "it's quite a team that we have together and thank you for allowing us to be part of your family."

ADJOURNMENT

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

Voice Vote

Unanimous

The meeting was adjourned by Commissioner Dooley at 8:49p.m.

DATE APPROVED: _____

Jay Dooley, Chairperson

Charles Staab, Vice Chairperson