

PARKS, RECREATION AND FORESTRY COMMISSION

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 11, 2008 – 7:30 PM

NOVI CIVIC CENTER – COUNCIL CHAMBERS

The meeting was called to order at 7:30 PM with Commissioner Schwarzlose presiding.

ROLL CALL: Dooley (Absent), Blair (Present), Iszler (Absent) Policicchio (Present), Schwarzlose (Present), Staab (Present), Wingfield (Absent), Bharadwaj (Absent), Venigalla (Absent).

APPROVAL OF AGENDA:

Nancy Cowan suggests the addition of a Superintendent's Report, which is then added as item 5 B. It was moved and seconded to approve the agenda.

Voice Vote

Unanimous

AUDIENCE COMMENTS: None

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

It was moved by Commissioner Staab and seconded by Commissioner Blair to approve the November 13, 2008 Commission meeting minutes.

Voice Vote

Unanimous

SUPERINTENDANT REPORTS

- A. Superintendent Cowan informs the Commission that she will also be speaking for Superintendent of Parks Wiktorowski. She would like to thank those who attended Ringing in the Holidays last Friday. She states that there was a great turn out and that it was a very successful event despite the cold temperatures. She would like to remind the Commission of the Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe production taking place this weekend and that all are encouraged to attend. The new Engage! for the January through April programs has been printed and will be mailed the following day so it should be received by residents this weekend and early next week. The first date of registration is Monday, December 15th. The publication includes many activities available to a wide variety of people. Also, Engage! has been chosen for a state marketing award for best brochure publication within the state of Michigan. Staff will be accepting that award at the February 3rd – 6th conference which takes place in Dearborn, Michigan.

On behalf of Superintendent Wiktorowski, Superintendent Cowan would like to welcome Kevin Roby to the department as the full time Building Maintenance Supervisor in the evening. He is already doing a great job in bringing new ideas to the department and looking at ways to do things better. Landscaping is now complete in the center islands in the parking lot. This was a portion of the lighting project that is being completed now. In addition, the 2008 Fall Planting is now complete and they are already preparing and looking forward to the Spring Planting. The City is also currently applying for its 17th Arbor Day award.

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

- A. Walkable Novi – Commissioner Policicchio states that there has not been a meeting since the last Commission meeting. The next meeting is scheduled for January 8th. The 2008 update of the prioritization analysis has been completed.

- B. Park Foundation – Commissioner Staab states that since the last meeting the Foundation has not had another meeting. The next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday evening. He has heard some preliminary reports that this year's Gala faired very well from a profitability standpoint. He states that they are looking at new officers that will be elected and appointed on Tuesday evening.

MATTERS FOR COMMISSION DISCUSSION AND/OR ACTION:

- A. Mid-year Progress Report on FY 08/09 Priorities – Director Auler states that in July they shared with the Commission the priorities for the 08/09 fiscal year. There were approximately 19 significant priorities that they are focusing on. This being the mid-year meeting, he thought it best to provide a progress report. The first item is the feasibility study for the development of the Signature Park project. City Council has authorized a contract with a consulting firm to lead a process that will culminate in a conceptual plan for the park, including a conceptual plan for a potential recreation facility. They will also conduct a feasibility study in terms of operations cost, income opportunities and what all that might mean. That process is under way and will be completed by January 29th. At that time it will be submitted to City Council for their consideration and comment.

Secondly, Nancy Cowan begins by stating that the Landing Property Master Plan focuses on a Property known as "the Landing." It is located at 13 Mile and Old Novi Road on the lake shore of Walled Lake and is approximately 13-14 acre property. At this time the project is getting ready to kick off and they are only waiting for more direction. The Community Recreation Plan is in the developmental phase, researching and putting together information. The Commission should expect to see a great deal on this plan in upcoming meetings.

Director Auler speaks on the Capital Investment Plan, stating that there has not been a lot of progress made. This is something that will be targeted potentially for budget submittal for the upcoming year, to contract for that service. Essentially, it is taking a look at all of the capital assets within the park system (shelters, roofs, structures, etc.); identify the current condition of those items and their life span. That will be developed into a six year plan in terms of replacement opportunities. They are looking to submit that for a service improvement within the budget cycle. If they are not successful in getting it funded, they will have to seek other funding opportunities to do that as it is something that is very important. In regard to the Fuerst Park property, in terms of development and the Civic Center campus integration, the construction drawings have been submitted to their office this week and are 50% complete. They are in the process of reviewing those and preparing a packet for submittal to the Planning Commission. The project will be considered at the Planning Commission for the January 14th meeting. Following that, they will then provide an update to City Council at the January 26th City Council meeting and then complete the construction drawings to 90%. At that point, the project will go out to bid in approximately March and begin construction approximately late April to mid May. If that occurs, they will be on track to have construction completed some time in July and have the park operational for programming and community use at that time. The additional active sports land, in terms of seeking partnership opportunities, is being looked at as potentially being a component within the Signature Park

Project. Capital Investment Projects were touched upon at a previous meeting but he will go over some of them briefly. The Lighting Project: the installation of the lighting project at the Police Headquarters and station is complete. The Civic Center lighting installation is complete, as the Commission may have noticed on the walk in. They will be finalizing the Power Park Lighting Project December 19th. DTE must complete a switch over of the power to be able to energize the complex and the target for that is the 14th. That project is on track to be complete and ready for operation next spring. The last item is the Power Park Concession Stand Facility. That project went to the Planning Commission last night and received a positive recommendation. They will now be moving forward for departmental reviews and then hopefully get that project out to bid next week and maintain the time frame of having that open sometime in June or July for the season. In terms of financial analysis, it is an ongoing project. It is underway as part of their budget and updating it as it relates to the parks. They will be able to share additional information at the February Commission meeting. Under Resource Development, to date they have approximately \$49,000 in sponsorship that has come in for their events and over \$17,000 in additional value through their volunteer program and trade outs.

Nancy Cowan states the Theatre Improvement Venture Team went through a process with some focus groups as well as conducting a survey of citizens and customers that attend the theater performances. The goal of the Venture Team is to look at the performing arts and theatre program and look at where they are and determine a future path of where they would like to go and develop. The plan is basically finished and they are putting some final touches on that. It will focus on six major goals for the theatre as well as the strategies to carry those out. Upon its final draft she is sure they will be sharing more information with the Commission but overall it is a very comprehensive plan for moving that program forward. The next item is the Strategic Plan Initiatives. The plan was completed last year and they are in their first year of implementing many of those strategies. To date, they have chosen 7 overall strategies that they want to focus on putting into place this year. Some of those have already been achieved. They did hire a part time recreation programmer, Linda Berta, and she is doing a fantastic job at the older adults' center. They are also putting into place new marketing strategies. They have formed partnerships with other organizations and have created some new sponsorships in regard to the older adult area. Improving the Efficiency of Facility Reservation Process has been worked on by herself and Evie Watt. This is the project that they spoke about at the last meeting as far as ensuring that the reservation of their facilities within the Civic Center and Meadowbrook Commons are done within the Class software system, which is a comprehensive system used by the front desk, recreation staff, and operation staff can function in to look at the details of the reservations. This will help them to provide even better customer service as well as gather data about the customers, the revenue, the hours of room rentals, etc. in a more efficient way. This process will go live on January 2nd.

Director Auler speaks on the Communications Plan, stating that they utilize a lot of different tools to get their message out, which is primarily that of a healthy, active lifestyle, creating a sense of community and promoting and impacting positive economic development within the community. That message is conveyed through the Engage! magazine, the website, email communications, and the public access channel. One of the things he wishes to focus on after the New Year is putting together a solid plan of where their focus needs to be and where they get the most return on their investment in terms of communication. This takes him to the final piece he would like to share in terms of the Mid Year Report. The item he would most like Commission input on in the next several months is the Community Recreation Plan. They will have results back from a community survey that is being done by

the Park Foundation which will be back in mid January. This information will provide them with perceptions of the citizens with a 95% level of confidence in terms of quality of service as it relates to programs, facilities, communication, met/unmet needs, indoor/outdoor activities, parks and so forth. That will be a key tool that will help set the stage for the Five-Year Recreation Plan. Nancy Cowan is working on basic components of that plan. When they get the survey back he would like to ask the Commission to consider having one or two Commissioners willing to meet with them to provide input and help develop strategies, keying in on Capital Improvement Items. That is one thing he believes the Commission could become more engaged with and help as they move forward. Secondly, they will be looking to update the Strategic Plan. When they prepared and wrote the Strategic Plan in the beginning of 2007, the dynamics and the economy were different and this survey will also provide new perspective. This will focus more internally, on operations, communication, program efforts, and where they need to focus their resources.

Commissioner Staab asks Nancy Cowan if they will be seeing a copy of the Theatre Plan document. She replies that they will certainly be sharing that when the final draft is complete sometime in January.

AUDIENCE COMMENTS: None

COMMISSIONER COMMENTS:

Commissioner Staab wishes everyone a happy holiday season. He also states his appreciation for Director Auler soliciting and encouraging attendance and participation.

Commissioner Policicchio states that he is not aware of the practice of the department in terms of year end reviews or statements to the public. He has lived in the city for 32 years and it seems that this was a banner year in terms of either projects completed or projects started, i.e. Fuerst, Signature Park. He states that his biggest concern for the New Year is that they will have to reckon with the fact that there will be future constraints on the growth of what happens. For instance, people saw a lot of sidewalk improvements, but can they continue, etc. Ultimately he would like to state that from a year end stand point, it might be helpful for the public to see bullet points of everything that's been done this year, since it was a good year, perhaps even potential items for next year. He isn't aware of the process for press releases or how the department operates in terms of that type of thing. He hopes that the next year is a continuation of the progress of this year and he joins Commissioner Staab in wishing everyone a happy holiday and prosperous New Year.

Commissioner Blair would like to continue on what the previous Commissioners stated in terms of public outreach and involvement. He encourages all to get involved in the surveys because it is so important to have the citizen's response, particularly in these tough economic times.

Commissioner Schwarzlose states that as they started the year they knew it was going to be a year full of projects. Going forward next year will be as well. As has always been the case, they have continued to strive for excellence and produce excellence. He would like to recognize with the rest of the Commission what the department has done and is doing. Congratulations. He would like to remind everyone again about the theatre production this weekend and wishes them a happy holiday season.

ADJOURNMENT:

The meeting was adjourned by Commissioner Schwarzlose at 8:07 PM.

DATE APPROVED:_____.

Reagan Schwarzlose, Chairperson

Jay Dooley, Vice Chairperson