

**PARKS, RECREATION AND FORESTRY COMMISSION**

**THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 12, 2009 – 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 (Present), Blair (Present), Iszler (Present) Policicchio (Present), Schwarzlose (Present), Staab (Present), Wingfield (Present), Bharadwaj (Absent), Venigalla (Absent).

**APPROVAL OF AGENDA:**

It was moved by Commissioner Policicchio and seconded by Commissioner Dooley to approve the agenda as written.

**Voice Vote**

**Unanimous**

**AUDIENCE COMMENTS:** None

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES:**

Commissioner Staab wished to amend the January 8, 2009 minutes under Foundation Report, item B, Jay Dooley was elected Vice President of the Parks Foundation.

It was moved by Commissioner Dooley and seconded by Commissioner Staab to approve the January 8, 2009 minutes as amended.

**Voice Vote**

**Unanimous**

**STAFF REPORTS:**

A. Administrative Report – Randy Auler, Director of Parks, Recreation & Forestry

1. Update on the Signature Park Project

A conceptual plan for Signature Park was presented at the February 9<sup>th</sup> City Council meeting. Financing options, capital and operating costs were also discussed. We would use the 73 acres of property which was part of the land exchange between the City of Novi and the Novi Community School District. It excludes the 19 acre parcel on which we have a purchase option. It is designed, at this point, in a way that does not require the 19 acres. In the future it could be acquired as part of a larger parcel or a single parcel itself. This would net a savings of 1.5 million dollars for the taxpayer. The parking lot, when coming in to the park, will be able to accommodate up to 450 vehicles. There are 10 acres which are reserved as part of the school district in the event that they ever need to build an educational facility. Until that time, we have complete and unfettered use of the space and have designed the area as a multi-purpose field as well as a festival area. It is also large enough to accommodate two full size soccer fields, a football field and a cricket field. These fields could be rented. Private areas become focal points to holding different events. The back area parking lot hold up to 54 cars and has a circular traffic pattern that takes people to an area that has a four or five acre dog park. There is a boardwalk leading out into the wetlands giving a view of the open area. Also in the back area will be a series of tree houses that will be connected by walkways. These are unique play areas which draw people to use the space. In the interior of the park are pathways that connect to the

ITC transmission corridor. Pathways and bikeways are rated number three in the National Citizen's Survey of what the community needs. They did price out what it would cost to build a greenway from the park corridor up to Providence Park Hospital campus and it would be about 1.1 million dollars. This is not included in the presentation or proposal to City Council.

What is being presented is a concept and is not "set in stone" but a possibility which is subject to change. In front of the building is a plaza which could be used for a multitude of things. It has a fountain or water feature so that in summer children and families can congregate there and in the winter it could be flooded and made into an ice rink. The building is divided in to three sections. To one side is a multi-use theatre area which has a very nice stage with dressing room and storage area and support facilities we do not have now. It would seat up to 200 to 250 people but would have an area in which to expand and accommodate around 400 people. Other activities could be held there or it could be rented out.

There will be a Welcome Center when you come in as a point of contact. The building has been designed in a way that it will minimize the number of staff. There will be no new full time staff in this facility. It will be run by part time and our current full time existing staff. There will be a changing room but not a full locker room. There will be four regulation High School size gymnasium courts surrounded by a walking/jogging/running track. There will also be a multi-purpose room where recreation programs, activities, or adult services can be held, including fitness programs. This includes a very aggressive program plan.

Presented to City Council was the concept for the facility as well as developing the first phase area of the park which includes the infrastructure, the plaza area, and the multi-purpose festival field. We estimated this at fifteen million dollars. We presented this to City Council with four different funding or financing options. City Council provided staff with direction to present a limited millage rate for Parks and Recreation services that would increase our millage rate by half of a mil.

The next step is to present a resolution authorizing this to be put on as a special ballot issue for the City Council to consider. If it is approved it will be submitted to the State and to Oakland County by February 24<sup>th</sup> to be placed on the May 5<sup>th</sup> ballot.

The Parks, Recreation and Forestry Commission and the staff can not promote the project. They can only provide information and educate.

Commissioner Winfield asked if the cost of \$15 million includes the whole park or is the back part phase 2.

Director Auler replied that it includes the infrastructure, the facility and the multi-purpose area.

Commissioner Wingfield then asked how phase 2 would be financed.

Director Auler replied that it would be like any other capital improvement project where a concept plan is developed and things are phased out as funding becomes available or other opportunities become available.

Commissioner Policicchio asked what kind of tournaments this facility might attract.

Director Auler replied that the facility will attract basketball and volleyball tournaments. It also has the opportunity to attract outdoor activities as well such as three on three and cricket. This facility will generate income which can be put back in the system but it is not a 100% cost recovery facility. It was designed by utilizing community input, the Strategic Plan, the Community Recreation Plan and surveys, to meet the wants and needs of the community now and in the future.

Commissioner Policicchio asked if the sports fields are dedicated strictly to those sports.

Director Auler replied that they are not. He said to picture it as a ten acre field. It could also be a place to hold an arts festival or have other activities. The 50's Festival is currently housed on 2.3 acres so this space could be a community draw. Bringing the community together is what signature parks are about.

Commissioner Blair asked if Director Auler could give any examples that are similar to this sort of project.

Director Auler stated that there are many signature park projects and each one is unique. On a large scale, Central Park in New York City is a signature park and locally Canton has The Summit.

2. Power Park Phase 3

This is the final phase of the development of the softball complex. The bids came in on this project and will be reviewed at the next City Council meeting for consideration and approval of the removal of the existing concession stand, score tower and all of the asphalt. The plan is to make it more of a park like setting as well as put in a new facility. One of the reasons this is being done is to attract economic development opportunities to Novi. We have been selected in 2010 to host a national softball tournament. Just this week we were notified that we will host the State 2009 Girl's Fast Pitch Softball Tournament. It will attract between 1,000 and 1,500 people to Novi during a 3 to 4 day period which will be an economic benefit for the community.

Commissioner Staab asked Director Auler what kind of profits, for the department, the tournaments bring.

Director Auler stated that he would have to do research on it and it also depends on how the packages are put together and how we put sponsorship packages together. We have been in conversation with sponsors to put up the tournament fees. It will generate some revenue for the department and certainly for the community.

3. Fuerst Park

This project is near design and construction drawing completion and will be going out to bid in March and will go to construction as soon as the weather breaks. This facility should be open in late summer.

B. Recreation Division – Nancy Cowan, Superintendent of Recreation

1. Venture Team report on Theatre program and improvements

Superintendent Cowan stated that there was report in the packet regarding the theatre and performing arts programs. Last fall, an interdisciplinary team reviewed the programs and ways to expand and develop these. It was an in-depth process and the findings and goals are in the report. We need to focus on quality staff members and currently have postings out for one full-time contracted performing arts director and two for part-time programming performing arts staff. These postings have been up since last week. We will be taking applicants through the end of this month and hiring in the near future.

2. Landing RFP

Funds have been allocated in the fiscal 2008/2009 budget for a land use study for the property known as "The Landing" at Old Novi Road and Thirteen Mile Road at Walled Lake. We are moving into that project coming to fruition. The team working on that, which she is a part of, has developed a draft request for proposal for land use study. This will go to City Council for review and input. The study is to look at the land and develop a plan for that location and use. The process will include a lot of input. The completion of that study should be in June.

3. Programs

The Experience Japan event kicks off next week and runs through early March. There are programs both here and at the library. She encourages the Commissioners to be

a part of that event. Thursday, February 19<sup>th</sup> is the opening night from 7:00 pm to 9:00 pm here at the Civic Center.

The annual Daddy Daughter Dance took place this past weekend. We had nearly 100 more participants this year than last year. There were over 520 dads and daughters. We are finishing the budget process and looking forward to kicking off spring and working on our summer camp publication. Summer camp programs will be out by early March and there will be a full slate of programs for the summer.

Commissioner Schwarzlose stated that the theatre report did not address some of the other services for the theatre like set builders and costumers and he wanted to make sure that those would be addressed.

Superintendent Cowan stated that through the focus groups, specific questions were asked on the strengths, weaknesses and opportunities throughout the whole program and those positions were brought up as a part of that. It was decided that we will continue to pay for those positions and have quality people. She then stated that "Seussical, Jr." tickets are now on sale for the production in early March. Sixty percent of those tickets are already sold.

Commissioner Staab stated that the report is very comprehensive. He asked what the timeline is to fill the posted positions.

Superintendent Cowan stated that the postings went up last week and will be up for two to three weeks. The interviews should be done in March and hopefully the process will be complete in early to mid April.

Commissioner Staab asked how the theatre was doing this fiscal year as far as revenue and expense.

Superintendent Cowan stated that we are doing very well considering that the November show was cancelled and we have not had some of the staffing costs so we are on target for where we projected.

#### **COMMITTEE REPORTS:**

A. Walk Novi – Commissioners Iszler & Policicchio

1. Sidewalk Survey

Commissioner Iszler stated that Walk Novi did not meet this week. There was a small sidewalk/pathway survey handed out at the Homeowner's Association breakfast. The small group who responded does actively walk, run or bike and this emphasizes the importance of trails and sidewalks. They all did want to see connections to the signature park.

B. Novi Park Foundation – Commissioners Dooley & Staab

Commissioner Dooley stated that he had looked at the January minutes and that Commissioner Staab had done a very good job of recapping the information for the Parks Foundation meeting in January. The Foundation is in the final stages of restructuring. These should come to fruition at their meeting next week.

Commissioner Staab stated he would like to note that the treasurer, Justin Fischer, improved the investment results over the 2007 amount. From a financial standpoint the Foundation is in good shape.

#### **MATTERS FOR COMMISSION DISCUSSION AND/OR ACTION:** None

#### **AUDIENCE COMMENTS:** None

## **COMMISSIONER COMMENTS:**

Commissioner Blake stated that he supports the signature park in concept. It is too good of an opportunity to pass up. He has some reservations about some missed opportunities. One opportunity was a bond on school board two years ago and the library bond a year ago where we possibly could have partnered and leveraged tax dollars. He asked if Director Auler perceived any opportunities with the Signature Park.

Director Auler stated that we have always enjoyed an excellent relationship with Novi Schools and have always leveraged that relationship for the benefit of the community as a whole. The Novi School Board, Novi School administration, Novi City Council and Novi City administration have always worked hard to do that. Examples are that our youth sports programs would not occur without the relationship with the school district. We use their gyms. We have grown to the point that 50% of our gym requests are denied because of the use by the schools or the various programs that they have. The same is true with the theatre. We have always had a tradition of sharing land. As an example, the Novi Middle School and Deerfield Elementary School were built on park land which the City of Novi owned. There are areas for improvement and enhancement. City Council and City staff believes strongly in partnership to leverage resources and maximize services for the community.

Commissioner Iszler stated that she is also in favor of Signature Park and anything promoting a healthy community is important. She also stated that since trails and connections were in the top three items in the survey she would like to see them in Phase one.

Commissioner Dooley stated that he would like to applaud City Council for their comments on Monday and also Director Auler for the excellent presentation he gave and the work he and the department have done. He heard a comment from one of the members of City Council that this facility is going to be something for everyone. He then stated that the Mayor commented that this is not just a Parks and Recreation vision but a City of Novi vision. He again thanked Director Auler for everything he has done.

Commissioner Wingfield stated that he supports the Signature Park.

Commissioner Policicchio stated he finds remarkable the progress that has been made as a City, especially in the Parks and Recreation department including the Fuerst Park and the improvements to Power Park. He thinks the Signature Park will be the "crown jewel" in what is going on here. The debate in the community needs to be on the merit of the park itself and not a bad economic climate. That is the challenge before us.

Commissioner Staab stated that after reviewing everything that was online and the presentations he feels we need to look at the value of the Signature Park presented today. The land value alone is huge. The land was slated for a second High School at one time and it is good to see an active use of this land that will appeal to everyone. From an economic standpoint, it is market value not assessed value. For the amount of investment it is a huge return. He is looking forward to seeing it pass.

Commissioner Schwarzlose thanked the Parks and Recreation department for the time and effort in the Signature Park project and also the City Council for their support and direction. We need to keep the focus on the positive economic impact for the community.

**ADJOURNMENT:**

It was moved by Commissioner Staab and seconded by Commissioner Policicchio

**Voice Vote**

**Unanimous**

The meeting was adjourned by Commissioner Schwarzlose at 8:18 PM.

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

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Reagan Schwarzlose, Chairperson

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Jay Dooley, Vice Chairperson