

**PARKS, RECREATION & CULTURAL SERVICES COMMISSION**

**Thursday, September 16<sup>th</sup>, 2021 – 7 P.M.**

**Novi Civic Center- Council Chambers**

**Joseph**

The meeting was called to order at 7:03 p.m. with Commissioner Dooley presiding.

**ROLL CALL:**

Dooley (Present), Staab (Present), Joseph (Present), Joshi (Absent/Excused), Riggins (Present) Smith (Absent/Excused), Torimoto (Present)

**APPROVAL OF AGENDA:**

Commissioner Dooley motioned for approval of agenda with a few deletions. The parks and facilities update ITC presentation, and the Meadowbrook Commons update will be moved to the October meeting. The agenda approval was second by Commissioner Staab.

**Voice Vote**

**Unanimous**

**CITIZEN COMMENTS:**

None

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES:**

Approval of August 2021 minutes.

It was moved that the minutes for the August meeting be approved by Commissioner Staab and seconded by Commissioner Riggins.

**Voice Vote**

**Unanimous**

**COMMITTEE REPORTS:**

- A. Walkable Novi – Commissioner Riggins & Smith  
Commissioner Riggins stated that the September meeting was rescheduled to October 21<sup>st</sup>.
- B. Novi Park Foundation – Commissioners Joseph, Staab & Torimoto  
Commissioner Joseph said that there was not a meeting this month and the next one is October 18<sup>th</sup> and there will be quite a bit to discuss.
- C. Grants Committee – Commissioners Dooley & Joseph  
Commissioner Dooley summarized that there was a lively robust discussion on various properties that the committee has recommended for property acquisitions. It is going to City Council executive session September 27<sup>th</sup>. The next meeting is tentatively scheduled for November.  
Director Muck gave an update on Northwest Park. He explained a land and water conservation fund grant was submitted in April. It includes development of the park to include parking, playground, trails, and prairie restoration. The Initial scoring came back this week and was a bit lower than expected. Other parks and rec agencies around the state experienced similar scores. We are trying to

figure out the reasons for the scoring. There is an opportunity to submit supplemental information by October 1<sup>st</sup>. Director Muck has been working with consultants who assisted with the grant writing and strategy to improve score. The next step is in December when the Natural Resources Trust Fund meets to do the official scoring and recommendations that will then go to the legislature. Commissioner Staab asked if feedback was given with initial scoring. Director Muck answered they had six or seven areas for improvement. The original submission was in April and scoring was back in mid-September with only a two-week window to get the scores up.

D. Parks and Facilities Updates

1. ITC Community Sports Park- Commissioner Torimoto

Tabled until October meeting

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

A. Meadowbrook Commons update – Director Jeff Muck  
Tabled until October meeting

B. Commission Chair, Vice Chair Nominations & Committee Appointments  
Director Muck began saying that this is the time of year when we appoint a new Commission Chair, Vice Chair and start making committee appointments. It was decided to table until the October meeting since two commissioners have excused absences. Director Muck will send out an email for the commissioners to indicate their interest, he will generate a list to work from to be ready to go in October.

**STAFF REPORTS**

A. Administration Division – Director Jeff Muck

Director Muck began with a couple announcements. First, we received notification Tuesday that we are officially CAPRA reaccredited. We will be having a presentation at City Council on Monday, September 27<sup>th</sup> recognizing the staff and everyone who has helped.

We will be returning to having student representatives to the commission in October. The youth council structure has been revamped for the city. They will be working on a capstone project as part of the new process. There were students recently appointed to Library Board, Parks Commission, and the Youth Council.

1. Park Projects Update

Director Muck said the 10 Mile ITC trail sidewalk is not complete. It is still delayed due to DTE because of storms, labor shortages, and reallocating resources. City staff including the engineering department continue to push DTE on getting it done.

The water tower is complete with paint, new graphics and the antennas went up yesterday. A video will be coming from Studio 6 highlighting the back story of how the project was completed with donations from PPG paint company. The exercise equipment is tentatively scheduled to be installed the week of October 13<sup>th</sup> at Wildlife Woods.

Director Muck had visuals on the screen of Lakeshore Park Twelve and a Half Mile parking lot. There has been conversation regarding this project for years. The Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Services, Department of Public Works, and Police Department have been collaborating to address concerns with users parking on Twelve and a Half Mile and Dickson to access the southernmost portion of the trails. Staff has received complaints regarding safety issues for pedestrians, traffic due to vehicles parking at the curb and number and placement of vehicles along the roadway. The Motor City Mountain Bike Association has been outstanding in helping us try to police this. However, there has been an increased use of the park and trails throughout the pandemic which has led to more vehicles parking in this area. There has not been a reduction since the reopening of the park. Trail users park in this area mainly for use of the pump track. It has been determined that construction of a ten to twelve space gravel lot would best address the traffic and parking concern. The lot will include designating roadsides as no parking in this area. Traffic control orders would be required to enforce the signage. New wayfinding is being planned to indicate additional parking is available at the main Lakeshore Park entrance. The work will be completed in-house by the Department of Public Works staff this fall. Everybody is fully in favor of this (DPW, engineering, police, and Mountain Bike Association) so we are planning to proceed.

Commissioner Staab asked about the cost of the parking spaces? Director Muck answered cost would be covered by the general fund. Commission Joseph's underlining question was why. Director Muck elaborated increased traffic, safety, new development, proximity to pump track and trailhead within the park as well as being better for the trail coordinators. Commissioner Joseph agreed that it all makes sense and asked if twelve spaces are enough. Director Muck answered that they wanted to be cognizant of taking out trees and vegetation as a start.

B. Recreation Division – Deputy Director Tracie Ringle

1. Program & Services

Deputy Director Ringle began saying that she is going to talk about community events tonight which has not been discussed in full scale for a while. The first event is a new, Jack-o-lantern Jubilee and will take place on October 22<sup>nd</sup> at the ITC trail. It will start at ITC Community Sports Park because there is plenty of parking. People can walk the trail, stop at several booths to pick up treats and talk to characters. The business community and civic organization groups are encouraged to participate and help us engage our community in a fun evening outdoors. Recreation Supervisor, Cristin Spiller is working on these community events.

Deputy Director Ringle continued with the Veteran's Day recognition event which will take place November 10<sup>th</sup>. In the past there has been a luncheon and recognition for the veterans. This year it will also include USO style entertainment with an emcee, comedian, and musicians. The information can be found at [cityofnovi.org/veteransday](http://cityofnovi.org/veteransday).

Furest Festive Nights is moving forward, and we are ready to start marketing. It will take place the first weekend in December with food vendors, Santa visits, marshmallow roasting, hot chocolate, carolers, and nature friendly crafts. The times will be December 3<sup>rd</sup> 6:00-9:00 and December 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> 4:00-8:00. Furest

Park will be lit up. Participants can walk the trails and stop at different stations. After the first weekend the lights will remain in place for passive visitation of the park through January 3<sup>rd</sup>. The library will be involved as well.

Deputy Director Ringle said youth and teen programs which Cristin Spiller oversees are back full scale. Tumble Bunnies which is a youth gymnastic is sold out. The parent child groups have waiting lists which leads us to believe people are ready to get back to recreation. Saturday the soccer season started. The uniforms were a week behind due to distribution across the U.S., shortages, and delays. Next Saturday will be Dooley Dog Day at the park with hot dogs, gathering, enjoying kids' soccer, along with picture day for the teams. Youth tennis is exploding with large numbers for fall classes following a large summer program. Indoor fencing began and the October / November dates are already full. Fencing is taking place at the Lakeshore Building and they practice with pool noodles. Basketball and volleyball are between 2019 and 2020 numbers closer to pre-COVID participation. Practice and games will be hosted in the schools. Cultural Arts auditions for Oliver Junior took place last Saturday. There will be one cast with four shows. What is new with this show is switching out lead parts to get more involved with speaking parts. Dance classes are gaining steam too. There are 193 participants in twenty classes this fall. Recreation Supervisor, Alyssa Golles has done a great job continuing that program, working with instructors, and looking at new opportunities to expand.

The atrium art display this month is Melissa Morris who is related to Recreation Supervisor Greg Morris. October the University of Michigan Bio Arts will be displayed.

Madison Lachance started this week as the new Older Adult Services Recreation Supervisor.

Lastly, Deputy Director Ringle gave updates on Villa Barr. The strategic plan was finished last April after some delay to COVID. Between April and August many things have been accomplished under four categories. An audio sculpture tour with QR codes to an app called IZI Travel which has a map and recording for each piece. There will also be information for a botanical tour to talk about the trees, shrubs, everything David Barr planted, and we continue to add to the park. The Friends of Villa Barr have assumed the role of the artist in residency lead. They have been involved with jurying applications. Now Friends of Villa Barr will greet the artists when they arrive, provide transportation from airport, supply a bicycle, and nurture the artist during their stay. They have the knowledge to connect the artist to others in the community along with venues. Julia Forrest is currently in residence. She held a virtual art program for the Novi Public Library. She is a photographer and has been taking great photos at the site which will be used for promotion in the future. The red studio barn has been sided with vinyl siding which is great because it has a long life. The color is identical, so the esthetic did not change but is there for the long haul. A local Southeast Michigan artist, John Sauve, sand blasted and repainted Irina and Arai for visual appeal, longevity, and integrity of the pieces. An independent contractor has been working on the ornamental garden which we hope to transition to a community led garden that will be supplemented by master gardeners and community groups.

Related to the garden we received a \$500 grant from Keep Michigan Beautiful that helped us purchase plants and seeds. The parks maintenance team is doing a great job maintaining the property.

Commissioner Torimoto asked about the season at Lakeshore without lifeguards. Director Muck stated we were very happy with how the summer went. There was somebody on site to contact in case there was an issue. People adjusted and it was a great summer. Director Muck added that the beach did not have to close at all due to staffing issues. In the past there were multiple days especially towards the end of the summer when the beach could not open. The beach was closed only twice and those were due to weed treatments.

C. Older Adults Division – Director Jeff Muck  
Special Outreach Services Update

Director Muck started with good reports of programs being up and running. Senior fitness Zumba Gold returned 9/11. It runs twice a week with participation similar to pre-COVID. Chair Yoga is back at Meadowbrook on Tuesdays. The transportation program is thriving again. Since we started single loading due to COVID we had a thousand transportation trips the month of August. The CDC does require masks be worn by the drivers and riders on public transportation and social distancing. This policy will be in place through January of 2022. A majority of social programs including cards are back up at pre-COVID numbers. The Novi Needlers and quilters group will be added back into the offerings. We are still in need of volunteers to host programs such as blood pressure screening, tech support and a bingo coordinator. These positions are posted on social media.

The Oakland County Board of Commissioners Healthy Aging Oakland County Ad Hoc Committee has partnered with the area agency on aging, and they are going to host a senior townhall at the Novi Civic Center next Thursday September 23<sup>rd</sup> in Council Chambers. Social Services Coordinator, Sandy Fisher attended the annual training for TEFAP food commodity program that is held through Oakland County. September 20<sup>th</sup> -24<sup>th</sup> is National Fall Prevention Awareness Week. The Medicare open enrollment period begins October 15<sup>th</sup> which is a popular program. Sandy Fisher is also working with the Medicaid, Medicare Medicaid assistance program to offer an informational program as well as part D counseling.

Director Muck shared a few statistics from the phone calls made through the S.O.S. initiative. The oldest resident reached was 104 and the youngest was fifty-five. Most of the responses were from the eighty and over generation. The top two items for discussion during the phone calls were transportation and medical loan closet. The top five requested activities were art projects, photography, bingo (which has returned Fridays at Meadowbrook), pickleball (our courts are open and leagues full) and bird watching. The phone responses differ from the online survey results. The online results will be given at a future meeting. All four Novi zip codes were represented. Madison Lachance will use these results to hit the ground running. Currently she is being trained by Tracie Ringle in addition to the staff assisting in the areas of their specialties. She is going to be a great fit for our department. Hopefully, the Parks Commission can meet her next month.

## **COMMISSIONER COMMENTS:**

### Commissioner Riggins

It is great to hear about all the community events, how everyone is getting involved, and taking their time to participate even though the pandemic is still going on. People are willing to get out with the numbers as high as they are. It is just amazing. All the things we offer is just unbelievable.

### Commissioner Joseph

I appreciate the discussion as usual. Thank you for entertaining my question on the Lakeshore piece. My opinion has changed. It is great with all the programs coming back and seeing that they are full. I am looking forward to the October meeting and officially welcoming Madison.

### Commissioner Torimoto

Congratulations again on the CAPRA reaccreditation.

I finally made it out to Wildlife Woods pickleball courts on a beautiful day. The first time playing was challenging. On the court next to us there was four middle school kids and they said they were going to make Friday night their pickleball night. It is a stereotype that pickleball is just for the older folks. But everybody can enjoy. A second thing, while we were playing an older gentleman came over and offered to show us how to play. He wanted to be social and an accommodating citizen. The city is offering operational efficiency for all people of all demographics to come together with something in common.

### Vice Chair / Commissioner Staab

Congratulations again on CAPRA. Only three departments in state are accredited.

Director Muck added the other two are Canton and Independence.

Commissioner Staab continued we are doing things in the right manner and getting people active by offering many activities for the young and old throughout the community. I look forward to October.

### Commissioner Dooley

I echo all the sentiments and statements this evening about all that you do for the city, everything that goes on and like Vice Chair Staab said it involves all ages. We all have passions on this commission, and you touch on every one of those passions at some point. It is just wonderful.

It is becoming that time of year when you look up in the sky at night and see those little monarchs making their trek to Mexico for the winter. I hope we continue to involve our parks with the habitat. Do more to spread the news about monarchs and the fact they are being depleted. Do little things that we can to keep the population of the monarch vibrant. I love that butterfly.

**ADJOURNMENT**

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

**Voice Vote**

**Unanimous**

The meeting was adjourned by Commissioner Dooley at 7:59p.m.

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

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Jay Dooley, Chairperson

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Charles Staab, Vice Chairperson