

PARKS, RECREATION & CULTURAL SERVICES COMMISSION

Thursday, October 21st, 2021 – 7 P.M.

Novi Civic Center- Council Chambers

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. with Commissioner Dooley presiding.

ROLL CALL:

Dooley (Present), Staab (Present), Joseph (Present), Joshi (Present), Riggins (Present)
Smith (Present), Torimoto (Present)
Student Representatives: Bheemineni (Present), Raghunathan (Present)

APPROVAL OF AGENDA:

Commissioner Staab motioned for approval of agenda, and it was seconded by Commissioner Smith.

Voice Vote

Unanimous

CITIZEN COMMENTS:

None

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

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

Voice Vote

Unanimous

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

A. Walkable Novi – Commissioner Riggins & Smith

Commissioner Smith began by saying the meeting just finished with discussion on access to the trails specifically 275. They are building a new access point on Haggerty Road in Farmington Hills. It was general discussion and will be taken up in the next session of Walkable Novi next year. He continued with updates on construction. We are waiting on DTE to finish off utility movement on Ten Mile and Haggerty with a couple small places left. Safe routes to schools will be finishing off tomorrow and there is another sidewalk going in by spring.

B. Novi Parks Foundation – Commissioners Joseph, Staab & Torimoto

Commissioner Torimoto began the updates from the last meeting on the 18th. The biggest topic was the Jessica Starr Splash Pad Project. The donation campaign has begun to fund the splash pad at Bosco Field. There has already been a lot of publicity from Fox 2 and social media communication. Additionally, there was discussion on budget and organization. It is a great opportunity for the foundation.

Commissioner Joseph agreed the majority of the discussion was around the Jessica Starr splash pad and the funds needed. Donations are now being accepted and starting to trickle in. Contributions can be made through the normal foundation link or add backslash Jessica. Director Muck mentioned the city web services are working on enhancements which should roll out shortly. Commissioner Staab reinforced the major fund raiser is Pour on the Shore which is July 29th, 2022. The last major donation was for the pickleball courts which was \$80,000. The courts were originally budgeted for \$100,000. Thanks to Parks and Rec, Director Muck and Deputy Director Ringle they were under budget. Jennifer Deegan is going to help Foundation fundraising through social media. The next meeting / holiday warming party is December 14th with location to be determined.

C. Grants Committee – Commissioners Dooley & Joshi

Commissioner Joshi stated that there was not a meeting this month. Director Muck continued with the update recapping the last meeting's discussion and how the Grants Committee had made recommendations to City Council for potential grants and land acquisitions. The recommendations did go to Council executive session for discussion. They have given staff direction to proceed on those properties. The grants committee next meeting is TBD, most likely December as we see what happens with the state funding. At that time, we would also have the Northwest Park grant back.

D. Parks and Facilities Updates

Commissioner Dooley introduced this portion of the meeting to for those who are not familiar with some of the roles and responsibilities of the Commission. "We are tasked to visit the parks in the City of Novi. We have all been assigned a few parks. It is our honor to do these presentations. It reinforces why we are so blessed to live in a city with such a great park system."

1. ITC Community Sports Park- Commissioner Torimoto

Commissioner Torimoto visited ITC Community Sports park on Sunday. He started with an aerial view from Google maps. He mentioned it had been a while since he walked through the whole park. He showed pictures he took through the presentation. He said the Tim Pope Playground looks fantastic. The official opening was May this year. Commissioner Torimoto mentioned he spent time with his daughter through the years playing here. The new structure shows hints of the old structure but quite a bit of an upgrade.

Commissioner Torimoto looked at the bricks and noticed a couple with milestones and history of the City of Novi. In the beginning when the first playground was being replaced, they put up pickets where names were added for donations. These are inside the fence. Donations can be made through the website for the Tim Pope Playground and the splash pad. The pavilion is right by the play

structure. A city employee was there cleaning out the trash cans. The basketball courts are next to the pavilion and entrance to the trails. The courts are in good shape however, Commissioner Torimoto suggested repainting the lines and repairing the bench. Next, he spoke about the tennis / pickleball courts describing them as looking fantastic. There is a bit of soil erosion, water, and a potential fence issue. He also mentioned a sign with priority for pickleball usage. He will make a request for a sign to be made for tennis leagues because there just are not enough courts. He continued with photos of the path, bike station, new maintenance shed as well as soccer fields. An observation of water pooling, erosion and wet grass were concerns however, the grass looks fantastic. There was some talk of improvements at the ITC Fields. Director Muck interjected one of the main reasons why Bosco Field is so important to add to the parks system is that we could renovate ITC. Bosco Field will be ready next spring that allows us to get a long-term plan in place to renovate ITC fields because it is no longer up to our drainage standards. We can move the soccer program to Bosco for the 700+ participants. It will be more cost effective than renovating one field at a time. Commissioner Staab brought up the pickets around the Tim Pope Play Structure are for sale. They can be purchased on the Parks Foundation website for \$100. If it is done quickly, it could be installed next spring and would be a beautiful holiday gift.

Commissioner Dooley added that the month of October does more damage to ITC Community Sports Park than any other month including winter. A couple events had to be cancelled this fall because of rain on Saturdays.

2. ITC Trail – Commissioner Joshi

Commissioner Joshi showed beautiful pictures of her walk along the ITC trail and described many parts as looking fine. An overview of whole trail, extensions into neighborhoods, signage, wildlife, and the boardwalks were all featured in her presentation. The future home of the trailhead on 9 Mile was highlighted. She mentioned several areas where ITC is cleaning and taking grass out.

MATTERS FOR COMMISSION DISCUSSION AND/OR ACTION:

- A. Commission Chair, Vice Chair Nominations & Committee Appointments
Director Muck began by welcoming the new student representatives. He recently sat down with the students to prep them for what to expect and found both to be excited and ready to take part. Krithin Bheemineni is a sophomore at Novi High School and likes to play basketball. Rashmita Raghunathan is a junior at Novi High School and is interested in dance, music, and art.
Director Muck continued with the compilation of the requests that everyone submitted. There was one Chair and Vice Chair looking to return. Vice Chair Staab and Chairman Dooley were unanimously retained. Four commissioners will be part of the Parks Foundation: Commissioner Torimoto, Commissioner Riggins,

Commissioner Joseph, and Vice Chair Staab. Commissioner Dooley will be joining Commissioner Smith on Walkable Novi. Commissioner Joseph and Commissioner Joshi will be the representatives for the grants committee. It was mentioned this process was easier than in previous years. Director Muck thanked everyone for their service from the staff level.

- B. 2021 Park Shelter Rental Report – Recreation Supervisor Jessica Mistak
Recreation Supervisor, Jessica Mistak began that she updated the Parks Commission in January with the customer service changes to better accommodate people's desire to have safe social activities outdoors at Novi Parks. City Council approved a rate increase of \$20 for park shelters in January. Also, half day rentals were approved which were very popular. The numbers show a large increase in shelter rentals. All the weekends during the summer were filled as well as multiple days during the week which previously was not very common. Our last rental date for 2021 is October 31st. In 2018 the last rental date was September 29th, so the demand has increased for a longer shelter season. The last time all the shelters were open was 2018 and the total revenue was \$27,000. This year \$44,964 has been taken in which does not include four additional rentals. This is a result of the rate increase, but we have had a great demand for shelters. Shelter rentals for 2022 start January 11th which can be done on the city website.

Jessica Mistak continued; we are looking to provide greater customer service by addressing some of the needs that came up this year. Since a lot more people desire to be outdoors and it being many renters first time hosting an outside event, we faced some challenges. There will be some clarifications to make it an easier process for our customers and staff. Due to the increased usage, we have learned that more communication is needed regarding the policies. Therefore, adjustments have been made on the shelter rental application. The number of picnic tables will be an approximate since we cannot guarantee the specific amount of tables under each shelter. The capacities have been adjusted for a more realistic expectation of the rental space, specifically Shelter 2 at Lakeshore. The alcohol policy will be clarified, beer and wine are only allowed at Lakeshore Park. No glass containers are allowed. Limitations and guidelines for decorations and fire prevention will be included in the information. This season renters wanted to extend their space with additional tents and tables. Provisions will be included to clarify that this is not allowed because of infringing into public space. Additionally, communication about inflatables, carnival games, amplified sound will be included. Recreation Supervisor, Jessica Mistak explained the adjustments in the date change and cancellation process.

Several questions were asked about the presentation. First, Chairman Dooley inquired if the refund policy will be explained up front. Recreation Supervisor said there will be a prompt in the rental process online as well as it stated in the

information. He also asked if any signage will be posted regarding generators. It was explained that the building attendants patrol the rentals. Director Muck mentioned the account clerks who fielded the shelter calls kept track of the concerns. A plan was worked on for moving forward. Chairman Dooley asked about numbers of people at the various shelter rentals. Recreation Supervisor Jessica Mistak provided a statistic of self-reported numbers from July 1st – September 30th were 60,200 visitors. It was added that the half day rentals will only be from Memorial Day – Labor Day due to staffing issues. Commissioner Riggins asked about how it is handled if someone is using a shelter that someone rented. Lakeshore has the building attendants who could intervene. The non-emergency dispatch number is provided. There is also a schedule of rentals posted at the shelters. Renters are encouraged to bring their receipt too. Commissioner Joseph said he was pessimistic about half day rentals but admits he was wrong. It was explained the half days increased the rentals on the weekdays. Director Muck recognized the excellent job the staff did cleaning up in between the rentals.

STAFF REPORTS

A. Administration Division – Director Jeff Muck

1. Jessica's Splashpad Update –

Director Muck presented what was shared with City Council on September 27th. Many may recognize Jessica Starr, former meteorologist for Fox 2 news. Her family brought forward the idea that they wanted to build a splash pad in her memory. Jessica was fun loving, full of life, loved the outside and weather. Her mom said there was no better idea than to recognize her with a splash pad where those kinds of activities could happen. It would be built at Bosco due to the proximity to the ITC trail, central location in city, plus her children live and attend school nearby. Director Muck continued the tentative plan is 3,200 square feet which is dependent on fund raising efforts. The family is anticipating a half a million dollars. If we exceed that, the footprint and amenities could change. The initial plan is to match Lakeshore Beach operational hours Memorial Day to Labor Day. The latest technology to operate remote sensors which activate water will be used. As a result, the water it is not running when it is raining out or too cold. Jessica's family is very adamant that the splash pad is not just for the kids but parents and grandparents as well to bring joy. Everything will be handicapped accessible. There will be a recirculating system which means the water will flow through, get treated and reused. This is more financially stable and environmentally friendly. To be determined is utilities and the restroom changing facility. There are people stepping forward to volunteer willing to do pro bono work, so it is progressing.

Director Muck added that the Novi Parks Foundation immediately jumped on board to act as a fiduciary entity for the project. Anyone donating to the splash

pad will receive a donation letter. It is a tax-deductible gift as the foundation is a 501C3. All donations to the splashpad go directly to the splashpad. This will not be a lifeguard staffed park on purpose since staffing issues are tough. Currently the fundraising has generated a little over \$20,000 and other big commitments have been made. There will be articles in Engage and video pieces coming out as we move forward. The timetable depends on how the fundraising progresses. It will be a phased approach and plans for phase two we want to see how the response comes initially from Fox 2 and City Council. With the holidays coming a focus will be made for giving.

2. Park Projects Update

Director Muck said the Lakeshore Park Twelve and a Half Mile parking lot is ready for use and opened October 20th. People can use the lot to park and access the Lakeshore Trails. Landscaping and signage will be added. This lot will help with the safety concerns. The Motor City Mountain Bike Association has been outstanding and were in favor of this. They are getting the message out and encouraging the use of the parking lot.

The exercise equipment is being installed at Wildlife Woods Park. Earlier this week the frame for the shade structure went up and the concrete was poured. It probably will be at least two weeks before the exercise equipment goes in because of weather. The ITC Trail connector will come thorough and be constructed by late spring 2022 because of the wet conditions.

The turf has grown very well, and the parks maintenance team has done as outstanding job at Bosco Fields. There is still some work to do including installing parking blocks, signage, and other amenities in preparation for opening in the spring.

There was good news with a couple of awards from Keep Michigan Beautiful which promotes, provides education, recognizes beautification and restoration projects throughout the State of Michigan. Novi received the KMB award of merit for the Fuerst Park Monarch Waystation and the Michigan Award for the ITC Corridor Trail. The awards were presented Saturday October 9th at the Crown Plaza in Lansing. Rick Meader, the city's landscape architect accepted the awards on the city's behalf. Beautification Committee member and KMB board member Celia Todd was in attendance as well.

B. Recreation Division – Deputy Director Tracie Ringle

1. Program & Services

Deputy Director Ringle began by saying the weather has come up a few times this fall, and the team has reacted and shifted to work around it. Saturday is the third rescheduled day for soccer pictures. Recreation Supervisor Chase Root was able to work with the high school to get some games rescheduled on their field under the lights. He also coordinated bonus games for some of the younger age groups. The parent child cornhole league has had some registrations which is a

new program at Lakeshore Park. We are actively trying to program that facility. Fall basketball and volleyball games start this Saturday. There is only a twenty-eight player difference this year from the last non-COVID year. 521 kids are registered for basketball which provides the opportunity to be active and socialize. It is the last week for adult softball. There was a trend for rain on Tuesday nights, so those leagues were extended as well as Fridays. A good number of tournaments will be returning to Power Park which is a good source of revenue.

Deputy Director Ringle continued with cultural arts updates. The Oliver Junior show will take place November 12th-14th. It is the first live production since COVID. Thirty-five actors are participating which is a smaller cast. Typically, there is upwards of sixty kids in two casts. Tickets will be limited to about half the capacity which will make everyone feel more comfortable about the program. The Chorales are back to rehearsing at the middle school with a new director. The concert band will begin rehearsals the November. Both of those groups have holiday performances booked and promotion will begin soon. Cynthia Oak is the current artist in residence at Villa Barr. She is a writer and has been offering programs at the Novi Library. There will be more information about her on the city website.

The first Jack-O-Lantern Jubilee will take place October 22nd at ITC Community Sports Park. 460 kids registered for the three-hour outdoor event. The event is along the ITC trail portion in the park. A number of businesses and civic organizations will be passing out candy and helping with crafts. Furest Festive Nights is the weekend of December 3rd. This event will have Santa visits, crafts, activities, and food trucks throughout the weekend. The lights will stay up at Furst Park for people to enjoy through the rest of December. Recreation Supervisor Cristin Spiller has done a great job funding this event through sponsorship and working with the community.

C. Older Adults Division – Recreation Supervisor Madison Lachance

Director Muck introduced Madison Lachance the new Older Adult Services Recreation Supervisor. She has been here over a month and is a great fit for the department. Madison Lachance added she went to Hope College and majored in exercise science with a minor in dance. After graduation she did a gap year and hiked half the Appalachian Trail. Her most recent job was a community recreation wellness coordinator at a senior living center.

1. Special Outreach Service Survey Update

Recreation Supervisor Madison Lachance started the presentation with background about the Special Outreach Services survey. It began in July to reach out to older adults to get a feel for what type of programming they were interested in. It was perfect timing because she got a feel for what to focus on. The survey was completed in September. 438 participants took the survey. The

survey was distributed several ways with the most popular being Next Door. Other ways it was distributed were a QR code during programs, email blast, and S.O.S phone calls. The largest turnout was from people ages 60-70, which was 170 of the 438 participants. The Novi Civic Center was the most popular location from the survey results. Fitness and travel were the top areas of interest followed by cards, special events, and outdoor activities. Other activities mentioned were arts and crafts, pickleball and concerts. Many people said that they were interested in evening programming because ages 50-65 are still working and cannot participate in programs during the day.

2. Programs and Services

Recreation Supervisor Madison Lachance continued with updates on the programs and services in the Older Adult division. All the cards and bingo programs are operating at pre-COVID levels. We are looking at expanding the cards by offering games in the evening. Bingo has transitioned to paper books which are safer because only one player touches the card. Bingo callers are now using Sign Up Genius for scheduling however, there is still a need for a program coordinator. The coordination of cards will transition to Judy Klein in November.

The Veteran's Celebration is November 10th. Lunch will be provided by Mission Barbeque. A comedian/ musician has been booked for a USO style show which will be a celebration. Ninety-one veterans and twenty-six nonveterans have registered. In December a Jingle and Mingle holiday event will be held at Meadowbrook with entertainment, crafts, Santa Claus, hot chocolate, and cookies. During January there will be an evening winter walk trail and an intergenerational program painting snow around the gazebo. Travel programs should be up and running in January. November 18th the library will be providing free entertainment at Meadowbrook. The next tech support group is November 18th. The topic is using iPhone notes and reminders. The Medicare Medicaid Assistance program is very active. Two retired RN's will be helping with blood pressure screening at Meadowbrook. Therapeutic massage returned in August with thirty-six massages given so far. Finally, Sandy Fisher is working on fall prevention and has been invited to an injury prevention summit.

COMMISSIONER COMMENTS:

Commissioner Smith

A lot of information. I was especially glad to hear about the usage of the shelters and getting sorted out what to expect when renters come that is very good progress.

Commissioner Joshi

I would like to welcome the students and nice to meet Madison. Nice presentation Commissioner Torimoto. It is exciting with the programs and the parks. It is good to know we are back.

Commissioner Joseph

Congratulations to the team on the awards. It is always a nice positive thing to motivate and inspire. It is incredible to see the numbers getting back to resemblance of normal. I didn't mention in the Lakeshore update but again I admit I was wrong about the parking lot. I did see the Mountain Bike Association posting about the lot and it looks great. I hope to use it this weekend. It was a great meeting, with a lot going on yet an efficient meeting only 90 minutes. Welcome to the students and Madison.

Commissioner Torimoto

Welcome to the students and Supervisor Madison. Congratulations on the award. The new events sound fun, especially the Jack-O- Lantern Jubilee and cornhole. I wish my daughter was younger. The shelter rental trends, and outdoor activities show we are going in the right direction. Keep up the good work.

Student Representative Krithin Bheemineni

I agree with the point Commissioner Torimoto brought up during the ITC presentation about how tennis is a rising sport, and we need to prioritize our courts.

Student Representative Rashmita Raghunathan

It is a great opportunity to be here and listen to the updates and happenings especially Bosco Fields and the splash pad.

Commissioner Riggins

Tonight, was a very eventful meeting with so much to discuss. All the Novi residents that can donate to the splash pad please do so. I think it will be just awesome for the parks in our area.

Vice Chair / Commissioner Staab

I want to thank the commission for renominating myself for the co-chairperson. I appreciate all the presentations this evening. Including the dynamic presentations of park reports by Commissioners Torimoto and Joshi. I appreciated the updates on the rentals. It is good to see the numbers and revenue are bouncing back. Welcome aboard Madison. I look forward to attending the Jack-O-Lantern Jubilee tomorrow night with my grandchildren. I'll give a firsthand report in November.

Commissioner Dooley

Thank you for the excellent presentations, the city and commission learn so much. We appreciate all the preparation and job that you do giving back to the City of Novi. Thank you to both our student representatives. Take what you learned back to your school and brag about the nearby Park Recreation and Cultural Service Department in the city. I hope we will see you every month and look forward to you representation. The award for the Monarch butterfly is awesome. I love that butterfly. If we can help the beautiful creature prosper in our city, it is a great thing.

ADJOURNMENT

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

Voice Vote

Unanimous

The meeting was adjourned by Commissioner Dooley at 8:35p.m.

DATE APPROVED: _____

Jay Dooley, Chairperson

Charles Staab, Vice Chairperson