

**PARKS, RECREATION & CULTURAL SERVICES COMMISSION**

**Thursday, March 18, 2021 – 7 P.M.**

**ELECTRONIC MEETING**

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

**ROLL CALL:**

Commissioner Dooley read a State Mandate of the Open Meetings Act, that all members will identify their location by stating the county, city, and state from which he or she is attending the meeting remotely.

Dooley (Present) from Novi, Oakland County, Michigan, Staab (Present) from Novi, Oakland County, Michigan, Joseph (Present) from Novi, Oakland County, Michigan, Joshi (Present) from Novi, Oakland County, Michigan, Riggins (Present) from Novi, Oakland County, Michigan, Smith (Present) from Novi, Oakland County, Michigan, Torimoto (Present) from Novi, Oakland County, Michigan.

**APPROVAL OF AGENDA:**

Commissioner Dooley tabled line item 6.D, Parks and Facilities Updates to April meeting. It was motioned to approve by Smith that the agenda, as amended, be approved by Commissioner Smith and seconded by Commissioner Riggins.

**Voice Vote**

**Unanimous**

**CITIZEN COMMENTS:**

None

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES:**

Approval of February 2021 minutes.

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

**Voice Vote**

**Unanimous**

**COMMITTEE REPORTS:**

A. Walkable Novi – Commissioner Riggins & Smith

The first order of business at the meeting February 11<sup>th</sup> was electing the new chair and vice chair. Smith was elected chair and Commissioner Riggins was elected vice chair. Meetings were set up for the rest of the year which are on June 10<sup>th</sup> and September 9<sup>th</sup>. Reviewed the current non-motorized projects that are active now; crosswalk markings, sight lines, and some of the challenges the city faces. There was discussion on connecting the ITC trail to the Providence Park trails and public use of trails at Providence Park.

Director Muck gave a Northwest Park update. The meeting was finished off with an engineering review of projects currently active for this year. A few projects on 10 Mile that will basically complete east to west. The safe routes to schools are going in, the easements are going out to bid in May or June with construction in the summer. The 10 Mile north side, west of Wixom Road project is moved up to

this summer. Commissioner Joseph asked about the how the sidewalks on 10 Mile will be handled with the proposed expansion. Also, if the sidewalks by the Senior Center have been compromised with the construction of the new dealerships hopefully this will be taken care of by summer. Commissioner Riggins said she would find out information/ clarification regarding these questions.

- B. Novi Park Foundation – Commissioners Joseph, Staab & Torimoto  
Commissioner Torimoto stated the last meeting was on March 1<sup>st</sup> and was held virtually. The agenda welcomed Commissioner Joseph to the foundation. The treasurer reported some new formats for profit and loss balance sheets. Director Muck reviewed the park projects progress. There was discussion on tax processing challenges and using external counsel for tax preparation. The meeting also had discussion about donation policy and what would be accepted. Finally, the picket fence at the Tim Pope Playground was discussed along with the donations. The next meeting will be in May.
  
- C. Grants Committee – Commissioners Dooley & Joshi  
Commissioner Joshi said the last meeting was in January and Northwest Park was discussed. Director Muck stated that most of the work for this committee is between October and January since that is the grant cycle. An email was sent to the Commission regarding the NW Park grant resolution approval by City Council. Currently working on final pieces including signing off on environmental paperwork. The deadline is April 1<sup>st</sup>. and we are ahead of schedule. City Council is excited about this.
  
- D. Parks and Facilities Updates  
Tabled until April meeting

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

### **STAFF REPORTS**

- A. Administration Division – Director Jeff Muck
  - 1. Park Projects Update  
Director Muck stated that we are waiting for frost laws to come off for the ability to start our park projects back up, but we do have some of them prepped, for instance Bosco Fields. Staff is working on signage for the field outlining “you are here” signs. Myself, engineering, and maintenance teams walked the field two weeks ago. The fields were looking good from a drainage standpoint and were pretty dry. A lot of seeding is needed in some areas as well as touch ups. They are still in a full restoration into spring and early summer. There are plans for the north playground at ITC to be replaced. We are waiting for weather to install the poured in place surface which will happen this spring due to frost laws and steady temperatures. Lakeshore is in similar vein. Second course of asphalt waiting until frost laws are off. We also cannot start planting again. If you remember we did not get our fall plantings in before the weather

hit. None of the planting has been done around the building and we still need to seed around the pavilions and the property line, especially on the west side of the park. The first screening needs to be done. Benches have been ordered for the beach. They say Lakeshore on the back and have a nice coating so they will not get too hot in the sun. The benches should arrive in five – six weeks. The trail signage has been finalized for Rotary Park and Chase Farms Trails. They were printed today and will be installed in the next couple weeks. The one at 9 Mile will not be installed until the water and sewer project is finished.

Commissioner Smith commented that Rotary Park can be accessed freely despite the crane structures so kudos to making sure people can get in and out of there safely. Commissioner Dooley was approached by a citizen regarding a person driving car on bike trail at Lakeshore. Most likely an isolated incident because of difficulty getting around the fence. Director Muck will look into ways to deter this from happening.

## 2. Lakeshore Park Beach Update

Director Muck explained Lakeshore Beach will be converting to a swim at your own risk beach. This has been a point of discussion for several years. In 2020, we really started to make the move to convert the beach to swim at your own risk. Some of the reasons include not being able to hire lifeguards. We tried pay rate increases and covering certification costs. Also, during COVID many certification classes were cancelled. Over the course of previous summers, we would have to close the beach or reduce hours due to lack of staff especially in late August as lifeguards returned to school. The only other alternative to swim at your own risk would be to close the beach completely to the public. As a reference point in the early nineties, the Michigan Department of Natural Resources stopped guarding their beaches and in subsequent years Oakland County, Huron Clinton Metro Parks and multiple other communities have followed suit. Those entities put in place multiple safety policies and procedures which we researched and plan to follow. We consulted the city's risk management consultant and attorney's office. They confirmed that this is a fairly common practice and there are ways to effectively manage swim at your own risk. We have outlined several steps to help with concerns regarding liability. It starts with communication, notification of park users via the city website, Facebook page, and other social media. This will start up in full force as we get closer to Memorial Day. A megaphone will be used on site by park staff at Lakeshore in case of emergencies. The beach hours will be 10:00am - 8:00pm starting the Saturday of Memorial Day weekend through Labor Day. When the beach is not open the gates will be locked. While we are still under COVID-19 restrictions there is a chance that we will have to limit the number of patrons allowed on the beach. If we do, it would be controlled by a park attendant who would monitor that situation. Last summer, Mercer Beach on Walled Lake. There will be a lot of signage at the beach and throughout the park stating, no lifeguards / swim at your own risk and the beach rules. We will also have an emergency plan with information about inclement weather, emergency calls, address and clearly stating no lifeguard. Required safety equipment will be installed on the beach including a rowboat, life jacket,

throw ring and first aid kit. We will have a park attendant on site during beach hours responsible for the beach, Lakeshore Park, bathrooms and the building. They will open and close the beach, perform daily beach maintenance (cleaning shoreline and emptying garbage), safety checks, and be a contact for shelter rentals, and people on the beach or building. These attendants are not lifeguards. We will be placing a Mobi-Mat which is a silicone mat which allows wheelchairs and other mobility devices to more easily access the beach. The parks maintenance staff will continue to help with swim lines, buoys and grooming the beach three times a week. Things could change because of COVID-19 but hopefully we will have a full summer of beach usage.

Commissioner Torimoto asked if there is a way for the attendant to see the beach from the entry of the park and is there a camera? Director Muck answered that the park attendant will flow through the beach and park. They will not be always on the beach. They are not a lifeguard but just there to monitor.

Commissioner Riggins asked if the safety gear and everything that will be set out on the beach is available to all to use? Director Muck answered, yes these are for anybody to use if there is an emergency. Therefore, we have park staff checking it three times a week and doing a sweep the beach both before and after to make sure none of these items are missing or damaged.

Commissioner Joseph mentioned the situation of the beach turning into an impromptu or unauthorized marina for the boats of Walled Lake. Director Muck agreed that there are concerns about this situation with more activity on the lake. This has happened for years on nights and weekends. We encourage neighbors who live around the beach to contact Novi Police. It is also being enforced by Oakland County Sheriff's Marine Patrol. They have been aware that people (boats) are not supposed to be on the beach but has never been able to stop completely. We do our best with our friends in public safety.

## B. Recreation Division – Deputy Director Tracie Ringle

### 1. Programs and Services

Deputy Director Ringle updated the recreation area. She explained that it is currently a shoulder season, but outdoor programs are starting this weekend. Friday night a hike at Lakeshore Park which maxed out at one hundred people will be using the multi-use trails. This was hosted by Cristin Spiller as well as a Nerf Wars a kids' event on Saturday at Power Park. The Nerf event had over sixty kids between the two sessions. To keep children active and engaged during spring break we are hosting Camp Invention which only has five spots left. Softball registration is open however, it is a bit slower than it has been in past. We were not able to offer a spring session last year so we anticipated some teams might have dissolved. We are continuing to market this program. Registration is good for the 55 plus golf leagues with men's full, women's almost full, and the mixed has availability. We anticipate adding a fall session again this year. Soccer uniforms are ordered which means the season is right around the corner.

Camp Power Play is officially sold out. Lakeshore is close to being full with the exception of July 5<sup>th</sup> week due to the holiday and vacations.

A special edition of e-Engage will go out on April 8<sup>th</sup>, after spring break. This will include information on summer camp registration for sports, dance, art, theatre and science camps plus all the other fun stuff we offer. Additional marketing and a video for social media will also be done for promotion.

We are doing the Memorial Day Run virtually again this year with participants running on their own using their smartwatches to give us their times. We redid the map to encourage use of the ITC Trail. A one mile, 5K and 10K routes from two parking areas one at Wildlife Woods and one at ITC. Proceeds from the event will benefit the Novi Chapter of Paralyzed Veterans.

The theatre program has seventy-four participants in Shrek Junior. They will be filming in segments in Fuerst, Lakeshore, and Power Park. Tickets will be available for access to the live stream of the show the weekend of May 14<sup>th</sup>.

We have opened the Civic Center for some small rentals, meetings, homeowners' associations, and gatherings. We are keeping an eye on number restrictions from the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services. Any food served needs to be pre-packaged. Building attendants are sanitizing the rooms and keeping space as safe as possible.

Residence applications area available for Villa Barr Art Park with the deadline begin April 15<sup>th</sup>. We are working to increase the visibility of with the Friends of Villa Barr. Villa Barr is now listed on the Pure Michigan page as a destination. We are in the process of putting together a botanical tour with the help of a student from Eastern Michigan University which will be using the IZI travel app. This will also include the sculpture tour. The same EMU student worked with a professor and created an educator's guide. This includes not only art but nature of the science and everything David Barr a was about. A book with lesson plans with the standards required by the State of Michigan for education will be available for the Novi Community School District. We hope to add this to the curriculum. This is geared toward middle and high school students to encourage more field trips, students going on their own time, and extra credit opportunities.

Commissioner Dooley inquired about the plight of the Monarch butterflies and the importance of trying to preserve native species of plants and milkweed at Villa Barr's botanical gardens. Deputy Director Ringle confirmed that the landscape architect, Rick Meader has been working on a plan to replant a large garden that was previously cleaned out. Milkweed and butterfly bush are both going to be planted. Commission Riggins asked for more information about IZI tour app. Director Ringle explained it is a free app which she has worked with as a user and creator. It can be downloaded on your phone. Pick a place such as London, Detroit or Villa Barr on a smaller scale for tours in the area.

C. Older Adults Division – Director Jeff Muck

Director Muck stated that Meadowbrook Commons has opened up the common areas which is great for the socialization of the residents. This is possible because 93% of the residents have received both doses of the vaccine. We started to hold coffee hours and had a St Patrick's Day gathering with live music on a beautiful day at the gazebo. The music was brought by John O'Brien from O'Brien Sullivan funeral home.

AARP tax prep still going on. The tax deadline extended to May 17<sup>th</sup>. We are not sure if we can extend tax aid appointments.

The Novi quilt project is ongoing We are still looking for more patches which can be submitted through March 31<sup>st</sup>.

Our staff is currently working on putting together a calendar of activities for Meadowbrook Commons for the next two months now that the residents are vaccinated.

There have been some staffing changes in our department. Julie Nickels, account clerk retired after over twenty years. We brought back Derek Brooks a part time reservation coordination who was laid off due to COVID to fill that account clerk role. Greg Morris, Recreation Supervisor has made a return to the office after a long medical absence.

### **COMMISSIONER COMMENTS:**

Commissioner Smith - Another good meeting. A lot of good stuff happening. One the frost gets off the ground we can start doing some outdoor activities which is exciting, and I am looking forward to it.

Commissioner Riggins - It was a great meeting, and I felt a lot of information was shared. I am glad Lakeshore Beach is going to be able to stay open. All the signage looks great to let people know there is not going to be a lifeguard. The Mobi-Mat, for people in wheelchairs so they can get in the water is a wonderful addition.

Commissioner Torimoto – I am excited to hear about us ready to open and the innovative programming. Selling out and almost filling up of events no matter if it is kids or adults is a good sign. I think everybody is ready and looking forward to good times coming. Greg Morris comeback is fantastic.

Commissioner Joseph – I am super excited about the Mobi-Mat. I had seen an article or video about it and thought it was a great idea. It obviously benefits members of our community that may not be served in some of the normal senses.

Commissioner Joshi – I wanted to thank Director Muck and Deputy Director Ringle for all their updates. Everything that is happening is exciting. I have gone to Lakeshore Park a couple of times and seen somebody using the physical handicap and wheelchair accessible playground equipment. It was really nice to see, and it looks great.

Commissioner Staab – I appreciate all the updates and I is great to hear about all the programs, sign ups being filled as we recover from COVID and people are venturing out to participate. I would like to welcome back Greg Morris. I had the occasion to be out at ITC Community Sports Park on Monday. I was amazed to see three families at the play structure and people walking around the park on a cold day enjoying themselves. As we warm up in Michigan which will hopefully come sooner than later, we will see a lot more activity.

Commissioner Dooley – I could not believe how crowded Rotary Park was when I went there during my lunch break and could not find a parking spot. There were many families there and children on the play structure. It is nice to see our parks being widely used and appreciated. Walkable Novi is in great hands with our two commissioners Smith and Riggins. Thank you for being so immersed in such a valuable part of our city.

We cannot do it without this entire commission it is a great team and I appreciate all you do to make this a valuable asset to the city.

**ADJOURNMENT**

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

**Voice Vote**

**Unanimous**

The meeting was adjourned by Commissioner Dooley at 7:56 p.m.

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

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Jay Dooley, Chairperson

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Charles Staab, Vice Chairperson