

**PARKS, RECREATION & CULTURAL SERVICES COMMISSION**

**Thursday, August 19, 2021 – 7 P.M.**

**Novi Civic Center- Council Chambers**

The meeting was called to order at 7:01 p.m. with Commissioner Dooley presiding.

**ROLL CALL:**

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

**APPROVAL OF AGENDA:**

Commissioner Joseph motioned for approval of agenda and was second by Commissioner Torimoto.

**Voice Vote**

**Unanimous**

**CITIZEN COMMENTS:**

None

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES:**

Approval of July 2021 minutes.

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

**Voice Vote**

**Unanimous**

**COMMITTEE REPORTS:**

A. Walkable Novi – Commissioner Riggins & Smith

Commissioner Smith presented the update he received from Rebecca Runkel with the current state of the projects in Novi. Several are waiting on DTE to do their piece which has been delayed due to storms. Comcast needs to move an underground wire before the west side of Haggerty can be completed. The construction has started on the safe roads to schools and ADA projects. Additional city and private projects were addressed. The next meeting for Walkable Novi will be September 9<sup>th</sup>.

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

Commissioner Joseph stated that the major take away from the last meeting was that Pour on the Shore will be back in 2022. It will be on July 29<sup>th</sup> and the park has been reserved for both the day before and the day of the event. There was discussion on how to improve the event through feedback and seeing other similar events such as the one in Northville last weekend. He added we are looking to possibly expand and grow as well as understand what it means to be in a post pandemic world, what we need to do to make it a success and bring as many people as possible. Another important discussion for the team was sponsors. Many are needed and it is not too early to start soliciting those requests. The meeting was held at Wildlife Woods pavilion next to the new pickleball courts.

The foundation had an opportunity to contribute to those courts, so it was great to see people enjoying them. Commissioner Torimoto commented that we even saw someone using the courts for badminton. Next spring the ITC connector and exercise equipment will also be added at Wildlife Woods.

Commissioner Joshi asked for more information regarding the Northville event. Commissioner Joseph explained it was similar however, there were vendors and crafts along the perimeter, it was a large space with a band but provided more opportunity for socialization. The activity of downtown Northville drew folks into the area opposed to the event being the destination.

The next meeting will be October 18<sup>th</sup> at the Civic Center.

C. Grants Committee – Commissioners Dooley & Joshi

Commissioner Joshi stated there was not a meeting this month, but there is a meeting next month.

D. Parks and Facilities Updates

Furest Park – Commissioner Joshi

Commissioner Joshi started with the sign which was an introduction to history of Township Hall. She explained that she picked the weekend of Festival of Chariots to visit Furest Park. Slides were shown of the of area. The photos had tents and golf carts that are not normally there. The middle of the park by the sculptures was not as well maintained as she remembered. Director Muck explained there has been a change in contractors plus staffing issues. The sculptures Deputy Director Ringle mentioned in a previous meeting were up and look amazing. They are on all four sides of the middle section of the park. The pictures do not show the full beauty of the flowers and butterflies in the park. Commissioner Joshi did notice a chair from the Civic Center, stickers on a sign, geese, and a lot of branches scattered. She went on to show pictures of the pathways in concentric circles. A picture of the library was shown for the beautiful rocks. She finished showing a photo that was taken in March of 2020 when she was supposed to present Furest Park at the meeting that was cancelled at the start of COVID. Commissioner Joshi summarized that she walks in Furest Park every week and always notices that it looks great except for the branches from recent storms.

Pavilion Shore Park – Commissioner Joseph

Commissioner Joseph showed a map of the park to show the direction he walked through the park. He parked in the main parking lot and did a clockwise walk around the park as the sun was rising. It was absolutely beautiful. He said there were a bunch of people running, walking their animals, and a few enjoying their morning coffee. He continued walking to a seating area by the water with a nice view. The landscaping is getting a little overgrown with dead foliage, branches down and water covers missing, however, he noted nature is tough to maintain.

Another concern is the layered brick that goes around the shore but there is no stopping someone from stepping over those stones. Potentially you can see the gaps and everything between as well as the jagged rocks. It should not be so restrictive that it takes away from the beauty of the lake, however, consider any safety issue that might be of concern. The playground was not in use due to the

time of day.

Commissioner Joseph said he always appreciates the mechanic stations for bikes that are around the city. Lastly, the fishing pier which was open in 2013 had a nice view in the morning with the sun coming up. The shelter was empty for the picture. He did receive a complaint that there were not any dog stations around the park. There is a noticeable lack of areas to put your trash in middle section of the park.

Commissioner Joshi added that Pavilion Shore Park is probably the most popular. It is great to see so many people out. It is close to residential neighborhoods. It is great to have people on the water and enjoying the park itself. Commissioner Joshi brought up questions regarding trash at the Festival of Chariots at Fuerst park. Director Muck stated that the festival organizers take really good care of the facilities however, this year we had to talk to them because there was quite a bit left over. Possibly because the crowds were larger than they anticipated coming out of year when it was not held. After we called on Monday, they took care of it.

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

A. Accessible features in parks website – Commissioner Smith

Commissioner Smith began by saying "I'm not a web developer but I do do spreadsheets. I did this in Google sheets. I played around with some different ways to present by types of features." He went on to demonstrate a grid / graph with parks across the top and then an "X" of what feature is in each park. There would be a link to access the web page for each park. If you click the feature twice it will show what each feature looks like.

The commissioners agreed that they liked this format however, the concern which was expressed at the last meeting was how many features to include. The goal is to be as inclusive as possible but with not too many that items that could get lost. The commissioners hope to get feedback and comments from people with experience. Director Muck suggested using contacts with the school system, have them share with the with some of the local disability networks and bring their comments back to the next meeting. We should get back to this discussion in October since schools are just starting. An additional suggestion was putting the grid in Engage.

#### **STAFF REPORTS**

A. Administration Division – Director Jeff Muck

1. Park Projects Update

Director Muck started with Lakeshore Park. We have identified some locations for additional screening measures on both the east and west side. We have promised repeatedly that we will continue to analyze, replace, and enhance landscape. Neighborhood residents were invited to meet with city staff on August 24<sup>th</sup> to show them the fall planting plan.

The painting is complete at the water tower. Graphics are going to be printed next week and then the painter will install. The Novi Special will be back on the water tower very soon.

Commissioner Staab was one of the commissioners who came to the opening of

Power Park playground along with Mayor Gatt and several City Council members. That playground is fully open and being used by people all the time. The swing is definitely a big hit for everyone. Our parks maintenance team is taking on the mowing and turf care at Bosco fields. We will start scheduling soccer there in the spring of 2022.

We are working on wayfinding signage to direct people to parks around the city. We authorized a study with a firm to look at how to get people to our parks. The meeting to review the results is in September. The plan would be for a sign shop to print the signs in the winter with installation in the spring. Director Muck clarified that this would be for the destination parks such as ITC, Pavilion Shore, and Bosco and not the neighborhood parks.

Deputy Director Ringle mentioned at the last meeting that we would be looking for a gardener for Villa Barr. She has selected a candidate and they will be starting to take care of the plantings that were recently put in and long-term care of the gardens.

## 2. NRPA and Program Statistics

Director Muck explained every month a different department does a presentation to city leadership regarding statistics which is called City Stats. August was our month. Director Muck and Deputy Director Ringle's presentation covered analyzation of NRPA performance report to see how we compared to our peers across the county. We also looked at how we stack up against other agencies especially with CAPRA which is the 1% of agencies around the U.S. We talked about program planning, evaluation process and program fee comparisons which are conducted throughout the year. Some of the results showed is that we have more residents per playground yet more park acreage per thousand residents than the median and more residents per park than the median. These numbers were done before the new census data was released. The good side is we have more trail miles. We have fewer full-time employees, so we are doing more with less staff.

Director Muck continued with a recap on CAPRA. We achieved 152/154 on the standards. The police department is also nationally accredited. It was determined that if you try to find communities with both their parks and recreation and police department with accreditation it is in the tenths of a percent. This is great for Novi. Other communities are constantly contacting us asking for our policies and procedures. We are only one of three in Michigan with accreditation.

The Special Outreach Services were updated next. Almost 1,200 calls were made to those sixty and over to check how they were doing, social service, transportation, and loan closet referrals. Some of the Older Adult Services drivers did home knocks. We made recent follow up calls after the storms too.

Participation numbers are getting back to pre-COVID rates in soccer and dance. Shelter rentals have increased due to the half day options. They were booked through Labor Day if not two weeks after especially on weekends. We may need to look at other locations and long-term planning for additional park shelters.

Current transportation numbers are 7,640. These are single riders due to COVID precautions. 2019 with double and triple loading we were at 16,000. So mid-July it is halfway there. The demand for transportation is there.

Program planning and evaluation is one of the things we are most proud of because we make decisions based on statistics and facts. After action reports are used to track numbers, ups / downs, and totals through spreadsheets. Our staff surveys the community after programs. Director Muck showed a sample template with questions such as why did you register? overall satisfaction, and recommendations. These show the good and bad of the program, trends, things that impacted the program, such as weather competing programs in other communities, were things done differently, change of time or giveaways. Having these recorded helps future planning and if there is a staffing change. Finally, we do evaluate and compare to surrounding communities. This is part of the reason we raised out park shelter fees because when we compared, Novi's were on the low end. Director Muck summarized looking at data is part of overall program evaluation.

Commissioner Riggins asked if there is a community garden for food or just flowers at Villa Barr. Director Muck answered that we leave community gardens to Tollgate.

Commissioner Smith asked if there was going to be a ceremony when the water tower is complete. Director Muck said it has not been decided yet but most likely.

## B. Recreation Division – Director Jeff Muck

### 1. Program & Services

Director Muck gave an update on a few programs. This was the last week at Camp Lakeshore and PowerPlay. We had 687 campers which was limited due to licensing and regulation guidelines. Hopefully next year we can offer more spots. This fall we will be offering a new Halloween program. Business will have the opportunity to come out to support the program and promote their business by providing the treats along the ITC trail.

We are also revamping our Veteran's Day event. It will be a USO themed event offering veterans a boxed lunch from Mission Barbecue. There will be a comical emcee and musical entertainment from the Triangular Brothers. Traditional portions of the event will be kept including presenting of the colors and singing of the national anthem.

There were 140 people participating in pickleball since we began in June. The program will continue to grow based on demand. We are learning new things about leagues and tournaments and adjusting. Recreation Supervisor Greg Morris met with the pickleball players to discuss league formation and modification for the future.

We have 46 fall adult softball team registered. That is up 9 teams from 2020. A few have wanted to wait another year due to COVID.

There are 95 youth tennis players currently registered in classes and about 400 participated this year. Novi is a very strong tennis community.

There are 561 youth soccer players in the thunder and lightning leagues which is up from 440 in 2020. The large growth is in the U5 / U6 teams which is great for the longevity of the program.

Sizzling Summer had another successful year. Wednesday concerts had great crowds. Fridays really fought the rain. Dance classes are looking good and are set to begin September 13<sup>th</sup>. The recital is being planned for mid-December. Mexico Lindo Ballet and Hula classes are returning in the fall. The Saturday hula will be utilizing the Lakeshore building. The fall theatre show has been announced. It will be Oliver Junior. Auditions are set for September 11<sup>th</sup>. A new artist in residence will be moving into Villa Barr this weekend. Her name is Julia Forest, a photographer based out of Brooklyn, New York.

## 2. OAS Recreation Supervisor

Director Muck was happy to announce that we have selected our final candidate for the OAS Supervisor, she is scheduled to begin September 13<sup>th</sup>. Madison LaChance has a background in exercise science. She is currently working at a senior living facility doing recreation and special events. Director Muck thanked commissioner Riggins for assisting through the hiring process and assessment center. The panel agreed that her creativity, energy, and enthusiasm were awesome. Director Muck and Commissioner Riggins also liked that she was capable of teaching classes on her own.

## C. Older Adults Division – Social Services Coordinator Sandy Fisher

### 1. OAS Programs and Volunteer Update

Sandy Fisher began "with all the challenges that we had it's great to report that the OAS card programs are back." There were thirty-two people who showed up to play euchre which was very consistent with pre-COVID numbers. Bingo started in April because it can be played on your own, spread out. About thirty-two people show up on Fridays which is a great number. We moved to a paper card booklet program instead of using reusable cards. The bingo callers are returning including Commissioner Dooley. Many of the programs would not happen without the volunteers to help facilitate. However, we are looking for a new person to coordinate the bingo schedules. Social Service Coordinator Sandy Fisher plans to get a thank you gift for the people who have stepped up to volunteer.

The daily lunch began on July 12<sup>th</sup>. "All things yarn" which is our knitting, crocheting and handwork group started last week. The group has a huge pile of knitting items that will be donated to the Ascension Cancer Center. The items will be sold in the gift shop.

Since the July / August Engage hit Sandy's phone has been ringing off the hook. She already has had 123 loan closet phone calls this month which is about average for a whole month. Many people want to donate items to the loan closet. The loan closet is getting renovated in November. The storage area will be expanded with more shelves to make things easier to find.

Social Service Coordinator Sandy Fisher has been invited to attend a focus group of key stakeholders for a 2022 community needs assessment. Our partner Ascension with health and wellness classes offers some very good programs for free however, they will continue to be virtually until 2022. The emergency food assistance program TFAP which is four times a year is coming up. Many churches facilitate the program as well.

Finally, the most popular program has been the Medicare / Medicaid assistance program. We have already received seven phone calls about counselling appointments because someone is turning sixty-five every day and wants to learn more about their health care options.

Director Muck acknowledged the work Sandy did throughout the COVID crisis last year as there was a staff reduction. Sandy stayed strong and was a stalwart. She physically came in multiple times to help with meals on wheels and food commodity programs in the middle of the shutdown. She was one of the few staff members who came in, took on additional duties, and continued to take on some duties that would not fall in her purview because of the staffing moves we had to make.

Commissioner Dooley thanked Commissioner Smith again for starting the discussion on updating the parks resource guide. He mentioned on the agenda every month there is a notice regarding accommodations in regard to meetings.

### **COMMISSIONER COMMENTS:**

#### Commissioner Smith

I'd like to thank Sandy for all her work. I especially appreciate it now that my parents are residents of Meadowbrook Commons. I would like to thank Director Muck for the presentation and statistics. I always appreciate a good spreadsheet. It is very interesting. I didn't think of all the things you'd have to do to compare Novi to other cities.

#### Commissioner Torimoto

Thank you Sandy it's good to hear from Jeff how you've made it through one of the most difficult situations. It is exciting for my first meeting back since I missed the last one. We talked about at the last Parks Foundation meeting is that everybody is realizing how important or valuable it is to engage with nature and people safely. I think Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Services is going to be a key in the future.

#### Commissioner Joshi

Thank you, Sandy. I see the loan closet overflowing every time I walk by, I am glad to hear that it is going to be renovated. It is exciting to hear that Novi is in the less than 2%. Sometimes you don't realize how fortunate you are.

#### Commissioner Joseph

The meeting was extremely informative. I'm also a stats guy so I love all the information, seeing that we are adjusting and trying to be on the same page with the surrounding communities to make sure we can serve at the same level. Thank you, Sandy, your enthusiasm is contagious. I loved your presentation of the information. The same with everything discussed today.

I wanted to mention the ITC pathway just north of Nine Mile there is these two great wooden chairs that are probably five or six feet tall. They look like a destination for a picture. I think the resident right off the trails does design work. I think it would potentially be nice to include within the pathway as we start to finalize the destination parks. Something to consider reaching out. It was great to be here hopefully we can continue to be in person going forward.

Commissioner Riggins

I want to say thank you to Sandy as well. It is not easy to pick up extra work and do other jobs. That shows what a wonderful team player you are. I also want to say the presentations of Fuerst Park and Pavilion Shore were awesome. So, thank you for bringing them to the citizens and the community. It is exciting our parks are back coming to life, everyone is coming out and enjoying the parks and playing cards. I am excited because my daughter is having a baby on the 29<sup>th</sup> and I want my grandson to be able to enjoy these things as well.

Commissioner Dooley

Last month I was talking about taking some folks from work around the city and how impressed they were with the city. The meeting took place at the end of July. We spent time at Pavilion Shore. They were so impressed with the beauty of the lake that time of afternoon into the evening. I was very proud to be a citizen of Novi and Commissioner on Parks and Rec because of how great the city is and what we have to offer not only our citizen but those who are coming to visit.

Jeff thank you very much for stating the obvious about Sandy. It's no surprise that she would do what she did to elevate everybody because that's what you're all about. It is nice to get recognized like that, you deserve it.

Fun meeting as always with a very robust discussion. I like to use that word because that's what we are all about. We all have our passions within parks and rec and bring diversity to it.

**ADJOURNMENT**

A motion to adjourn was made by Commissioner Riggins and seconded by Commissioner Torimoto

**Voice Vote**

**Unanimous**

The meeting was adjourned by Commissioner Dooley at 8:16p.m.

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

\_\_\_\_\_  
Jay Dooley, Chairperson

\_\_\_\_\_  
Charles Staab, Vice Chairperson