

PARKS, RECREATION & CULTURAL SERVICES COMMISSION

Thursday, January 15th, 2025 – 7 P.M.

Novi Civic Center – Council Chambers

The meeting was called to order at 7:00p.m. with Chairman Joseph presiding.

ROLL CALL:

Commissioners: Joseph (present), Riggins (absent/excused), Dooley (present), Gopalakrishnan (present), Staab (present), Bagley (present), Torimoto (present)

APPROVAL OF AGENDA:

Chairman Joseph added 2025 Annual report, 9B under staff reports. Commissioner Staab motioned for approval of agenda and second by Commissioner Torimoto.

Voice Vote

Unanimous

CITIZEN COMMENTS:

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

It was moved that the minutes for the December 18th meeting be approved by Commissioner Dooley and second by Commissioner Gopalakrishnan.

Voice Vote

Unanimous

PRESENTATIONS

A. Erin Junge -Recreation Supervisor, Sports

Deputy Director Ringle said it was her pleasure to introduce Erin Junge and invited her to the podium. She continued that she will be in the sports division which is a large area of the department. She will be partnering with Steve Fellhauer.

Erin began by saying she started in November. She has had experience on the west side of Michigan with the city of Portland and most recently Royal Oak. Before that she started her career in a suburb of Columbus. These were smaller departments where she wore many hats. Erin is looking forward to focusing on sports since that is her passion. Steve has been a great asset as she started working with the adult softball league. Tomorrow she will have a tennis meeting. Basically, Erin is getting her bearings and is excited to be here. The Commissioners welcomed her to the team.

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

- A. Novi Parks Foundation – Commissioners Joseph, Riggins, Staab & Torimoto
Commissioner Staab said the next meeting is January 21st. At the December 9th meeting a new slate of officers were decided. Sheel Desai will be President. Brian Adams will return as Vice President, with Harry Torimoto Treasurer, and Mike Sommerville will serve as Secretary. Besides the new slate of officers, the exciting news is the Foundation has offered and the position accepted by a new executive director. They will be attending the January meeting. There is also an offer for an events coordinator which has not been finalized.
Pour on the Shore will take place 7/26/26. Commissioner Torimoto added an onboarding zoom session was held yesterday with the new executive director, Marcell. It was an open discussion. He is very passionate and ready to start working.

- B. Active Mobility Committee – Commissioners Gopalakrishnan & Dooley
Commissioner Gopalakrishnan attend his first Mobility Committee meeting today. The first topic was the sidewalk on the east side of Taft Road. It was determined it is a low priority. Commissioner Dooley added SEMCOG grants, the safe street projects, and sidewalk gaps were other conversations. Prioritization of sidewalk projects throughout Novi will be future discussions. The ITC to Bosco connector construction will start in March. Commissioner Dooley closed with thoughts about the Eight Mile bridge project waiting on completion to communicate to citizens.

MATTERS FOR COMMISSION DISCUSSION AND/OR ACTION:

A. 2026 Commissioner Monthly Report Schedule

Director Muck presented the schedule for the monthly reports for the Commissioners. The seven Commissioners will be paired with the seven full-time staff members. During the assigned month the Commissioner will meet with the programmer and attend some of their events. It is possible to swap months if necessary. The staff members can attend the PRCS Commission meeting when their Commissioner does the presentation. It will kick off in April with Commissioner Bagley and Recreation Supervisor Fellhauer. Their focus will most likely be soccer. July will not be scheduled since it is Parks and Rec month. The schedule will conclude in November with Madison and Commissioner Torimoto. It was decided Director Muck will send out a calendar invite so the pairs can start communicating.

STAFF REPORTS

A. Administration Division – Director Jeff Muck

1. Park Project & Initiative Updates

Director Muck stated he changed the title of this line item to park projects and initiatives because it more accurately covers his topics. The demolition of the Shawood Island building has paused due to resolving issues related to a discrepancy between the original hazardous materials report and the contractor to complete the abatement. Director Muck anticipates the building coming down this spring. Plans are being made to remove several trees and the easement from Chase Farms and Rotary Park in preparation for the replacement of the footbridge on the trails. There is not a timeline for bridge replacement, but we want to remove the trees this winter. They will come down when the Forester determines the least amount of damage will occur to the easement and when the contractor has availability. The residents and HOA have been extremely cooperative. Quotes and design for the footbridge need to be approved by Council.

The resolution to create a park rule to prohibit smoking and vaping is scheduled to go to Council on January 26th.

The full-time PRCS staff will be out of the office on Wednesday February 4th from 9:00-4:00 for our third annual staff retreat. The office will remain open with limited services. This year's retreat is being planned by Kit, John and Milah.

2. City Council Early Input Goal Setting

Director Muck, Deputy Director Ringle and OAS Manager Keiser attended the City Council Early Input Goal Setting session last Saturday. Director Muck highlighted the topics that were Parks and Rec oriented. City Council will vote the finalize the fully developed goals at their January 26th meeting. Under the city services and community experience category the number one objective was to reestablish the biannual survey to better measure resident satisfaction and inform decision making. This will be very helpful to CAPRA accreditation by giving statistics and validation.

A new goal is public art strategy, citywide public art and placemaking strategy. Integrating our Planning Department, Community Development and Parks to enhance the character of the city centers, expand public art opportunities, incentivize public art development, and create a public art fund to help support the development of public art across the city.

The third goal is by the end of fiscal year 2027 to have at least one joint public meeting between the Novi City Council and the Novi Community School District Board of Education. The purpose is to identify partnership opportunities that maximize community benefit, reduce duplicate services and shared use of facilities including community access associated with the upcoming high school campus renovations. The bond passed last summer, and the school district is looking to build an activity center and natatorium. Another goal is to create a community and recreation center needs and scope study that accesses resident needs and service gaps, inventories, existing city, school district and partner facilities. This incorporates structured coordination with the school district regarding recent and planned investments and defines potential facility scope options with high level itemized cost estimates for future consideration and implementation.

Director Muck continued with category two, infrastructure, economic community development and financial stewardship. The CIP millage renewal may be placed before voters in August of 2026. Ten years ago, a one mill millage for capital improvements was passed. Lakeshore Park was redeveloped, the new DPW building was constructed, property purchases, ITC trail segments built and new firetrucks were purchased with the funds. CIP millage renewal is very important to PRCS.

The last item important to this body by the end of fiscal year 2027 is to develop a comprehensive property development and reuse strategy for key city owned sites including the Bosco back 40, ITC East property and existing police station site to guide future development decisions aligned with community and economic objectives and ensure readiness for implementation once the new police facility is operational. There were questions, comments and clarification about the joint meeting with the school board and City Council, Shawood Lake property, and ITC East.

B. Recreation Division – Deputy Director Tracie Ringle

1. Programs & Services

Deputy Director Ringle said we are two weeks into the new year, and it shows. The department has had a busy couple weeks. Shelter rentals began on Tuesday January 13th. Lakeshore Park shelter one is booked every weekend of the main summer season with the exception of a few dates. The smaller shelters have some availability.

The Daddy Daughter Dance is coming up on February 6th and 7th. 475 people have signed up but registration remains open. Mother Son Game Night in March has 100 participants registered already. 950 tickets have been sold for next weekend's Beetlejuice Junior production. It will be held at Novi Middle School with two casts. Tickets should exceed 1,000 so we hope to use that venue in the future. Auditions will be held February 1st for the spring show, Aladdin Junior.

There is a new offering in Cultural Arts. PRCS is partnering with Atelier an instructional art studio in Royal Oak. Classes will be held at the Lakeshore building. Registration is monthly. Works from Atelier are currently displayed in the Atrium to market the program. Deputy Director Ringle continued with the changes to USA soccer. For the 2026-2027 season it has been decided to move back to school year for age divisions instead of birth year. Ten years ago, the school year method was used to determine ages. USA soccer gave some leeway to make the transition easier than it was ten years ago. Novi's players may choose to stay with their current team. Team selection will be in June. A young lady on the Lightning Select Team will be in the Olympic Development Program.

Steve, Erin and Deputy Director Ringle conducted a softball managers meeting on Monday to introduce Erin. She will be taking over this program with the help of Steve, during the first year. Playoffs, prizes, rules, umpires, schedules and other topics were discussed. Twenty-five managers attended, minutes and a survey will be sent to those who were not able to come.

The Cultural Arts Committee met for the first time this evening with enthusiasm. There was great discussion among the three members regarding the draft council goal. Meeting will be monthly on the third Thursday of the month. The committee will present to City Council at least annually about what is being planned, achievements, direction and issues.

2. 2025 Annual Report

Deputy Director Ringle began by saying it is a proud opportunity to share this report with the community. It reminds us of the things that were accomplished in the past year. It was fun to put together with help of the Community Relations team that provided the visual component. The highlights of the report were showcased by Deputy Director Ringle.

Under the trust umbrella was the priority registration for Camp Lakeshore and PowerPlay. 100% of the attendees this year were Novi children compared to 85% in 2024.

The conceptual plan at Northwest Park was finished by restoring the prairie at the south end. There was a controlled burn assisted by the fire department then the area was seeded with Michigan native plants.

Giggles for Gaga Ball was the next featured achievement. Jack Hoppesch, an Eagle Scout candidate who was a camper then junior counselor at Camp Lakeshore came forth with the idea to provide a gaga pit for Camp PowerPlay.

Innovation was covered with the collaboration of Sizzling Summer and RC Raceway. 140 youth designed 3D paper cars that were featured in the Atrium. Select participants were able to take their design and put it on a custom RC shell to race at the RC Raceway.

The Diwali Fest was obviously included in the Annual Report because of the event's success. 3000 folks were in attendance. Plans are underway for 2026 along with seeking sponsors. It will be held in November since Diwali is a moving date holiday.

The older adult travel program has grown by 54% between 2022 -2024 increasing from 350-538 travelers. Kudos to the team, contractors, and use of the fourteen-passenger van for providing trips to move the older adults around the country and state.

Nature Nuture Novi in 2025 had 1400 participants that took part in programs ranging from Buzz About Bees, Owl Prowl, garlic mustard removal, birdwatching and other hands-on experiences. This year Nature Nuture Novi Junior took off with complimentary programs for youth to engage the next generation with age-appropriate education. In early 2025 Novi Parks received an mParks outstanding design award for Jessica's Splash Pad.

A number of people in the department serve on mParks statewide committees to share their experience. Steve Fellhauer reached his CPRP. Director Muck received the Fellowship Award which is the highest honor presented in mParks.

Deputy Director Ringle asked the Commissioners to go through the whole report for any edits or additions. The report will be added to a Council packet later this month as well as the city website. Director Muck praised Deputy Director Ringle for working ahead to get this report done the second week of January. Other agencies take much longer to produce their annual report.

C. Older Adult Division – OAS Manager Kit Kieser

1. Programs and Services

OAS Manager Kit Kieser started with social programs. Yesterday, 2026 was kicked off with James Dupre performing a free afternoon concert at Meadowbrook Activity Center. Tomorrow Michigan Day returns. Buddy's Pizza, Michigan made snacks, trivia, and prizes. This is the fourth year this program has been held, and it continues to grow. February 12th will be the Valentines Day Luncheon at the Meadowbrook Activity Center. Participants will have an Italian lunch and be entertained by the Harmony Town Chorus. February 17th the Novi Choralaires will host Songs and Sundaes at 7p.m.

In the nature programs a family friendly beach themed recycled art class will be held on January 28th at Lakeshore Park. Participants will transform recycled plastic bottles into ocean-inspired creatures. February 25th Rick Meader will lead a hands-on garden design workshop to expand on the butterfly gardens he did last year.

The Mackinac Island Grand Experience is already half full. The trip is scheduled for October 13th – 16th. Last year the trip filled by February. A lot of people return to travel to Mackinac again.

AARP tax counselors are currently in training for the 2026 season. Appointments started on January 6th. 143 appointments were made that day. 400 tax appointments are expected to be filled.

Oakland County Veteran's Resource Fair will return to the Civic Center on March 26th from 9:00-12:00. It is not in Engage.

OAS partners with Age Ways to host Bingocize. It will be offered again because it was popular. It combines exercise with bingo with a cognitive and workout component. February 23rd a new class Living with Arthritis in partnership with Henry Ford Health. It is the first health and wellbeing class of 2026.

Registration is open for the Memorial Day Parade. The event's webpage is already active, and we are looking for sponsorships this year.

2. CAPRA Re-accreditation Status

OAS Manager Keiser explained Novi PRCS is one of three departments in Michigan that are accredited. There are 222 in the country and one in Germany. Reaccreditation is a process the which the whole department is involved. The purpose of the five-year cycle is to ensure the agencies are maintaining their practices, high level of service and operations. 2025 has been a big year because we are working to be organized and 100% ready for 2026.

Kit was pleased to announce that yesterday the self-assessment was formally submitted. The submission reflects a comprehensive review of ten CAPRA chapters and 154 standards to meet. The documentation demonstrates compliance with national standards for parks and recreation agencies across the country. The next phase will be the peer review which is a national review team that evaluates the submission. They will conduct a virtual visit to check that all the documentation is accordance with our compliance, then they can reach out with questions. This visit is scheduled for May. We are looking forward to these next steps.

Director Muck gave credit to Kit for being the point person for CAPRA. She kept the team on track, challenged us on our areas of compliance, pointed out areas to reduce documentation. She reformatted files and brought a new way to setting up the submission. This will be the last cycle with the current standards. Novi will be one of the last agencies to be renewed under these guidelines. She has done an amazing job especially this past month. To answer Commissioner Torimoto's question, CAPRA demonstrates an excellence of how the entire city is working with parks and recreation.

COMMISSIONER COMMENTS:

Commissioner Torimoto

I am excited about the new format for monthly reporting. It is a boarder way to look at it and learn about what actually goes on behind the scenes. I am looking forward to it.

Commissioner Staab

The 2025 Annual Report is outstanding. I agree with Director Muck that being done by January 15th is incredible on so many levels. Many organizations where I was on the board did it in February or March. Congratulations on getting it done.

I want to reinforce just three CPRA accreditations in the whole state of Michigan and being one of 222 in the country is amazing.

Commissioner Bagley

I really like the 2025 highlight report. Kudos to all and the amazing work that happened in 2025. I love the section on innovation specifically because it is going to be so important and I can't wait to see where it is going. In The Mitten theatre numbers stood out, they are very impressive. Of all the cities in Oakland County I feel like we are taking theatre to another level. I have paid attention since I am a parent.

Awesome work on the fact that last year's camp was Novi residents. It is a testament to how those incentives work in the community when we do direct outreach.

Thank you for the presentations and programming.

Commissioner Gopalakrishnan

Happy New Year everyone. I agree with the other Commissioners that the 2025 highlights were wonderfully laid out with the trust, innovation, and commitment topics. The sections and visuals were stunning. I was glad I was part of Diwali Fest. The report summarizes how great our team is with a well-trained staff. Getting the report done in January was just awesome.

Thank you for the reports. We got the new year started with a lot of busy events happening.

Commissioner Dooley

Commissioner Dooley asked if the report was going to be available for the citizens of Novi. Deputy Director Ringle clarified that it will be on the website and social media posts will reference the report for people to take a look.

The Miss Amazing gala took place at the city about six weeks ago. I want to recognize Director Muck and the department for being attentive and helping those who needed assistance. It is such a wonderful event the city puts on. The volunteers and staff exceeds expectations. Thank you. Miss Amazing means a lot to my family. This will be year six for this event in the city and I will talk more about it at the February meeting.

Commissioner Joseph

Commissioner Joseph asked about the format for the Diwali Fest since the date is in November. Deputy Director Ringle said we will have to expand and figure out the outdoor area with November weather. There will be more communication about the traffic flow because that was a significant issue.

We are off to a great start this year and I am looking forward to what 2026 has to come. I am interested in hearing more about the reaccreditation process. Let us know if there is anything we can do to help.

ADJOURNMENT

A motion to adjourn was made by Commissioner Bagley and seconded by Commissioner Gopalakrishnan.

Voice Vote

Unanimous

The meeting was adjourned by Chairman Joseph at 7:50p.m.

DATE APPROVED: _____

Joseph, Chairperson

Dooley, Vice Chairperson