

PARKS, RECREATION & CULTURAL SERVICES COMMISSION

Thursday, July 21st, 2022 – 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 (absent/excused), Tolkacz (present), Torimoto (present)

Student Representatives: Bheemineni (absent / excused), Raghunathan (present)

APPROVAL OF AGENDA:

Commissioner Joseph requested to move the Rotary Park presentation to the August meeting.

Commissioner Torimoto motioned for approval of agenda. The agenda approval was second by Commissioner Staab.

Voice Vote

Unanimous

CITIZEN COMMENTS:

None

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Approval of June 16th, 2022, minutes.

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

Voice Vote

Unanimous

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

- A. Walkable Novi – Commissioners Dooley & Tolkacz
Commissioner Tolkacz said there was no update this month. The meeting was held last month.

- B. Novi Park Foundation – Commissioners Joseph, Riggins, Staab & Torimoto
Commissioner Torimoto explained there was a small meeting at Lakeshore Park on June 22nd. The group went over fundraising ideas taking advantage of the facilities in the city. A German Oktoberfest theme, dog park event and bowling were a few of the ideas.

- C. Grants Committee – Commissioners Joseph & Joshi
Commissioner Joshi said there was not a meeting last or this month. Director Muck explained that we are in a monitoring phase to see how the SPARK grants come out which is the 65 million from rescue funds. The information will be released in October with an eight-week window to submit for those opportunities. Due to initial requirements, it might be tough for us to get. Our priority is four pickleball courts and increased parking at Wildlife Woods.

D. Parks and Facilities Updates

1. Rotary Park

Commissioner Joseph tabled to August

2. Fuerst Park

"A big park packed into a small footprint" is how Commissioner Tolkacz describes Fuerst Park. He said it is amazing, the amount of stuff in this park. The presentation showed images and description of the park during the winter, spring, and Memorial Day. Fuerst Park is one of our most historic parks based on the buildings, Township Hall, and commemorative plaques. They do a nice job describing the history of the owners of the land and how it got donated to the city in the mid-seventies.

Commissioner Tolkacz mentioned opportunities for improvements including shoveling the paths in the winter, increasing seasonal lighting, fixing the peeling paint on the building and reworking picnic tables.

He said the memorial walk was well done, and it occurred to him the way the park is laid out with circular sidewalks it is a great place to tell a story. The World War I memorials were interesting as well as the history of Novi. Commissioner Dooley added that Fuerst Park hosts Miss Amazing, and he cannot think of a better choice in the city because of the amphitheater and accessibility.

MATTERS FOR COMMISSION DISCUSSION AND/OR ACTION:

A. Parks and Recreation Month Proclamation & Staff Recognition

Commissioner Dooley read the proclamation from Mayor Bob Gatt:

Proclamation, Parks and Recreation Month, July 2022.

Whereas our parks and trails are vitally important to establishing and maintaining the quality of life in Novi, ensuring the health and wellness of citizens of all ages, and contributing to the economic and environmental well-being of a community and region; and,

Whereas, Novi Parks Recreation and Cultural Services Department has achieved national accreditation from the Commission for Accreditation of Parks and Recreation Agencies, generally known as CAPRA, joining 1% of agencies nationwide and demonstrating excellence in the areas of operations, management, and customer services; and,

Whereas Novi recognizes the benefits derived from parks and recreation resources and continues to make investments in infrastructure updates, new amenities, parks, and staff.

Now therefore, I Bob Gatt, Mayor of the City of Novi on behalf of the Novi City Council, proclaim July 2022 as Parks and Recreation Month.

Director Muck said he was happy to accept that proclamation at the last City Council meeting. Tonight, he wanted to have the staff recognized. Staff members came up and introduced themselves in order of seniority and provided a short overview of their areas of expertise.

- Jeff Johns, Recreation Supervisor Youth and Teen. Main priorities are summer camp, special events and park development projects.
- Madison Lachance, Recreation Supervisor Older Adult Services. Oversees fitness programs, social events, travel program and Nature Nurture Novi.
- Alyssa Golles, Recreation Supervisor Cultural Arts. Oversees dance, theatre, atrium art, and art in the parks including Villa Barr.
- Jessica Mistak, Recreation Supervisor Facilities. Supports internal and external events at the facilities primarily the Civic Center and Lakeshore Park. Oversees the dog park and Senior transportation.
- Chase Root, Recreation Supervisor sports department. Supervises soccer, tennis, and various sport clinics.
- Greg Morris, Recreation Supervisor sports department. Handles adult and youth sports including softball, pickleball, youth basketball and volleyball.
- Sandy Fisher, Social Services Coordinator. Manages the loan closet, food commodities distribution, support groups, health and wellness programs, volunteers, technology classes and distributes resource information.

Director Muck recognized the department's Account Clerks Shannon Janes and Derek Brooks. The commissioners showed appreciation for the staff.

STAFF REPORTS

A. Administration Division – Director Jeff Muck

1. Park Project Updates

Director Muck began with information on the Meadowbrook Commons roof replacement which is scheduled to begin in the next two weeks. As soon as it is confirmed residents will be notified. There should not be any interruptions in service or disruptions.

Jessica's Splash Pad received a donation from Signarama of two coming soon signs. These will include a QR code that leads to the Parks Foundation page for donations.

The final walk through of the Wildlife Woods Trail Connector happened today. Some restoration, cleanup is still needed along with adding signage.

For the Northwest Park grant, staff is working with our engineering team to construct the parking lot as part of the 12 Mile paving project in an effort to reduce costs. Staff is also in the process of developing a draft RFP for the consultant for the master plan of ITC.

The ribbon cutting ceremony for the Water Tower RC Raceway has been moved back to September in order for us to better evaluate the usage over the summer and determine the need for additional amenities such as bleachers, benches, picnic tables and shade structures. The first race is scheduled for July 30th. Feedback from that event will help us with decision making. Staff and volunteers have installed an announcer's stand, a maintenance access road, mulch and landscaped the bare areas. A donated timing loop was installed under the

track. Water Tower Park has been added to a webpage on CityofNovi.org and is now shown on the Parks and Recreation facilities map.

B. Recreation Division – Deputy Director Tracie Ringle

1. Program & Services

Deputy Director Ringle said the parks are busy and Lakeshore is no exception. The Motor City Mountain Bike Association is hosting the Tree Farm Relay for the first-time post COVID on July 23. Lakeshore Park will be very busy until mid-afternoon. MCMBA provides us countless volunteer hours every year maintaining the trails. This is a major fundraiser for the association to put money back into the park.

Alyssa Golles and Deputy Director Ringle met with Abby Marchesseault, the new artist in residence at Villa Barr. She will be there through the summer researching Beth Barr's dance background. It was interesting to our staff and the Friends of Villa Barr to have somebody interested in Beth's career path which was dance. She will collaborate with our dance instructors for extracurricular classes. She is also working on a piece that will honor Beth that she will present next summer. At next month's Commission meeting Deputy Director Ringle will report on the progress of the Villa Barr strategic plan.

The Recreation Supervisors provided more details on their departments.

- (1) Alyssa Golles began with cultural arts division. Currently there are two different concert series out in the parks. Sizzling Summer on Wednesday mornings and Tuesday Tunes once a month in the evenings. Sizzling Summer is geared towards kids and young families. The performances have included music, joke tellers, and magic. The locations are Furest Park (June and August) and Lakeshore Park in July. Tuesday Tunes takes place at Fuerst Park with live bands, family friendly activities, an obstacle course and food from Outback. The weather has been a challenge.

A lot of camps have been offered this summer including dance, art, and theatre. Many of the instructors continue to teach their regular programming as well.

The theatre crew is prepping for auditions in the fall. Cinderella will be the performance. Auditions will be taking place in August.

Two new artists will be displaying in the atrium in August.

- (2) Jessica Mistak began with adaptive programming specifically, KultureCity which is sensory inclusion training. We have sensory bags that people can check out. The staff has been trained to identify when a patron might be having sensory processing issues. In 2019, the Civic Center was the first building in Novi to become KultureCity certified.

There was a therapeutic recreation focus group which is part of the mParks organization. Jessica Mistak learned about Michigan Disability Rights Commission and their assistive technology division. The organization will do demonstrations on new assistive technology including outdoor equipment such as adaptive e-bikes. Arrangements are being made for them to come to ITC because the trailhead has easy access, and the entire trail has stable surfacing.

There has been a tremendous growth of rentals at Lakeshore Park since implementing half day rentals between Memorial Day and Labor Day.

There was an \$11,000 increase in revenue due to this. Facility rentals at the Civic Center have also bounced back.

Jessica finished with a story about how the Senior transportation department worked with Sandy Fisher and the loan closet to find a solution for a rider to continue to use the service for medical appointments.

The dog park software has upgraded which allows remote gate opening.

- (3) Jeff Johns said the summer has just been gangbusters. The camp program sold out in the March / April timeframe before he arrived on staff. The state licensing representative visited earlier this week. A state licensed day camp requires a lot of policies, procedures, rules, and guidelines to run a successful camp. The representative was here for five hours overseeing the day-to-day operations, interviewing staff, talking about policies, overlooking handbooks, and training guidelines. She was very happy with the program. She said the staff was consistent as far as behavior management, emergency procedure and protocols for the operations of camp. The day was stressful, but it was a well-received visit.

We are in the process of planning some upcoming events including Jack O' Lantern Jubilee at the end of October and Lunch with Santa in December. Jeff mentioned he is working on Northwest Park with Deputy Director Tracie Ringle and getting the parking lot installed.

- (4) Greg Morris began by saying the staff is amazing and he is lucky to have the ability to work together each day. He oversees the site supervisor staff (part timers). He is blessed to have a great crew but will be losing a lot of Seniors this year.

The summer softball leagues are full on four out of five nights. They are coming back. Some other communities are not offering as many adult options. Teams are coming to Novi to play because of our fields. The parks maintenance team does an amazing job especially here at Power Park. He would put our fields up against any in the state. Fall softball registration is open.

Greg also oversees pickleball which he could program full time due to the interest in the sport. The lessons with Fred Proctor and ladder leagues fill up almost within days of putting them online. Therefore, we are going to offer more especially now that the construction at Wildlife Woods is starting to complete.

He programs the fifty-five and older golf league at Riverbank. A fall league has been offered since COVID due to demand.

Greg oversees the youth basketball and volleyball programs in the fall and winter. Last winter there was seventy-two teams with over 700 kids participating, the highest numbers ever. Greg said the numbers are high due to Novi Parks being a place they can trust because we will run a quality league / program on the management side.

The Cricket Cup happened this past weekend. There were sixteen teams that played for the pride of hoisting the giant cup for pictures.

- (5) Chase Root is in charge of the soccer and tennis programs. The soccer league has grown 33% with 22 Select teams. He gets great feedback from the community, parents and coaches for the various things that are done

throughout the season. Dooley Dog Day is back after a little hiatus due to COVID. The parents and coaches appreciated the 1,000 free hotdogs that were cooked and served on picture day. There were so many cancellations on fall Saturdays because of rain. A new tradition started, a mid-November bonus game under the lights at the high school. There were six peewee games during two time slots. These types of events give back to the community.

The new tennis team (T Bolts) was created this summer. There is nothing like it on this scale in parks and recreation in the area. It was created because many parents reached out after being in the beginner and intermediate classes asking what is the next step. Coach Todd and Chase Root worked on creating a youth tennis team as part of a league, being able to participate in matches, understanding how to keep score which is generally not taught in beginner and intermediate classes. This first year there are 146 participants.

Adult tennis now has prescheduled match times and reserved courts. Chase and his son participate in the tennis programs.

Before the updates from the Older Adult Services division Director Muck clarified that everyone in the room has some area of responsibility programming for Seniors including senior softball, golf, arts and crafts, facilities, and special events.

(1) Madison Lachance shared exciting new programs that were held recently.

Last week a group went to Milford and did a kayak / canoe trip down the Huron River to Central Park and watched a concert. Monday, they celebrated National Ice Cream Day with residents making their own sundaes and socializing. An evening dinner group called Table No.VI started this month and will rotate every month to different restaurants. Tomorrow a feeding the birds program will take place at Kensington Metropark. August 4th the Luau luncheon will take place at Meadowbrook. The Polynesian Dancers of Michigan will be performing. In mid-August Madison will be teaching a drums alive class that she is excited about.

Madison's most exciting news is the partnership with mParks for the Mackinac Island Grand Experience. The trip has not taken place since 2004. The trip filled and we were given five more rooms. Currently, there is only one more room left.

(2) Sandy Fisher provided statistics for her programs the last fiscal year. 414 volunteers worked 2968 hours which is double the previous year. The loan closet had 172 items donated. \$340 in thank you donations were made to the loan closet. The boxes of food commodities were consistent at 437. The support groups are coming back including the hearing loss support group. Sandy answers many questions about community resources.

Director Muck acknowledge the parks maintenance team which makes our parks look great day in and day out. He added that parks and recreation is not a 9-5 job. Our team is here early mornings, late nights and gets calls on the weekends. I could not be happier to work with this special team.

COMMISSIONER COMMENTS:

Commissioner Tolkacz

Let me say thank you to the staff for all the late hours. I can imagine that you probably get calls on the weekends. I've lived in Novi since 1982. I moved in with my wife and two-year-old at the time who is now a thirty something. He is living in a suburb north of here and has four kids of his own. His comment was wow, he did not appreciate how good the parks and recreation department was in Novi until he lived in another community.

Commissioner Joseph

I said thank you previously, but I wanted to reiterate that I appreciate everything that you guys are doing especially now hearing all of the wonderful things that you have expanded upon. We have so many activities it is hard to believe that they all get taken care of.

I attended a zoo walk for mental health awareness two weekends ago. The Jessica Starr Splash Pad was front and center of their booths. The awareness is stretching far and wide.

Commissioner Torimoto

Thank you all again for your time today but also every day. The scope and scale of what you do is just unbelievable. Listening down to the details today. I think what makes me really excited is the quality level also talking about projects into the future. I can see future programming for the splash pad. In addition to the programs that you have now, and the scale is expanding. I'm looking forward to the opportunities of the future. The story that stuck with me today was not only providing programming and top-notch facilities, it's proactively reaching out to be adaptive and inclusive to allow people to join the community through some of the programs.

Student Representative Raghunathan

Thank you for all the work you do it really shows for the parks and programs. It is good more information is available for the splash pad and really like the QR code idea. She asked when construction will begin. Director Muck answered that they are hoping to break some ground this fall and open next summer. However, with a caveat that with how construction is right now we don't know but we are targeting next summer.

Commissioner Joshi

I just can't thank you enough for being here tonight, everything that you have done and constantly doing. I think I've tried every service available, recreation, theater, sports, parks, not older adult yet but I can't wait.

I was at a neighboring city park, and I thought to myself "Wow look at these benches. I can't even sit on it". I never have that problem in a Novi park.

I'm waiting and looking forward to the RC racetrack. I did go by it, and it looks amazing.

Commissioner Staab

Thanks again for everything you do. This month I went outside my comfort zone on a couple of activities. I attended Madison's sleep clinic (Brain Health Series, Sleep Does More Than You Think) which was great. I was at the Sizzling Summer series with the guitars in the main room here a week ago. The performer really captivated the kids. I

congratulate Alyssa on your program. The performance had to move from outside to inside because of rain. It was handled beautifully, seamless and a great program. I look forward to attending more.

Chairman Dooley

Thank you, Sandy, Greg, Jessica, Alyssa, Madison, Jeff and Chase, for coming tonight. The director said it best, this is not a 9-5 job. It is obvious that you are passionate about the work that you do. Thank you for acknowledging the other departments that could not be here this evening. Professionally as a commissioner this might have been the most rewarding meeting. Listening to what you all do and what you continue to do. Thank you countless for that.

I've spoke before about the plight of the monarch butterfly. They have officially been put on the endangered species list. I saw some monarchs this week in Novi on the milkweed bush. I remember as a kid how plentiful they were. As commissioners we talk about the parks we visit, evaluate, and share our passions with the citizens about how great these parks are. Any time that we have an opportunity to put those plants like milkweed in the parks or in your yards at home to keep these butterflies active. Novi is lucky we have a chance to see thousands of them going south.

ADJOURNMENT

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

Voice Vote

Unanimous

The meeting was adjourned by Commissioner Dooley at 8:03p.m.

DATE APPROVED: _____

Jay Dooley, Chairperson

Charles Staab, Vice Chairperson