

# PARKS, RECREATION & CULTURAL SERVICES COMMISSION

Thursday, April 20<sup>th</sup>, 2023 – 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:**

Commissioners: Dooley (present), Staab (present), Joseph (present), Joshi (present), Riggins (present), Tolkacz (absent/excused), Torimoto (present)  
Student Representatives: Bheemineni (present), Raghunathan (absent)

## **APPROVAL OF AGENDA:**

Commissioner Riggins motioned for approval of agenda and second by Commissioner Joshi.

**Voice Vote**

**Unanimous**

## **CITIZEN COMMENTS:**

None

## **APPROVAL OF MINUTES:**

It was moved that the minutes for the March 16<sup>th</sup> meeting be approved by Commissioner Staab and second by Commissioner Joseph.

**Voice Vote**

**Unanimous**

## **COMMITTEE REPORTS:**

- A. Walkable Novi – Commissioners Dooley & Tolkacz  
Commissioner Joshi filled in for the second time at the Walkable Novi meeting. She provided updates from the meeting. The main discussion was about the results of the public engagement survey that was sent out to the citizens. Other construction projects and sidewalk updates were also discussed. The biggest takeaway was that the Lakeshore tunnel and South Lake Drive Road construction is ahead of schedule. The group talked about future projects such as the 12 Mile Beck Road widening, 10 Mile with the culvert replacement and Novi Road being under construction. Commissioner Joshi continued by saying the sidewalks in Meadowbrook Glens are 75% complete. That was the first subdivision considered for the program because it is one of the oldest and largest in the city. Chairman Dooley said he enjoyed the findings in the survey results. It was in line with the expectations of folks who walk and ride bikes as their mode of transportation. The results were consistent with both parties. The consultants are looking for another public engagement opportunity in mid-June. Details will be made available at a future point.  
Commissioner Staab complimented the contractor by saying he has done a good job, flexible, and has spruced up the neighborhood a lot. Commissioner

Torimoto commented on the different opportunities available to provide feedback through the survey.

- B. Novi Park Foundation – Commissioners Joseph, Joshi, Staab & Torimoto  
Commissioner Joseph said there was a fundraising update meeting last month and the next meeting is Thursday. The main item is that the foundation is still looking for large donors and sponsors to facilitate Pour on the Shore. The donors and sponsors cover the cost of the event then ticket sales are the incremental cost that goes back into the fund. He asked if anyone has leads for a large sponsorship opportunity.  
Commissioner Joseph mentioned the meet and greet that will be held next Monday. The goal is to recruit new members from recent graduates of the Ambassador Academy. Anyone who would like to get involved with the Parks Foundation is welcome to attend.
- C. Grants Committee – Commissioners Joseph & Riggins  
Commissioner Riggins said there was not a meeting but there is one coming up. Director Muck added that no movement has come from Lansing and that is why there has not been a meeting. He did put a May meeting on the committee's calendar because he anticipates some movement. Discussion needs to begin for 2024. It was pointed out in the Walkable Novi Committee meeting that there is an opportunity to go after grants for trail counters.
- D. Parks and Facilities Updates  
1. Brookfarm Park & Village Wood Lake Park – Commissioner Torimoto  
Commissioner Torimoto began his visual presentation by showing the entrance ways for both Brookfarm and Village Wood Lake Parks. He explained he has walked by but never walked through these parks. The beautiful day was a great opportunity for him to get an understanding of how we actually present them. The website describes Village Wood Lake Park as 54 acres of undeveloped parkland. There is a gravel loop path. One side is shaded with trees. There is a lake, and it is at the end of a subdivision. It is a neighborhood park right next to Village Wood Lake Elementary School. The park is very accessible and easy to walk through. There are four parking spots including one that is handicapped. The weather was nice the day he visited so many people were walking from the neighborhood, and several were fishing. The benches are positioned on a concrete base of foundation. People can sit there and marvel at the nice scenery towards the lake and the back end of the subdivision. The constructive comment Commissioner Torimoto had was the lack of garbage cans throughout the park. Tree branch damage was noticeable from the ice storm two weeks prior however, that should be taken care of by the crew.  
Commissioner Torimoto said there is no parking for the park itself at Brookfarm Park. He parked in the school's lot. Garbage cans were only at the entrance to the park. The recreational area is beautiful, and the maintenance is really fantastic. The trees are being taken care of. There is one soccer field that is used mostly for practice. The benches on the path can be used to watch soccer. At the end of his presentation Commissioner Torimoto stressed that the intent for

Brookfarm and Village Wood Lake is to be a neighborhood park.

## 2. Wildlife Woods Park – Commissioner Riggins

Commissioner Riggins said through her presentation they are going to take a closer look at Wildlife Woods Park. The beautiful park has fifty acres of fields and wetlands. The park offers a unique combination of natural beauty and modern amenities. She entered the park through the Villas of Stonebrook, the community where it is located. A slide was shown of the highlights and parking. There is a lot of parking between the two schools, so it is a great location for students and families.

Commissioner Riggins shared a quote by Marty Rubin that summarizes the significance of parks which resonated with her. "Parks and playgrounds are the soul of a city." The parks in Novi embody the spirit of the city and offer something for everyone and promote inclusiveness for the community.

When Commissioner Riggins arrived, she noticed the picnic shelter which can be rented. The shelter contains a barbeque grill. It is helpful that there is a sign posted stating when the bathrooms are closed. Wildlife Woods offers a lot of green space to run, play soccer, fly a kite, Frisbee, and other activities.

The park was busy when Commissioner Riggins visited since it was a beautiful eighty-degree day. The four pickleball courts were filled. A slide of the exercise equipment was shown. There is a sun canopy, safety rules are posted, and QR codes to get a demonstration of the equipment which is very user friendly. The equipment and whole park were very clean except for a tire and football tackle bag that needs to be removed. Between the two schools there is a basketball court.

She summarized Wildlife Woods Park is a wonderful destination for anyone who loves the great outdoors, whether you are looking for a peaceful spot to enjoy a picnic, play a game of catch, place to exercise or walk the trail. This park has it all.

Chairman Dooley said he can tell the passion of the presentations this evening. He encouraged people to visit these beautiful places. Wildlife Woods and Brookfarm Park have come a long way in a short period of time. Commissioner Torimoto asked about the land swap. Director Muck explained that it is very close to being complete.

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

#### A. ITC Community Sports Park Master Plan Results

Director Muck welcomed to the podium Recreation Supervisors Greg Morris and Chase Root. They have been spearheading this project from the start and will walk through the survey results.

Chase Root explained that they are in the information gathering phase. The first undertaking in that phase was the stakeholder meeting that was held on Wednesday, February 1<sup>st</sup>. There were four separate meetings with various groups:

- Tennis and pickleball.
- Michigan Jaguars Soccer Club and RCX Sports (flag football).
- OAS Advisory Board, PRCs Commission and the Parks Foundation.
- Novi Youth Baseball, Michigan Generals Softball and Detroit Cricket League.

The key point of input received was the potential of a racket sports complex which would involve additional courts for tennis / pickleball, hitting wall, restrooms, and platform tennis for winter play. This would allow for tournaments to be played at ITC. The Jaguars would like to see two turf fields. High level games cannot be played at ITC currently due to the condition of the fields. Improving parking from both a paving and layout aspect was also discussed.

The next step in the information gathering phase was the Open House that was held Monday, February 13th. Approximately thirty people attended. This is where the community survey was launched. The survey was open for one month.

Various avenues for marketing were utilized including social media, city website, email blasts, and posters. 865 surveys were completed and an additional 202 were partially filled out. 70% were completed by Novi residents. Details were provided on the respondents' age and areas of interest. The top goal was to improve existing amenities for sports-related activities as 90% of those who took the survey said that was very important. Chase Root displayed additional graphs with details of the results.

Recreation Supervisor Greg Morris provided additional break down of results based on the user groups. Common themes were additional pickleball courts and lighting. It was surprising that additional play structures were mentioned in many surveys since there are already two nice ones at ITC.

The next step in the process is taking the feedback that the commissioners provide tonight back to the consultant, the Spicer Group. They are going to visit the site on Monday, May 10<sup>th</sup> along with the irrigation contractor and fencing company to see if what is currently there can be utilized in the plans to keep costs down. Spicer is doing their due diligence putting the conceptual plans together. The plans will be presented by members of the Spicer Group at the PRCs Commission meeting in July. The hope is to have three conceptual plans. Following that meeting the plans will be presented to the City Council for further direction.

There were questions and comments from the commissioners. Some of the topics included lighting, water, restrooms, and playgrounds. Chairman Dooley thanked Greg and Chase for attending and presenting at the meeting.

## B. Northwest Park Playground Design

Deputy Director Ringle has taken the lead on the Northwest Park Project. She began the presentation by saying that Northwest Park is nine acres located at Grand River and Wixom Roads adjacent to Catholic Central High School and Andelina Ridge subdivision. The development of this park has been a long time coming. The property was acquired in 2015, community engagement surveys occurred in 2019, in January of 2022 a grant from Oakland County for \$100,000 was received which allowed to bring the project forward in the 2023-24 fiscal

year. A map was shown of the conceptual plan for the pathways, parking lot, playground, and prairie. The parking lot is nearly complete. On April 3<sup>rd</sup>, City Council approved the design services with Spalding DeDecker for the playground and trail development. The trails are designed to be six-foot crushed stone and natural dirt trails. Both will be ADA compliant. A survey was completed to identify all trees over ten inches. The pathways will be customized to keep as many trees as possible and the topography in the natural state. The budget was allocated for the 2023-24 fiscal year, so a mid-summer construction start is targeted for both the trails and playscape. The contractors will be determining the exact timeline, but the hope is July 1<sup>st</sup>. The prairie restoration will be the final piece of the puzzle and might need to be phased in.

Deputy Director Ringle showed slides of three play structure options for the commissioners to consider. The choices were all within the \$90,000 budget. The playground will be 70 by 40 feet. The area is slightly different than shown on the map to save more trees. The parking lot was also moved save some mature trees. There was discussion amongst the commissioners and option three was the consensus for the play structure. This option uses natural materials such as logs, boulders, stones. It is customized onsite with Michigan materials, hardwoods and some that may be repurposed from items that are already there. Poured in Place will not be used because a natural surface is better for this site. It is still ADA compliant.

## **STAFF REPORTS**

A. Administration Division – Director Jeff Muck

1. Park Project Updates

Director Muck answered Commissioner Staab's questions regarding pickleball courts. Meadowbrook Commons courts are proposed to be funded in the fiscal year 2023-24 so there is some possibility for next year. The designs have been revised and will be shared with the residents next week. Then the designs will be brought to the next PRCS Commission meeting. Wildlife Woods courts were in the proposed budget and CIP budget for 2024-25 but have been pushed back to 2026-27 because of not receiving the Spark Grant and waiting to see what happens at ITC.

Director Muck continued with the other park project updates including the purchase of the property on the southwest corner of 11 Mile and Beck. This was approved to fill in the Bosco Fields park property. The property sale should be closed by the next meeting in May.

The pre-construction meeting for Jessica's Splash Pad will be held on Monday. Water and sewer connections have been completed from Beck Road to the site. Fundraising continues. A \$5,000 check has been received from the Novi Rotary Club and \$8,000 from Dan Rose, Jessica's husband. A portion of the Memorial Day Run proceeds will go into the fund. Donors will be recognized through various methods when the splash pad opens.

Great news is that the Lakeshore tunnel project is ahead of schedule. If everything continues to be on track reopening on South Lake Drive could be in two weeks. The remaining work is installing guardrails, fencing, asphalt paving of the road, curb, and gutters. The tunnel needs to be sealed and painted.

Installation of gates, the foot wash and shower station, signage, and landscape restoration also need to be completed. Three new benches and sand for the beach will be added. Director Muck has had several site visits and said the clean look in addition to the width and height of the tunnel are going to be very much welcomed. He is looking forward to a good summer.

B. Recreation Division – Deputy Director Tracie Ringle

1. Programs & Services

Deputy Director Ringle began her updates with the youth and teen division focusing on statistics from camp registrations. Camp PowerPlay is filled which is a good problem to have. Weeks two, three, five, six and nine were filled by 8:17am on the first day of registration. The other weeks were filled shortly afterwards that morning. Camp PowerPlay was added a dozen years ago at the Civic Center it continues to be very popular. Camp Lakeshore is doing fantastic as well with registrations.

Recreation Supervisor Jeff Johns led the Easter Eggstravaganza on April 2<sup>nd</sup>. It was a beautiful sunny day. 300 participants gathered 4,000 eggs.

The staff will be supporting the Superhero Showcase formally known as Spring Palooza. The community open house will be on May 19<sup>th</sup> from 6:00-8:30 at the Civic Center. There will be family activities, hot dogs, and entertainment.

Seussical Junior wrapped up last weekend. There were six shows with each having an audience of over 200. Ninety actors participated. It was announced that the fall show will be Finding Nemo Junior. The licensing was just released by Disney and Novi will be one of the first communities to perform the show.

The concert band's spring performance will be Sunday at 2:00 at the Civic Center. The show is called Playbill and features songs from popular plays. The Choralaires are performing May 13<sup>th</sup> at the middle school at 7:30. The theme is Back on Broadway.

May 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> the Polynesian group will be hosting a cultural Polynesian workshop. An instructor from Hawaii will come to work with the current students in the dance program as well as others from Southeast Michigan. 100 dancers are expected to attend.

Deputy Director Ringle brought back Recreation Supervisors Chase Root and Greg Morris to provide information from the sports department.

Chase Root said the soccer season started a couple of weeks ago. There are 872 players participating, which is 100 more than last year an increase of 14%. Tryouts for the 2023-24 season will be June 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup>. His other programs are doing well, including archery with twenty-nine participants and flag football with 450 players. The cornhole league at Lakeshore Park is wrapping up.

Greg Morris complimented Chase on the growth of soccer due to his organizational skills. He continued with updating his programs. Winter basketball and volleyball have wrapped up. The season had challenges due to the construction at Novi Meadows. Over 700 youth participated, which was limited due to the facility issue.

Adult softball begins tomorrow night. Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday are men's leagues. Thursday and Friday are the coed leagues. The schedules are available on the website.

The highlighted camp is the Detroit Pistons. These are facilitated by the Pistons

camp wing. The camp in July is full with 120 kids but the August end of summer camp still has openings. There will also be mini camps in August. There are many camps offered because there is a thirst in the community for basketball and looking to getting more kids involved.

Pickleball is one of the strongest programs. Novi offered learn to play / try it for free which kicked off the program. Now there are beginner, advanced beginner classes and just added guided play. Guided play is a two-hour session for twelve people. Fred Procter, the pickleball instructor, will watch the players then analyze and give them tips and tricks to improve. These classes are for people who have completed advanced beginner and play regularly. Expanding pickleball instruction is a balance because we do not want to offer so many classes that it takes away from the open play in the community.

Registration is going on for the Memorial Day Run. Currently, there are ninety-three participants. However, the majority of the runners register in late April / early May. The website for enrollment is new and Greg is impressed. It is called runsignup.com and is utilized for many other runs in the area. Part of the proceeds from the run will benefit the Jessica Splash Pad.

Deputy Director Ringle added that Dooley Dog Day is April 29<sup>th</sup> at Bosco Field. Please join Commissioner Dooley for hot dogs that day.

#### C. Older Adult Division –Director Jeff Muck

##### 1. Programs and Services

Director Muck reported that April 12<sup>th</sup> was the last day for AARP Tax Aid. This year 483 appointments were held helping 461 individuals / couples. This is consistent with pre-COVID data. Thanks to the volunteer tax aids. Older Adults Services hosted the Oakland County Veterans Resource fair on Thursday, April 6<sup>th</sup>. Nearly 300 veterans registered and 219 attended the event. Many commented that they were able to get the information and resources they needed. Thank you to Walton Wood 12 Oaks for generously providing coffee and pastries for the event. Upcoming programs include Walk Your way to Health on May 17<sup>th</sup> and Cutting the Cord on May 18<sup>th</sup>. Memorial Day Parade planning is in full swing. The parade promotions are available to recruit civic groups, organizations, and businesses to march in the parade. Saturday April 22<sup>nd</sup> is the annual euchre tournament at the Civic Center with forty-nine people registered. The bi-annual group travel fair will be held on April 27<sup>th</sup>. Four travel companies will be here to highlight their upcoming trips and answer questions. Friday, April 28<sup>th</sup> Nature Nurture Novi will be celebrating Arbor Day at Wildlife Woods Park. Commemorative tree plantings are scheduled. Keith Salowich, the city's Forester, will be giving demonstrations on planting techniques, tree pruning, mulching, and proper watering to encourage growth. Keith is very passionate, about his job, knowledgeable, and a great guy.

Fuerst Field of Honor is coming back May 24<sup>th</sup> from 5:30-7:30. There will be a patriotic concert and hot dogs for the community. Veterans and guests will receive a special dinner catered by Mission Barbeque. A ceremony with a wreath laying, playing of taps, and 21-gun salute will take place. One of the highlights is the Trail of Honor where 200 flags and medallions will line the trail recognizing several residents who gave the ultimate sacrifice for their country. Director Muck continued with information on additional programs. Outdoor

hatha yoga starts in mid-June and runs through early September. It is a popular class in a great setting. The 55 and older golf league starts the week of April 24<sup>th</sup> at Riverbank Golf Course. The men's league is on Monday, women's on Tuesday and open on Thursday. Last year there were 110 golfers, this year has increased to 118. The league runs until September 6<sup>th</sup> culminating with a fun day scramble and banquet. Riverbank Golf Course has been amazing to work with and Mr. Morris has done well providing a great program for golfing older adults. Chair volleyball takes place on Tuesdays from 1:45-3:00 at the Civic Center. The program has grown from an average of ten to twenty players each week. In addition, to the softball leagues Greg mentioned, he also runs a 55 and over league. This is in conjunction with Northville Parks and Recreation. Registration is ongoing, however fourteen - sixteen teams are expected. This league begins May 16<sup>th</sup> and runs through August. It takes place on Tuesday mornings. Two additional leagues will be renting space at Power Park with teams traveling from around Metro Detroit. Power Park is becoming a mecca for older adult softball. Director Muck provided an update on the Older Adult Manager Position. Two candidates will be brought back for second round interviews the week of May 1<sup>st</sup>. He would be interested in having two-three Parks commissioners involved with the assessment center and interviews. Commissioner Riggins said she attended the Older Adults Advisory Board meeting on Tuesday. There was a robust discussion on the lack of a Senior Center in Novi. Director Muck explained when the Meadowbrook Commons Activity Center was built it was meant to serve that purpose. Due to population growth, there has been a movement to build a standalone center. The Older Adult Needs Assessment that was commissioned by the City Council is deliberating the need for a standalone senior center. City Council at the last budget meeting allocated some funds to the Older Adult Services Department to include potentially getting a senior center up and running.

### **COMMISSIONER COMMENTS:**

#### Student Representative Bheemineni

I wanted to start by saying I thought all the presentations looked elaborate and nice. It is good to hear that the Lakeshore Park tunnel will wrap up construction soon. I am excited to see that for the summer. Although it was a lengthy meeting it was very informative.

#### Commissioner Riggins

This meeting was very action packed. A lot of our programs are filling up quickly which is really nice. Northwest Park, I'm excited to see that come into fruition. I appreciate the ITC Community Master Plan survey results by Chase and Greg. Thank you. Very nice and good information.

Commissioner Riggins what time to be there for Dooley Dogs Days. 9:00am until the hotdogs run out was the response. They will cook 1,000 hot dogs.

#### Commissioner Joseph

I am still digesting all the information. Interesting results from the ITC but I still think it is being worked through with the contractors to provide some insights. I am looking



forward to Northwest Park coming together and looks great. Very informative meeting that a lot is going on in the city as usual. Thank you to our special guests.

#### Commissioner Torimoto

I am echoing the same comments here. I think we are pretty fortunate and have an opportunity to engage the community and provide some feedback and plans for the future facilities. But also listening to the growth of the programming that we have. Part of the challenge is to match the priority with the solution for the park needs. Commissioner Torimoto asked about soccer at Bosco field and satisfying the need.

He added that we are pretty fortunate to be able to look at both growth as well as opportunity to really satisfy the growth.

#### Commissioner Joshi

Echoing everyone's comments. Wonderful presentation. Thank you for being here Chase and Greg and for the great presentation, very interesting results. I am looking forward to Northwest Park. The programs are just exploding. It is just amazing that we are even better than pre-COVID numbers. This is really good.

#### Commissioner Staab

I thank Chase and Greg for a great presentation, very interesting results. I look forward to the presentation this summer.

I will be more than willing to help out on the May 1<sup>st</sup> interviews.

I appreciate the different ideas for the Northwest playground. The structure brings something different to the city. I like that the commissioners recognized to do something different and be bold.

I want to reinforce the Choralaires concert on May 13<sup>th</sup> at the middle school at 7:00.

Great meeting today. Lots of good information. I will pray for nice weather for Dooley Dog Day. A great meeting. I appreciate everyone's contributions.

#### Commissioner Dooley

Number one, I would like to compliment Novi Parks Foundation on the vested interest in the Novi Ambassadors. It is something the city takes very seriously. There have been a number of graduating classes now. The Novi Ambassadors is an opportunity for the ambassadors to see all the various intricacies of the city including the Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Services Commission. So, kudos to all in the Novi Parks Foundation to try to involve those ambassadors because they are very motivated. Those who have not sat on a commission for a city, these are great opportunities to get involved.

May 6<sup>th</sup> is the Miss Amazing pageant for the City of Novi. This is the fourth edition that the City of Novi is hosting for the State of Michigan. Miss Amazing is a pageant for special needs young ladies, adults, and older adults. They vie for the crown in that particular age group. This year it will be held in the auditorium. This year will have the largest number of contestants. If you have not seen it just sit in the audience and watch, it is a beautiful thing. A lot of volunteers in the City of Novi put in their time to be part of such a beautiful event.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

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

**Voice Vote**

**Unanimous**

The meeting was adjourned by Commissioner Dooley at 8:49p.m.

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

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Jay Dooley, Chairperson

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Charles Staab, Vice Chairperson