

PARKS, RECREATION & CULTURAL SERVICES COMMISSION

Thursday, November 17th, 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:

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

APPROVAL OF AGENDA:

The ITC Community Sports Park and Dog Park presentations were tabled to future meetings. Oakland County Grant Application was added to the Matters For Commission Discussion.

Commissioner Tolkacz motioned for approval of agenda as amended and second by Commissioner Riggins.

Voice Vote

Unanimous

CITIZEN COMMENTS:

None

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

It was moved that the minutes for the October 20th meeting be approved by Commissioner Staab and second by Commissioner Joseph.

Voice Vote

Unanimous

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

- A. Walkable Novi – Commissioners Dooley & Tolkacz
Commissioner Dooley reported that there was not a meeting in November. Joe will report on the December meeting. Director Muck added Monday night, City Council approved the consultant for the Walkable Novi Master Plan. It is the same consultant who created the original in 2011.

- B. Novi Park Foundation – Commissioners Joseph, Joshi, Staab & Torimoto
Commissioner Staab said a meeting was held yesterday but there was not quorum. Many matters were discussed including splash pad revenue and the balance of the checking account. President Landry provided an update on Villa Barr and a possible donation to help with the artist in residence program. The Foundation is actively looking for new members. Executive Director, Melissa Agosta had an idea to tap into the alumni from the ambassador program. Pour on the Shore is set for July 28, 2023. The election of officers will happen at the December meeting. Commissioner Staab invited the parks commissioners to attend.

C. Grants Committee – Commissioners Joseph & Riggins

Commissioner Joseph said three grants were discussed tonight. The Spark grant for Wildlife Woods with the pickleball courts that are intended for that location. There was discussion on how the city was impacted by COVID and the needs for these funds. The Ralph Wilson Junior grant for \$50,000 that was submitted for by the Starr family. The Foundation is waiting on some documentation.

Director Muck will provide more details in line item seven D and E because he will be asking for the commission's recommendation to council for the November 28th meeting.

D. Parks and Facilities Updates

1. ITC Community Sports Park - Commissioner Joseph - tabled to December.
2. Novi Dog Park – Commissioner Joshi – tabled to January.

MATTERS FOR COMMISSION DISCUSSION AND/OR ACTION:

A. ITC Community Sports parks Master Plan Update – Recreation Supervisors Greg Morris and Chase Root

Director Muck introduced Recreation Supervisors Root and Morris who took the lead on the planning for the new iteration of ITC.

Recreation Supervisor Chase Root began with an overview of the process. A RFQ was issued September 21st with a deadline of October 12th. Three firms submitted bids. A five-person panel individually evaluated the technical proposals through a QBS system. The main criteria being resource capability, being able to complete tasks in timely manner, demonstration of understanding the requirements, experience with park specific design and working with parks and recreation departments. The top two were asked to interview. Spicer Group accepted and came in with a presentation while the other did not respond. Recreation Supervisor, Greg Morris continued saying that the Spicer Group is the recommendation for the project. They have vast resources, and we were impressed. Their references were glowing, mentioning communication, the presentation had impactful visuals and they showed an ability to engage with the community. The Spicer Group has a reputation of successfully securing grants and other funding. In the last ten years they have secured over \$31 million in grants. The initial pricing was just over the budget but with working with in-house services for the topographical survey that number can be lowered to less than what was budgeted.

The timeline was explained. This presentation was presented at the Consultant Review Committee on Monday night. Once the Parks Commission approves it will go to City Council on November 28th. After passage by Council, then there will be a project initiation meeting in Mid-December which will lead to user group meetings, community meetings, an online survey, and surveys at city events. There will be a presentation at the Parks Commission meeting in July. Then to City Council for input and final approval in August. Greg Morris finished by expressing that him and Chase have been very passionate about ITC from their years working in Novi. It is great seeing it come to fruition and it is an exciting time.

B. OAS Yearly Program Statistics & Update – Recreation Supervisor Madison Lachance

Director Muck recognized Commissioner Staab's suggestion to bring forward an update on the efforts with OAS over the past year. The best person for the presentation is Recreation Supervisor Madison Lachance who has been on staff just over a year.

Madison Lachance showed a presentation with the programs and statistics that the Commission would find interesting. She started with quarterly participation numbers concentrating on the programs that she handles including cards, bingo, hobby groups, dinner / lunch groups, travel program, Nature Nurture Novi, fitness, wellness, and special events. When Madison started in September of 2020 programs were starting to pick back up. As the quarters moved along the numbers have been increasing due to offering more and reaching new participants. There was a comparison of first-time participants prior to COVID (2018) and currently. A graph showed a huge increase in first time participants in sports, cultural arts and everything Older Adult Services does. An age group comparison showed increases for ages 55-64 and 65-74. This is due to more weekend and evening programs as well as programs that appeal to younger older adults like evening socials, travel opportunities, sports, fitness, and Nature Nurture Novi. There have also been intergenerational programs including Bingo and Bots with the Novi High School robotics team, Stories and S'mores, and snow painting. A lot of people attended the new ice cream social, movie matinee at the Winter Wine and Whimsey, Mackinaw Island Grand Experience and the Novi birders. Future plans with the Meadowbrook staff for 2023 are being made for card games, arts and crafts, smaller luncheons, and the Backyard Classic. More evening programs such as Cinco De Mayo at the Civic Center, two Sip Sip Hoorays and a holiday trivia event at Lakeshore Park are being planned too. Commissioner Staab said this was the information he was looking for, the increases in 2022 are wonderful plus the wide spectrum of activities. Additional questions and comments from the Commissioners took place. Commissioner Staab said the Veterans Day event was an excellent affair.

C. Appointment of Alternate Members to Walkable Novi and Grants Committee

Director Muck stated that Commissioner Staab pointed out that illnesses and absences can affect people not being able to attend a board or commission meeting. With time sensitive issues in parks and recreation it is important to have quorum therefore, we would like to appoint alternates for Walkable Novi and the Grants Committee. The Commission discussed and Commissioner Joshi will serve as first alternate to Walkable Novi, and Commission Riggins will be the backup. Commissioner Dooley will be the alternate for the Grants Committee and Commissioner Tolkacz will be the backup. Motion by Dooley, second by Staab and unanimously approved.

D. Wildlife Woods Spark Grant Application

Director Muck recapped that in 2019 Wildlife Woods Park was deemed an appropriate location for pickleball courts. The courts were installed in June of 2021. Since the opening twenty different pickleball related sessions have been held including introductory programs, instructor led classes, and ladder leagues.

Ninety-five percent of the sessions have filled up. People are waiting daily to use the courts. The department feels a need to add additional courts to the Wildlife Woods facility. The Building Michigan Together Plan was signed in March of 2022 which provides an infusion of federal funding into the state and local parks. 65 million was dedicated to the Michigan Spark Grant Program. It will be distributed in three different rounds and the first round is coming up quickly. The application is due December 19th, so we need to decide tonight.

Director Muck showed the conceptual plan and described the updates made after the grant application was opened. Changes were made to the site plan with emphasis on handicap accessibility. Mingling tables between the existing courts, signage changes and walkway adjustments were added to the plans. These changes were implemented in effort to score higher on the Spark Grant. An additional parking lot is needed due to the exercise stations, ITC trail connector, four existing pickleball courts, and the pavilion. The new conceptual plan brings the cost estimate to \$690,000. The Spark Grant does not require a match however, we can offer one which would be looked on favorably but not scored. This is unlike the trust fund grants that have been submitted in the past where a percentage of a match will get you additional points in scoring. We are suggesting City Council offer a \$150,000 match for this project. If Parks Commission approves the plan it will go to City Council on November 28th with a resolution to apply for the grant indicating that we would match \$150,000 which is roughly 20% of the total. There will also be a public hearing November 28th. Director Muck said he has doubts that Novi will receive the funding because it will be very competitive. Over 1,000 participants from across the state attended the webinar. However, we are probably further along in planning than many communities. This is just the first round and there will be two more rounds next year. In addition, we can also apply for the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund Development Grant in 2023. Motion by Commissioner Stabb, second by Commissioner Tolkazc to recommend approval by City Council. The Commissioners unanimously approved.

E. Oakland County Grant Application – Meadowbrook Commons

Director Muck said this is a rapidly evolving project that communities were notified about three weeks ago. The Oakland County Senior Citizens Grant is using the American Rescue Plan Act otherwise known as ARPA to assist senior centers with improvements such as capital, technology, infrastructure, equipment improvements or professional development. The grant will award up to \$250,000 in matching funds to senior centers and non-profit senior organizations located in Oakland County. Matching funds may include in-kind, current, or future investment in senior centers, recreation facilities for senior activities or other investments with long term benefits. The first webinar happened on Monday and applications are due December 9th. The project in mind for this is pickleball courts at Meadowbrook Commons. The Grants Committee was called together to discuss the project and request \$250,000 for the 1 to 1 match. There are thirty-seven communities eligible for this funding with 8.2 million available. It was confirmed that pickleball courts would be eligible for the funds. Traditional senior centers may go for improvements such as replacement carpet, air handling units, or touchless faucets. Pickleball courts

benefit not only Meadowbrook Commons residents but the greater senior community across Novi especially on the east side. The only pickleball courts in the city are at Wildlife Woods and designated times at ITC. This would be a good selling point for Meadowbrook Commons and lifestyle benefits. The courts would be in the area of the gazebo and exercise stations. It is proposed to add shade structures and benches. The estimate for the project is \$578,000. City Council would have to agree to match \$250,000 and cover the rest of the cost. It would be proposed that the money comes out of the senior housing fund from Meadowbrook Commons. The impression Director Muck has is that the county wants to give every community a piece of this pie and make an impact across the entire county.

There were questions and comments from the commissioners including topics such as input from Meadowbrook Commons residents, parking, sidewalk / neighborhood access, budget, landscaping, security, and court time.

Commissioner Staab proposed a motion to accept going forward to City Council with a recommendation to apply for the grant and matching funds for the courts. Second by Commissioner Tolkacz. The Commissioners were in favor with the exception of Chairman Dooley who abstained upon further clarification. Director Muck will hold a meeting with the Meadowbrook Commons residents and provide a summary of the concerns and comments to the commissioners to review.

STAFF REPORTS

A. Administration Division – Director Jeff Muck

1. Park Project Updates

Director Muck provided updates on four projects. The Lakeshore tunnel project is going out to bid and a contractor will be selected in December. Bosco Fields parking lot gates are closed for the winter. The park can be accessed by walking or bike but closed to vehicular traffic to protect the fields. Recreation Supervisor, Chase Root explained the tarp being used to initiate new grass growth over the winter. The parking lot at Northwest Park has been cut and most of the stone placed. The sidewalk installation is dependent on the weather. This is the first phase of the park development. The splash pad will go out to bid at the start of January with construction to start in April.

B. Recreation Division – Deputy Director Tracie Ringle

1. Program & Services

Deputy Director Ringle said there is increasing numbers of participants across all of the recreation programs in every division. Our programs are getting bigger and greater demand from basketball with sports to dance in cultural arts. It is attributed to the great staff, marketing support, and keeping the programs in the forefront during COVID. It is a great path of acceleration that we are on. At the Council meeting on Monday night, Finance Director Carl Johnson highlighted the increase in revenue in our department over the past year and how it has helped our fund balance. It was great being recognized for the hard work and what we are able to bring to the city.

The finale of the fall soccer season was the game under the lights on the Novi High School field on November 9th. The cornhole leagues at the Lakeshore Park building are full. We are working on a new partnership with Novi Athletic Club to have an E-sports camp during mid-winter break. Their facility added a new wing with E-sports during COVID.

The fall basketball season is underway; winter registration is already happening and is going extremely well. We are gaining younger players which is a great feeder for the program. A Detroit Pistons Holiday Jam camp will be offered during holiday break with potentially a visit from a player. The tennis and pickleball nets have come down for the season.

Recreation Supervisor Jeff Johns is leading the youth and teen programs including Lunch with Santa December 10th. The registration process is going well and will reach the maximum of 300. Carousel Acres is going to offer a reindeer camp during the holidays. Jeff Johns is building off Madison's program and will be starting Nature, Nurture Novi Junior. Programs will coincide tweaking the adult programs, discussing the same topic but with different methods.

The dance recital will be December 18th at the Civic Center. Due to the number of students, it will be spread across four shows to accommodate all the families. The current atrium art show is Melissa Morris, and it is selling extremely well.

January 26th-29th is the Cinderella performance for the Novi Civic Theater. It will be a full length show with live music. The concert band performance is Saturday December 11th at 2:00. The Chorales will perform December 4th at 4:00 at Faith Presbyterian and December 11th at 4:00 at Prince of Peace in Farmington Hills. Tickets will be available at the door. Winter Wine and Whimsey at Fountain Walk started tonight featuring ladies' night and goes through Saturday. Jeff Johns is coordinating the Kids Alley which will have games, crafts, character visits, and fun for the whole family.

We will be bringing on a new employee to oversee facilities and transportation. Katherine Scozzari will start Monday November 28th. She is a Michigan native but has been living in California. She will be a good fit for the department and will be introduced at a Commission meeting following her start date.

Recreation Supervisor Greg Morris provided more information regarding Sparc Arena and the year round pickleball opportunities.

C. Older Adult Division – Director Jeff Muck

1. Programs and Services

Director Muck gave updates on the social services aspects of OAS. Sandy Fisher, Social Services Coordinator attended the Michigan Association of Senior Centers Conference in Lansing November 2nd-4th. It was a great opportunity to learn from the successes of others in the field and compare where we stand. We have scheduled over thirty appointments for Medicare Part D counseling. Volunteer counselors John Howland and Megan Schira do a tremendous job providing the residents of Novi reliable, unbiased health insurance information. The AARP tax counselor training program has been pushed back to December. They are having challenges recruiting new volunteers. Sandy Fisher attended the T-FAP emergency food assistance program training as well. She reviewed and implemented the changes to the distribution process. Novi Today Magazine interviewed Sandy for an article about the loan closet for the late fall edition.

Since it was published thirty calls have been taken from people wanting to donate equipment, typically there are only three to four a month. Recreation Supervisor Madison Lachance provided activity updates. She took forty-two seniors on the Mackinac Island Experience. It was a wonderful time at the Grand Hotel, good food, carriage tours, nightly dancing with the orchestra. The dates have already been scheduled for 2023. The Veterans Luncheon was successful and all the feedback from the surveys was positive. Tomorrow is the Older Adult Services movie matinee which is part of Winter Wine and Whimsey. Ninety-six people are registered to see White Christmas. After the movie they can head out to the tree lighting then check out the vendors. In early December OAS is partnered with the Rotary Club to do a luncheon at the middle school with a free lunch and entertainment. We are also taking fifty-five people to the Van Gogh exhibit in early December.

COMMISSIONER COMMENTS:

Before the Commissioner comments Director Muck thanked the Commissioners for their support. It was a lot of information to digest tonight. As far as the grants these decisions needed to be made. I appreciate the work that has been done tonight and the direction that we are going to give to City Council.

Commissioner Talkacz

Commissioner Dooley started off the discussion saying that Novi residents are very blessed to have such a great staff and I would like to second that. The activities going on with Older Adult Services are just outstanding. Anyone who is retired, lives in Novi and is bored is not paying attention.

I really enjoyed the ITC presentation. It does not seem that long ago that it was built, and my kids were playing soccer there. I am excited to see gen 2 version of that park. We talk about pickleball every week and I am glad to see that we are making great progress to address the need.

Deputy Director Ringle's comments about how we kept going during COVID was a great foundation that helped us lead. We hit the ground running. Great job by everyone here.

Commissioner Joseph

I would add that I enjoy having the staff here during the meetings. It is a nice touch to have representation and get the story from the individuals that are doing it. Madison, Chase, and Greg, I appreciate you being here and showing the success of the programs.

Commissioner Torimoto

I like seeing the facility plans come through to something more concrete. It is exciting and we are privileged. We are applying for the grant however, even without it I think we have an opportunity to actually move forward to respond to the growing need for pickleball. The staff worked with speed and capability in order to get the plans together to submit. Thank you for the hard work.

It is good to see we are recovering from COVID in the Older Adult Services area because that is the most affected population.

Student Representative Bheemineni

In light of the upcoming Thanksgiving season, I would like to say I am very grateful to be part of a community with such an established staff. The developments look very good and interesting including Wildlife Woods. Good luck in earning the Spark Grant.

Student Representative Raghunathan

Overall the theme for tonight's meeting was pickleball. As this trend increases it is good that we fulfill what the community wants, increasing activity and even more in the summer. Happy Thanksgiving.

Commissioner Riggins

I am going to echo everything already said. The student representatives are very well spoken, and I like your comments.

I was grateful to be at my first Grants Committee meeting. There was a lot to discuss. I hope we are able to get the grants that are needed.

Commissioner Staab

I was glad to report back to the commission on the notes and activities from the Foundation meeting. Put December 5th at 6:00 on the calendar for the Foundation get together.

Thank you, Madison, for your detailed report on activities for older adults from 55 -95. I am glad I volunteered at the veteran's program because it is close to my heart.

It was good to see the start of the ITC program. I am anxiously waiting to work with Chase, Greg, and the community on the remodel of that sports park. We have all emphasized pickleball and it is a big thing not only in Novi but countrywide and is why we are addressing those needs in many different fashions.

I would like to encourage viewers to attend Winter Wine and Whimsey this weekend at 12 Mile crossing. I would also like to reinforce the Choralaires concert dates December 4th and 11th.

Happy Thanksgiving.

Commissioner Dooley

The amount of activities that the city puts on during this time of year is amazing and we take it for granted sometimes. Greg, Chase, and Madison the work that you do is constant. We are blessed to have you this evening. It is the fine work that you do that we just sit here and marvel every single time you come to the podium to tell us the great things that the City of Novi is doing in this department. It really does represent everybody in the city during this holiday season. We are very lucky to live in Novi and have you in the department. People aspire to live here because this city has so much to offer.

I pledge that we will work with Melissa and others to get some great folks to be part of Parks Foundation.

Happy Thanksgiving to all your families.

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 8:30 p.m.

DATE APPROVED: _____

Jay Dooley, Chairperson

Charles Staab, Vice Chairperson