

PARKS, RECREATION & CULTURAL SERVICES COMMISSION

Thursday, December 16, 2021 – 7 P.M.

Novi Civic Center- Council Chambers

The meeting was called to order at 7:04 p.m. with Commissioner Dooley presiding.

ROLL CALL:

Dooley (Present), Staab (Present), Joseph (Present), Joshi (Present), Riggins (Absent / Excused), Torimoto (Present)
Student Representatives: Bheemineni (Absent / Excused), Raghunathan (Present)

APPROVAL OF AGENDA:

Adjustments were made to the agenda. Line item D1 was tabled until January. Matters for Discussion and Action added line-item C: parks and facilities assignments 2022. Commissioner Staab motioned for approval of agenda, and it was second by Commissioner Torimoto.

Voice Vote

Unanimous

CITIZEN COMMENTS:

None

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

It was moved that the minutes for the October 21st meeting be approved by Commissioner Joshi and seconded by Commissioner Joseph.

Voice Vote

Unanimous

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

A. Walkable Novi – Commissioner Dooley

There was not a meeting this month and they will not have a meeting until next year.

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

Commissioner Torimoto said the most recent meeting was Tuesday night. The Executive Director position was a main topic of discussion. Rachel Zagaroli has done a fantastic job for the last seven years. We are currently looking for another candidate to transition into that role for operations of the Foundation, in addition an event specific support person. The Jessica Starr splashpad was also discussed.

Chairman Dooley asked if there are individuals who have expressed interest to take over the role of executive director? Director Muck explained the Foundation voted unanimously to extend an offer and wanted to thank Rachel for seven years of service.

C. Grants Committee – Commissioners Joseph & Joshi

Commissioner Joshi recapped that the Northwest Park Land and Water Conservation grant that Novi did not get was discussed. There is a new Oakland County Parks grant that we might be applying for in 2022. Potential land acquisitions and development grants were also discussed.

Director Muck thanked Commissioners Joshi and Joseph for attending the meeting. The committee is very helpful in giving staff direction. He added that we will be going after one acquisition grant and as Commissioner Joshi mentioned a development grant from Oakland

County. This is a brand-new program that will go to City Council on January 10th. Since we did not get the Northwest Park grant, we do have an opportunity with Oakland County to try to recoup some of the development money. Director Muck believes they are going to have at least one project targeted for development through the natural Resource Trust fund. He added we are looking ahead to 2023 as well. More details will be available in early 2022 because those are required to be submitted by April 1st. The process for the acquisition grants and development grants (except for Oakland County due to timing) is that they would be reviewed and approved by Parks Commission with a recommendation to City Council and then those require a resolution of City Counsel to apply to the state.

D. Parks and Facilities Updates

1. Novi Dog Park- Commissioner Riggins

Tabled until January meeting.

2. Meadowbrook Commons– Commissioner Staab

Commissioner Staab showed a presentation with pictures of highlights of Meadowbrook Commons. The first picture showed the front entrance off Meadowbrook Road. He said it is a very nice facility, well-kept / maintained and aesthetically pleasing. Commissioner Staab featured the Meals on Wheels program because the delivery takes place out of Meadowbrook. This service is for people over 60 that are not able to prepare meals on their own.

Meadowbrook Commons was built in 2001. Commission Staab applauds the management company and the city for maintaining the asset and keeping it in beautiful shape. The outside exercise equipment was shown which is similar to what we have deployed in other parts of the city. There are four different machines for people to exercise with and maintain muscle tone. The gazebo was built by the Rotary Club several years ago. Rachel Zagaroli worked in conjunction with them to build the gazebo, which is used for picnics, reading books, or just sitting and resting. Reservations can be made by Meadowbrook residents for Novi's Senior Transportation. There are many activities at the Senior Center including bingo and blood pressure screenings which can be utilized by residents and other seniors in the community. Meadowbrook was a great upgrade to the city's east side.

Director Muck spoke about the Jingle Mingle event that took place earlier in the day. It was one of the first major activities since the COVID outbreak. It was well attended including several City Council members. Kathy Crawford who was instrumental in getting the facility opened was also in attendance. Words were spoken in recognition of the twenty years. In addition, Santa Claus and entertainment were part of the event. The energy in the room was very positive and excited since so many were wanting more of this type of activities and celebrations.

MATTERS FOR COMMISSION DISCUSSION AND/OR ACTION:

A. Website – Accessible Features in Parks – Director Jeff Muck

Director Muck stated that this was an initiative that this Commission launched several months ago. We left off that staff would discuss with people who would use the website and the webpage development team. A month ago, we launched a single page that highlights some features of accessible and inclusive features of Novi Parks. The opening statement sums up the project. "The City of Novi believes everyone deserves a great park. We work to ensure every member of the nearby community has access to the many benefits offered by our parks." We launched this program with Ella Mae Power Park and the brand-new inclusive playground

built in July 2021 as part as the Special Outreach Services programs. The inclusive features at ITC Community Sports Park are highlighted which include the north playground design and safety surfacing. The ITC trail is a paved multipurpose trail with a great surface that anybody can access with mobility wheelchairs and walkers. The Lakeshore Park renovations were based on accessibility from the pathways, playground, trails and adding the Mobi Mat on the beach. The website also points out the wheelchair accessible picnic tables at several of the parks. Each highlight is clickable which will take the user to the individual park's webpage for location and other information.

B. Walkable Novi Committee Appointment

Due to the election of Brian Smith to City Council there is an opening on the Walkable Novi Committee. Director Muck said the City Clerk's office opened the empty Commission position for applicants. At Monday's Council meeting there could be an appointment to the Commission. Chairman Dooley suggested the new Commissioner fill the role on the Walkable Novi committee. The Commission agreed with this suggestion.

C. Parks and Facilities 2022 Assignments

Director Muck proposed moving everybody up a month, so everybody gets a different month. The new assignments will add the new Commissioner when they join. In January Commissioner Riggins will present the dog park then in February the new assignments will begin.

STAFF REPORTS

A. Administration Division – Director Jeff Muck

1. Jessica's Splashpad Update

Director Muck gave an update regarding the Jessica Starr Splashpad. Fundraising has been going on since October when the initiative went to City Council. Most of the funds that have come in have been from individuals within the community or people with a personal relationship with Jessica Starr. These have been smaller (\$50, \$100, \$500) type amounts. The total is in the \$30,000 range. In the meantime, the Novi Parks Foundation website has been enhanced. We want to make a landing page for people to donate. It has been cleaned and brightened up, family and Fox 2 pictures added plus the renderings that can be clicked on to get a better picture of the splashpad. Director Muck continued the family has put us in touch with Michigan State University's master level marketing class which will assist with a fundraising campaign as part of their capstone project. Newer techniques and marketing will be added to campaign strategies. This also connects us to the alumni group because Jessica was an alumnus of Michigan State. A family member was able to secure a pledge of matching funds through Visa for employees. This anticipates bringing in another \$20,000. There will also be a donation announcement from the Michigan State Fair at the Council meeting on Monday night. Director Muck added that this is an ongoing process. The family has other fundraising ideas including a golf outing and event at Top Golf.

2. mParks Community Service Award

Director Muck began I'm not only going to represent Novi Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services right now, but as the current president of the Michigan Recreation and Parks Association, also known as mParks. He continued, community service awards are presented to individuals, groups and organizations that support parks and recreation in Michigan. Recipients make a difference in their community through contributions to parks, recreation,

and leisure services. Director Muck said "I'm proud to announce our very own Chairman Jay Dooley was awarded this honor in 2021. Jay has been an enormous supporter of our department for many years. This is his second term on the Parks Commission which he is the Chairman. He was also Vice President of the Novi Parks Foundation and was the Novi Boosters President from 2010-2012. Dooley Dog Day takes place each spring and fall at our soccer program. Over 1,000 hotdogs are served to our soccer participants and their families. Not only does Jay sponsor the event but he stands with our parks team grilling and serving as well. Jay is passionate about our parks system, and he leads our parks commission with great energy. We feel he is one of greatest citizen advocates in Novi for parks and it was truly an honor to present Jay with this award". Director Muck was able to do the presentation at a Council meeting as well. Chairman Dooley said "I'm just a servant of this community and we can't do this without each other. I spoke about this commission and how much we are passionate about what we do. This is the best group of people that we have been associated with collectively, there's so much passion and strength. I'm just one person and I accepted this award on behalf of all of us because it is truly a commission award."

B. Recreation Division – Deputy Director Tracie Ringle

1. Program & Services

Deputy Director Ringle updated the late fall programs starting with the Jack O Lantern Jubilee that was a Halloween trick or treat trail at the ITC Community Sports Park's trail. There were 465 trick or treaters with fifteen businesses, as well as the police and fire department that helped pass out candy. Recreation Supervisor, Cristin Spiller estimates there was 7,000 pieces of candy handed out.

This past fall we had 620 soccer players (50 Tiny Tykes, 359 Thunder / house rec, and 211 in Lightning / select program). Our coaches are volunteer which adds \$99,000 in value which is significant and allows us to have a quality program at a great price. It was a wet fall which caused some cancellation and rescheduling of games. Recreation Supervisor, Chase Root was able to work with the high school to have games on their field to close out the season on November 10th. The kids thought it was super cool and hopefully we can continue to do games there.

Deputy Director Ringle said two weeks ago we had the Fuerst Festive Nights which was a first-time event. It was our large community holiday event and took place at Fuerst Park. The event had Santa visits, hot chocolate, marshmallow roasting, crafts, and the lights in the park. The lights will remain through January 3rd. There were a few challenges including the weather and Santa not feeling well so we had to not offer the Sunday event. Santa did meet with the kids he was supposed to see another weekend. The event was great for what it was meant to be, lower key, spread out, less crowds and outside considering where we are as a society. It is a good back bone to move forward with and add a few pieces next year. This event is funded solely on sponsorship. The business community is supportive, and we look forward to continuing to enhance that support so we can offer more to the community members.

Deputy Director Ringle continued that the tennis stats show the tennis youth program has exploded. The increase from 2020 is almost 60% for ages seven – fifty-eight. The first fencing program had thirty participants ages seven – fifteen. These took place at the Lakeshore Park building. Fencing will be offered again in the winter. Also, at the Lakeshore building we had parent-child cornhole league. They played ten games plus a tournament. In the winter it will switch to an adult league.

There were thirty-five kids in the fall musical which was Oliver Jr. This show was intentionally smaller. The spring production is going to be High School Musical which we anticipate a lot of kids being excited about and bring back a full-scale production. The Choralaires and Concert Band had their first public performances in their traditional settings. The Choralaires also participated in Fuerst Festive Nights. The dance recital will be held Sunday with more than one hundred dancers. The recital will be split into two shows to have more room and give people an opportunity to spread out. Chelsea Erickson has been teaching dance with us since 2016 and her programs keep growing, everything from baby ballet, jazz, and hip hop.

Registrations for upcoming winter basketball are at 585 which are higher than the past four years. There are 113 volleyball players registered now. We are in the process of forming teams and figuring out the puzzle piece of gym space at the schools.

Sparc Arena had their grand opening tonight. It is a private facility on Nine Mile not far from Rotary Park. Sparc Arena is based on offering racket sports (table tennis, pickleball, badminton etc.). We have partnered with them to have some indoor pickleball leagues which have sold out.

Shelter rentals begin January 11th. We had a stellar year in 2021. We are expecting rentals to be more popular than they were last year this season.

Deputy Director Ringle finished with updates on camps. Camp Artic Adventure which is held during mid-winter break will be at Lakeshore Park because we have the building, trails to discover, sledding hill and playground. It was previously at the ice arena, but we feel Lakeshore will be a good move. Camp registration starts March 1st. We are anticipating Lakeshore to accommodate seventy-five campers this year. Which is increased from forty. In the next recreation guide, there will be information on the Daddy-Daughter Dance, Mother-Son, and Eggstravaganza.

Commissioners Staab and Joshi spoke positively about their experiences at the new events, Jack O Lantern Jubilee and Fuerst Festive Nights.

C. Older Adults Division – Director Jeff Muck

1. Programs and Services

Director Muck reiterated about the Jingle Mingle / 20th anniversary event which took place today with sixty residents in attendance.

The travel program is back up and running. This was in high demand from results of the survey. Three companies are working with us and nineteen people have already signed up. Madison LaChance, the new Recreation Supervisor, is getting involved with the Mackinac Island senior trips through mParks. There are three trips held throughout the year we are looking to go in September / October. It is a highly discounted trip program. Lodging is at the Grand Hotel in addition to scheduled activities.

Judy Klein is continuing to make phone calls for the S.O.S. program to make sure seniors are prepared for winter. The new S.O.S resource guide will be in the next Engage. It will be a pull out like the calendar and go to every single household. The guide includes tax preparation, files of life, slip and fall programs, transportation, and other information. The S.O.S. program hosted a seminar called Financial Crimes, Tax Scams and Identity Theft December 9th at Meadowbrook presented by Detective Jeremy Stempien from Novi Police Department. He highlighted scams targeting seniors and explained how to identify a phone call or text from a scammer. Another seminar is scheduled for February.

Director Muck also spoke about the Medicare Part D counseling that ended last week. Thirty-

six appointments were held by volunteers John Howland and Megan Schira. AARP tax aid appointments will begin February 2nd. These will be returning to the pre-COVID format of one-hour meetings. Scheduling for these starts on January 6th. Last year we hosted 256 appointments and hope to have more available in 2022.

Finally, Director Muck talked about the transportation program for those fifty-five and older or with special needs. With the weather turning bad please refer people who need a ride for doctor appointments, shopping, parks, library, anywhere in the city. It is free.

COMMISSIONER COMMENTS:

Commissioner Joshi

Congratulations to Chairman Dooley. I want to wish everyone happy holidays and Merry Christmas. Great job at the parks and recreation services including the theatre and everything else.

Commissioner Joseph

Congratulations. Words cannot be said that express the gratitude of every member on this commission for Chairman Dooley. The award speaks volumes and is well deserved.

I am shocked by how easily the website came together. It took a very complex idea that was always expanding and highlights what we have and not necessarily what we don't have. It was a very positive solution and will be well received.

I had an opportunity to see the Choralaires. Aiden being new is doing an excellent job. The program went off seemingly without a hitch even singing with masks on.

The Fuerst Park lights are incredible and put a huge spotlight on that corner. The only comment I have, the same as Winter Wine and Whimsy at Twelve Mile Crossing is how do we reach out to the community to make sure that we get the participation for those events that maybe didn't occur this year. Both came off incredible but would like to see more people out there.

Commissioner Torimoto

Echoing what everybody else is saying and congratulations to the Dooley Dog Guy.

It is great to hear about the new initiatives, fencing, cornhole and badminton. It is something to bring people together considering COVID. Congratulations on being innovative. Happy holidays to everybody.

Student Representative Rashmita Raghunathan

Happy holidays, Merry Christmas, and Happy New Year. It was great to learn about the transportation program. I agree with Commissioner Joseph about the website. The landing page was really appealing.

Vice Chair / Commissioner Staab

Congratulations to Chairman Dooley, a well-deserved award. It is work to make our city a better place to work, fun and play in. It is what Novi has been about for many years corps of volunteers that take the baton and make sure we have a first-class services, parks, and city. Commissioner Joseph mentioned the broadening of the website. It is concisely formatted so people can easily access. I appreciate whoever took on the task and doing an excellent job. All the new activities, events, and Fuerst Park activities the first part of December I'm very blessed to have. Novi takes care of their assets and make them usable and accessible for the community. I want to wish everybody happy holidays, Merry Christmas, and Happy New Year, be safe and wear your mask.

Commissioner Dooley

We did not talk about Bosco, but the grass looks absolutely incredible. I can't wait for the spring when we are out there in full force. I kept thinking when Deputy Director Ringle was doing her presentation, now you know why people want to move to Novi. Not just the A+ school system but everything else, the resources we provide, children's activities, basketball, soccer, and volleyball. We are ahead of the curve with pickleball being as popular as it is. This is the reason people want to move to Novi. Director Muck and Deputy Director Ringle we can't thank you enough. I wish everybody a very prosperous and healthy new year.

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 8:04p.m.

DATE APPROVED: _____

Jay Dooley, Chairperson

Charles Staab, Vice Chairperson