

PARKS, RECREATION & CULTURAL SERVICES COMMISSION

Thursday, April 18th, 2024 – 7 P.M.

Novi Civic Center – Council Chambers

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

ROLL CALL:

Commissioners: Joseph (present), Riggins (present), Dooley (present), Joshi (present), Staab (present), Tolkacz (present), Torimoto (present)
Student Representatives: DiDomenico (present), Sid (absent)

APPROVAL OF AGENDA:

Chairman Joseph needs to postpone the Villa Barr update until the May meeting. Director Muck added item 8.A3 Strategic Community Recreation and Master Park Plan Update. Commissioner Dooley motioned for approval of agenda and second by Commissioner Riggins.

Voice Vote

Unanimous

CITIZEN COMMENTS:

None

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

It was moved that the minutes for the March 21st meeting be approved by Commissioner Staab and second by Commissioner Dooley

Voice Vote

Unanimous

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

- A. Walkable Novi – Commissioners Dooley & Tolkacz
Commissioner Tolkacz said there is no update for this month.
- B. Novi Parks Foundation – Commissioners Joseph, Joshi, Staab & Torimoto
Commissioner Staab said the last meeting was on the 11th. The website design was discussed. Melissa Agosta, David Landry, and Commissioner Staab were interviewed for Channel 13. It will air soon. Plans for Pour on the Shore are steaming ahead.
- C. Grants Committee – Commissioners Joseph & Riggins
Commissioner Joseph stated that there was a meeting this evening prior to the Parks Commission meeting. A history of the Grants Committee was provided by Director Muck. He explained the past and future of the group. The committee will apply for any grants possible that there is a chance of receiving. A motion to evaluate a canoe/ kayak launch for Shawood Lake was passed. Director Muck will provide information on feasibility.

D. Parks and Facilities Updates

1. Villa Barr Art Park – Commissioner Joseph - tabled until May

2. Wildlife Woods Park – Commissioner Joshi

Commissioner Joshi showed slides of the different areas of Wildlife Woods Park. She pointed out issues with construction materials. Director Muck notified parks maintenance of the concerns as soon as the report was sent to him and addressed the situation. That is why the Commissioners' visits to parks are important.

The pickleball courts are being used heavily even before the real season begins. However, the bathrooms are not open yet. She explained the rack for placing paddles and rules displayed for the courts.

The exercise stations looked great and are easy to use. The QR code did not access the video about how to use them. Commissioner Joshi did not feel the video is a must to be able to utilize the equipment. Director Muck said he would contact Greenfields because the video was one of their main selling points. A few more slides were shown during the conclusion of the report.

MATTERS FOR COMMISSION DISCUSSION AND/OR ACTION:

A. Resident Priority Registration

Deputy Director Ringle introduced the topic of priority registration. Recent discussions at these meetings have been about turning people away from our popular programs due to lack of space. Currently, registration happens simultaneously for residents and non-residents. There have been internal discussions about introducing priority registration for certain programs coupling that with an enhancement in the registration software that allows drilling down to the street level to determine residency. Presently zip codes are the method to determine. When 48167 is used, some Northville residents are able to register as residents. The adjustment will be able to filter to Novi taxpayers only.

Recreation Supervisors Steve Fellhauer and John Gillingham spoke in more detail about programs that would be affected by this change. John Gillingham explained the numbers in the summer camp program. Roughly 10% of children registered for camp are non-residents. This is important because the wait list is between 47-120 individuals hoping to attend. Steve Fellhauer mentioned youth basketball will be considered because there were about 100 children on the waitlists. Last fall 35-40% of the participants were non-residents. In particular, coed second grade, 50% of the players live in Northville.

Deputy Director Ringle stressed priority registration would only affect three to four programs that are highly in demand. The majority would stay open to non-residents and continue to register simultaneously. The department wants to serve the residents, manage the percentages, and improve perception. The goal is to launch and see where it goes. It would start in September with the fall programs.

There was discussion, questions and ideas expressed by the commissioners. At the end of the discussion, it was motioned by Commissioners Dooley and Tolkacz to move forward to recognize resident priority as the department sees fit with selected programs whether it be days or weeks for the priority period. The department will research the best practices used in other communities across the state and nation.

STAFF REPORTS

A. Administration Division – Director Jeff Muck

1. Spring Park Projects

Director Muck started with a reminder that the Lakeshore Park parking lot reconstruction and expansion is scheduled to start May 1st. It should be a two-week project. This will impact the parking lot in the rear area. Updated maps and availability will be communicated on social media. There has been movement with the new pickleball courts at Meadowbrook Commons, basically clearing trees, stump removal, soil prep, curb and sidewalk removal. Leveling and prepping the site, getting ready for construction to begin as scheduled. The sound dampening in the Lakeshore Building is scheduled for May 13th.

2. Jessica's Splashpad

Director Muck said it is the home stretch for the splashpad. The permanent fencing is complete. Benches will be installed next week. Final plumbing, electrical, landscaping, irrigation and turf installation will happen next week. May 6th is the target date for the start-up, which would be for operational, testing and training of staff. The week of May 13th the Health Department will visit for an inspection. Director Muck will be sending out an invitation for a VIP Preview on May 18th at 2:00. Major fundraisers who contributed to the splashpad, city officials, friends and family of Jessica Starr will be invited. The tentative opening is May 25th. It will run seven days a week from 10:00a.m – 8:00p.m. through Labor Day weather permitting.

3. Strategic Community Recreation & Master Park Plan

Director Muck continued by saying the department is in the process of creating the new five-year master plan. Part of the process includes conducting surveys and gathering public input. The public will be invited to meet with our team and share their thoughts, experiences and weigh in on the next five years. There will be in person drop-in sessions on May 21st 11:30-1:30 and 5:30 -7:30 at the Civic Center. The staff will be present at the Superhero Showcase at the Civic Center on June 6th. That evening there will be fun activities for kids to engage in to find out what they want for programs, services, and facilities. We are hoping to visit the Japanese school, Ring Kai, on May 18th.

People are encouraged to take online surveys through Flash Vote. Four will be launched over the course of May and June with different themes and topics. The commissioners are invited to participate in any of these input events. A graphic flyer is being developed which will be on social media.

B. Recreation Division – Deputy Director Tracie Ringle

1. Programs & Services

Deputy Director Ringle said camp staff training will begin next week. Applications are currently being accepted for counselors and CITs (Counselor in Training). CITs are teens 16 and younger who want to become a full fledged counselor in the future.

The spring soccer season is underway. Dooley Dog Day and pictures is this

Saturday at Bosco Field. Adult softball begins tomorrow. The first tournament of the season is this weekend at Power Park. Memorial Day Run numbers are on par with last year. May 1st is the deadline to register to receive a free t-shirt. The men's tennis league is nearly full with 31 of 32 spots filled. Adding more spots to that league is being considered. The women's league is smaller, but registration is continuing.

Disney Descendants theatre production was this past weekend. Each of the six shows had 315 people in the audience. In the Mitten Productions is very easy to work with, accommodating, nurturing to the actors, and encouraging. The fall show will be Anastasia. The dance recital is next week at the Berman Center which is part of the JCC. The recital is an Alice in Wonderland theme. 145 dancers will participate.

Peggy Kerwin is the April Atrium artist. Novi High School will have their annual art show here in May. This includes a contest for the very talented high school artists of every medium.

The next Choralaires concert is scheduled for May 11th at 7:00 at the Middle School. They will also be performing in June at Fuerst Park.

The Doggie Dive In is scheduled for Thursday May 23rd at Lakeshore Park. It is for dog park members only and registration is going on now.

C. Older Adult Division – OAS Manager Kit Kieser

1. Programs and Services

OAS Manager Kit Kieser began with Nature Nurture Novi due to the warmer, sunnier, nicer weather. Happy Trails hiking group started back. The group visits a different park each week on Thursdays at 5:30 throughout the summer. Novi Birders met for the first time on Monday. Twenty-six people saw a wide variety of birds at Robert H. Long Park. They will continue to meet during the summer. The Arbor Day event is on April 27th at Lakeshore. Participants can pick up their seedlings. Keith Salowich will be hosting a tree talk at noon to discuss proper planting and tree maintenance. April 22nd, Earth Day, leading up to the 27th, signs with tree facts will line the trails at Lakeshore. May 4th is the garlic mustard pull.

All of the bingo callers are trained on the new digital board. It has been in use for two weeks. The players and callers love it!

Tax time has come and gone. OAS hosted AARP Tax Aid for ten weeks.

Volunteers took 457 tax appointments. The Civic Center site was at capacity. We are in process of onboarding two new travel companies, Custom Holidays and Bianco Tours. Additional single and multi-day travel opportunities will be available for seniors. May 1st at 5:30 will be the spring Travel Fair.

AARP is providing Smart Driver, a program to help seniors understand the technology in their cars. The popular Cutting the Cord program will be held Thursday, May 2nd. Twenty-Five people have already registered.

In addition to the Memorial Day Run, OAS is planning two other events for the holiday. Fuerst Field of Honor is May 22nd at 5:30. There will be food from Mission Barbecue, Girl Scouts will lead the Pledge of Allegiance, a band will perform from 5:30-7:00, and the Mayor will give a speech during the ceremony. Parade planning is on track with sixteen groups already signed up.

2. Transportation Transition

Council is expected to decide on whether or not the City of Novi will subsidize any rides with People's Express after the transition July 1st. Weekly meetings with People's Express have been held to discuss communications, operations and the transition for riders and drivers. The only thing preventing communication with the residents is the determination by the Council. Then the packets to both riders and residents with all the information about the transition to People's Express will be distributed. The Older Adults Needs Committee determined that they would advise Council to subsidize rides for medical rides for people older than fifty-five and citizens with disabilities. On Monday Council will make that determination. People's Express is committed to having a satellite location at the Civic Center until 2025. This will help the staff who wish to continue employment with the new company.

COMMISSIONER COMMENTS:

Commissioner Talkacz

I want to thank Commissioner Joshi for the great Wildlife Woods report. I have spent a lot of time at that park, it is nice to see all the different features. I also enjoyed the discussion about resident priority registration. Thank you for bringing that forward. We hear the participation numbers every month but had no idea about the number mix of residents / non-residents. The report was very enlightening.

I was interested to hear about the progress of the splashpad. It is nice to hear about the invitation to the Grand Opening which is just around the corner.

Birding with Nature Nurture Novi is a great activity for outdoors as the weather is getting better. I want to try to participate in one or two of the Nature Nurture Novi programs.

Commissioner Torimoto

I think the resident priority highlight was good. We are lucky to have the programs and facilities. I feel bad not all can be accommodated, all the kids whether they live here or not. I understand the priority of serving the taxpaying community. It would be nice to work with surrounding communities to provide more services.

I am really excited about the unique splashpad however, I am nervous about how popular it will be on certain days and not being able to control resident / non-resident there similar to the pickleball courts.

Commissioner Joshi

Thank you for all the staff reports. The biggest one from Steve and John for us to think about as a city and parks department. It is really nice to see our programs getting filled up and have a waiting list. My plea for people is to not wait for the last minute – jump on it. The discussion was a head scratcher.

Commissioner Staab

I really liked the presentation on Wildlife Woods. I appreciate the many activities coming up around Memorial Day including Fuerst Field of Honor and the parade. Good dialog regarding priority registration. I appreciate the Commissioners being involved in the discussion.

I want to reinforce the Choralaire's concert on May 11th at the Novi Middle School.

I want to congratulate Kit for attaining the CPRP designation.

Student Representative DiDomenico

I never really thought about the resident priority, but it is a good news bad news situation. It is good that our programs are very filled. It makes sense to prioritize our citizens.

Commissioner Dooley

Nothing was bad in the staff reports. The reports represent Novi at its finest. There are so many dates and activities that encompass what Novi Parks recreation and Cultural Services has to offer the city. Thanks to Charlie for recognizing Kit for her remarkable honor. She should be proud of herself for all the work that went into getting that distinction.

The Dooley family will be very busy this weekend. My daughter Rachel and wife Lynne are co-chairs of Miss Amazing. It is going to be held at the Civic Center. Miss Amazing is a national pageant for special needs young ladies and adults. They vie for crowns in their particular age groups. There are close to thirty contestants. A number of folks in the city are volunteering, including at the last minute the theatre department stepped up to help with makeup.

Director Muck mentioned the Novi Ambassadors. The reunion is next week. I am proud to be an original member and look forward to chatting with my fellow ambassadors to help them see what goes on in the city and ways they can participate, volunteer, and give back to the community.

Vice Chair Riggins

I just want to say thank you for everything that has been discussed here. I appreciate the conversation about the residency priority registration. Thank you to Steve and John for letting us know the numbers.

I am excited for Jessica's splashpad since that is coming up as well.

The report on Wildlife Woods was great. I am glad everything that had tickets put in got fixed.

Chairman Joseph

I think Director Muck has been hesitant to put a final day on the splashpad, but I think we are all excited that it is coming to fruition. I am sure the Starr family is ecstatic as well. Congratulation Kit on your certification, that is an awesome achievement. I definitely appreciate everyone coming to present the numbers. I always love staff involvement outside of the three we get on a regular basis. It is extremely beneficial.

ADJOURNMENT

A motion to adjourn was made by Commissioner Joshi and seconded by Commissioner Torimoto.

Voice Vote

Unanimous

The meeting was adjourned by Chairman Joseph at 7:59p.m.

DATE APPROVED: _____

Joseph, Chairperson

Riggins, Vice Chairperson