

**PARKS, RECREATION & CULTURAL SERVICES COMMISSION**

**Thursday, March 16, 2017 – 7 P.M.**

**NOVI CIVIC CENTER – COUNCIL CHAMBERS**

The meeting was called to order at 7 p.m. with Commissioner Bauss presiding.

**ROLL CALL:** Bauss (Present), Staab (Present), Dooley (Present), Jewell (Present), Pratt (Absent), Thomopoulos (Present), Torimoto (Absent), Student Representatives Sanidhya Singh (Present), Joocho Lee (Present).

**APPROVAL OF AGENDA:**

It was moved that the agenda be approved by Commissioner Staab and seconded by Commissioner Dooley.

**Voice Vote** **Unanimous**

**CITIZEN COMMENTS:** None

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES:**

A. Approval of Feb. 16, 2017 minutes.

It was moved that the minutes for February be approved by Commissioner Thomopoulos and seconded by Commissioner Dooley.

**Voice Vote** **Unanimous**

**COMMITTEE REPORTS:**

- A. Walkable Novi – Commissioners Thomopoulos & Bauss  
Commissioner Thomopoulos said the next meeting is May. No further update.
- B. Novi Park Foundation – Commissioner Torimoto  
Commissioner Staab said the next meeting is April. Pour on the Shore is in July. Director Muck said the Parks Foundation is discussing funding some improvements to the Villa Barr property, in conjunction with City Council. Commissioner Staab said we want to use our money judiciously and fund projects.  
Director Muck said former Mayor David Landry is sitting in on discussions on the Friends of Villa Barr group in regards to development of trails and a pathway, parking lot, potentially doing renovations to the house to ensure it's ready to be used for an artist-in-residency program. Will be having more discussions and coming to Council.
- C. Grants Committee – Commissioners Pratt & Dooley  
Commissioners Dooley said there was a February meeting prior to Commission meeting about the Michigan Natural Trust Fund grant. Update on 3/15. Director Muck said more detail to come later in meeting. However, the ITC Trailhead Park grant is still in appropriations and needs to be approved by the Legislature before we can acquire that property. We've been keeping the broker and owner informed and plan to hopefully close on the property later this summer.
- D. Parks Updates
  - 1. Fuerst Park – Commissioner Staab

Commissioner Staab passed his phone down to show photos. Inspected 3/11 and it was in good shape. Marveled at one of the boards with information on projects and spring sign-ups. With all the wind we had last week, I was surprised there weren't more limbs and branches down. All the trash receptacles were clean and the benches were in a good state of repair. For the benefit of our student reps, the history of Fuerst Park goes back to Novi's infancy with orchard farmers. It was sold to the schools and then the City negotiated on it. There was a barn. The City put together this park to make it a functional park with an amphitheater. It's also been used for a farmer's market and Township Hall.

#### 2. Meadowbrook Commons – Commissioner Bauss

Commissioner Bauss said not a lot has changed since his last report. Catch basins are starting to collapse due to water, but were marked clearly with cones or barricades. Asphalt was coming up in the parking lot, but not anything that was uncommon this time of year. Saw some downspouts that were smashed that we'll need to get on. I'm surprised; there are a lot of units there who all have their own balconies or patios. They're all very tidy. It makes the whole property look very tidy. We do have a lot of open space on the Meadowbrook and Cherry Hill corner there, which is good, but I was wondering if there were any plans to put anything there. We have the gazebo and exercise trail, but there's still room for open space to have it open and green.

Director Muck said there are no current plans to improve that area, leave as a buffer.

Commissioner Bauss said he went after hours, so the common areas were locked because you have to be a resident to access.

#### ~~3. Novi Dog Park – Commissioner Pratt~~

#### 4. Villa Barr Art Park (Aug/Jan.) – Commissioner Jewell

Commissioner Jewell said he had a hard time finding the park. It's a tough location on a busy road. It looks like it'll be a great park. There was a lot of mud around the gate, so I chose not walk through the park. I understand the house will stay while other features are added and it'll be really nice. My car got stuck in one of the ruts.

Commissioner Thomopoulos said she's looking forward to the park being developed.

Director Muck said what we've proposed in the CIP budget is to have a small parking lot of 5-6 spots, enough room for a shuttle bus to turn around so it's big enough for students or a camp to come out there. A pathway wandering through the artwork. We've had discussion internally about what the signage would look like, but signage at each art piece, booklets so people can do a walking tour. In the back, it's very wet during the wet season.

Commissioner Thomopoulos asked if it could connect to the ITC pathway.

Director Muck said it could not, but the pathways could be a crushed stone material. Could connect to sidewalks on Napier in the future.

Representative Singh asked about the detail on the signage for art pieces and whether there's been thought to using QR codes that link to audio descriptions of each art piece.

Director Muck said there's audio of David Barr speaking about each art piece before his passing, so it's great to hear you feel that's needed because we have had those discussions. The opportunities for this park are wide open. Video tours or links back to the website where he's talking about it are what some people had envisioned for that park.

Commissioner Staab asked about adding an amphitheater at Villa Barr to be used by parents after child's soccer game at ITC Community Sports Park.

Mentioned a wine and cheese event several years ago.

Representative Singh asked about whether there's any consideration of turning it into a small picnic area to make it a local attraction?

Director Muck said there will be some of those components, like trash cans, benches and potentially picnic tables. A gazebo near the pond was part of one conceptual plan.

Commissioner Thomopoulos asked about adding additional parking.

Director Muck said there's limited space and you may have to take down the red studio building to do so. Putting in 5-6 spots is an initial start to get the park active.

Representative Singh asked when the park would be ready for active use?

Director Muck said this project is scheduled to be funded in fiscal year 2017-18, so we'd be making plans to get this project off the ground in that time frame.

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

##### A. ITC Trailhead Park Expansion by Director Jeff Muck

Director Muck said this is a parcel identified by our Grants Committee, which includes Mayor Pro Tem Staudt, Council member Mutch, Commissioner Dooley and Commissioner Pratt as a potential acquisition through a Michigan Natural Trust Fund grant. It's a 20.31-acre parcel located adjacent to the ITC Corridor. Identified a neighboring parcel located by ITC. Its 20.31 acres, with 9.8 acres of it being wetlands and 19.63 are woodlands. The reason this property was so attractive to the Grants Committee is because Council set a goal in February to preserve 50 acres of woodlands around the city. Showed the proposed ITC Trailhead Park that we hope to acquire later this summer. We are designating this new parcel as an expansion of the proposed parcel in the grant we're writing right now. We don't have any plans to develop this; would leave it in its natural state. I've also reached out to ITC to see if we can negotiate an easement or part of their parcel so they'd connect for a continuous 40 acres or so. The next steps are presenting this to you for suggestions or support. It'll be moving this to City Council on 3/27. We've already gotten some input from residents who are aware and supportive and focused on maintaining natural habitat. For the new student representatives, the proposed parcel we're waiting to acquire is planned to have a small parking lot to access the trailhead and possible a small picnic shelter or restroom facility. I had a conversation I had with a resident who uses the trail every day said he's noticed people parking along Garfield to access this property, which I've noticed as well, so it's definitely getting its use. It fit a couple of goals to expand that park and preserve and enhance the corridor trail.

Representative Singh asked if expanding the two parks would go through or around the wetlands?

Director Muck said it would encompass them, but be left in its natural state.

Representative Lee asked if it would be a recreational park like Maybury or used for events.

Director Muck said it's just for preserving the wetlands. It's currently listed by the broker as \$450,000. With the trust fund, its proposed the City match around \$125,000 out of the tree fund, instead of the general fund.

Representative Singh asked what is a tree fund?

Director Muck said, when people come in to develop a property and want to take down or replace trees, they have to pay a fee for each tree that's taken down and that goes into the tree fund to support plantings or maintenance on existing trees.

Representative Singh said he's noticed some of the trees in the summer have gotten a disease and are dead in the summer. They're falling into peoples' yards and branches are falling off, especially with the winds we've been having recently.

Director Muck said the City has a full-time forester in the Department of Public Services that works on tree management and planning. She oversees trees on public right of ways and public property. Some of the trees you're mentioning might be on private property, so the resident may have to deal with that.

Residents can always reach out to our forester, Tiffany Giacobazzi, and she's very active about coming out and meeting with residents about any issues they may be having. She presented a couple of months ago here.

Representative Singh said he's talking about Chase Drive, so asked that the process is to call?

Director Muck said they'll open up a work order and come out to address concerns with residents. They also have a city-wide plant-pruning program where you'll see trucks out all the time pruning or working on trees or diseased trees.

Commissioner Thomopoulos said she's in favor of maintaining woodland and wetland area. She said that trail does go through a heavily wooded area as you get closer to ITC CSP, but it won't be as dense of woods in the future as it gets developed, so I think preserving land to not get developed is beneficial. I was with you until you said it was going to be paid for out of the tree fund. I'm also aware of the need for a lot of money to replace trees that have been damaged. There are a lot of ash trees that have never been replaced. A lot of evergreens have suffered the last few years with the weather we've had and drought we had that one summer. I'm not sure whether the City Council added funds to help buy this, or if we're using funds designated to buy trees to buy land?

Director Muck said the tree fund is available to replace trees, maintain trees and also now they've determined it can be used to acquire and preserve space, as well.

Commissioner Thomopoulos said she's in favor, but cautions not to harm our ability to replace trees. It's a beautiful trail, even when you're walking by peoples' homes that you can see. Keeping the natural area would be great.

Commissioner Bauss asked how long has it been on the market? Director Muck said a few years, at least. Bauss said it seems like a lot of money for an unusable piece of land, really.

Director Muck said the broker said there has been interest on this. We are having an appraisal done on this.

Commissioner Bauss said he wondered how much of it was buildable, or whether it would stay that way forever whether you build it or not.

Commissioner Dooley said the public information about that is online.

Commissioner Jewell asked whether trees could be taken out of there to plant elsewhere in the City.

Director Muck said if a tree falls in dedicated woodlands, its left there because it's thought of natural habitat. It is a very wet and saturated land, so we probably had a lot of trees go down in the past week.

Commissioner Staab asked for location clarifications.

Director Muck said the trail segment through CSP is scheduled for this summer.

Commissioner Thomopoulos asked if it was possible to make a motion for it to come from a different fund?

Director Muck said you could, but he's taking direction from Council on that.

Commissioner Jewell motioned, seconded by Commissioner Thomopoulos, to submit the MNRTF grant for the 20-acre parcel at Nine Mile and Garfield.

Supported unanimously.

B. Commemorative Program Update by Deputy Director Tracie Ringle

Deputy Director Ringle said our current practice has the commemorative tree program. There are 39 commemorative trees throughout the City at parks and the Civic Center campus. It began 2004-05ish. Those are designated with a granite marker and the family receives a certificate for their family records as generations pass. Trees are selected from 11 species, provided to us through our city forester. They can choose the park, tree species and wording on granite marker. The trees are planted with our spring and fall tree plantings. Twice per year, we do a mass purchase and mass planting through a contract. If the tree is removed or falls in the first two years, the marker will be moved to the next closest tree. If a family reports a marker goes missing within the first 10 years, we'll replace. The cost is \$500. Displayed a map of Power Park tree locations. We've been talking about potential opportunities and park benches is something other communities do. Right now, we have a designated bench we're matching throughout our parks; at Fuerst Park, Pavilion Shore Park, etc. Our benches are placed on an 8x6 concrete pad. We've had some discussion internally on what a recognition plaque would look like. A lot of parks place plaques on the benches. Our benches would not be a good candidate for that because you'd negate the warranty and be screwing into the slabs and it'd chip and rust. We had to look at alternative options. An 8x3 aluminum plaque attached to the benches. Very similar to a bronze plaque. The MNRTF plaques are similar aluminum. The other option would be a 6x6 attached to the post and placing near the bench. We haven't launched this program yet. We had a call from a resident who lost her father, who was a long-time Novi resident, who wanted to do a bench. As a beta tester, we had some feedback about the aluminum. They wanted the bench tied to a more positive feeling than the interment at a cemetery. Benches would be available at 11 parks, identifiable by GIS. New benches are about \$2,000, including the bench and concrete. Existing benches we could do at a discounted rate of \$200-\$300. And, once they're gone, they're gone. Same guarantees as the tree program. The third option is the dog park. Dogs are members of the family, but there aren't as many opportunities to recognize those with a memorial. Some of our initial thoughts were a sign where you could buy a smaller sign that goes on it. We went to survey our dog park members and learned, from 50 responses so far of about 300 members, that about 30 percent would be interested. The majority said they would not be willing to spend \$150-\$200, but rather \$50-\$75. Asked about use of revenue received from the program and all responses were close, but an agility course, paved perimeter pathway and shaded benches ranked in that order. We brought the idea to our staff meeting and OAS Coordinator Sandy Fisher asked if

we could do something more unique. Idea came to tie dog tags to it. Amelia Purdy-Ketchum found photos online of a dog sculpture in South Carolina carved out of shape of creator's dog and people can put dog tags on it. Similar to bridge in Paris where you can put locks on it. They're seeking sponsorship via plaques from businesses. Theirs was about \$6,000 to create for that size. We'd like to hear from commissioners on both benches and dog park, as well as other ideas.

Commissioner Jewell said we could go to the local high school to have people make something, whether art class or robotics team.

Representative Singh said the robotics team has a CNC machine and could create something like this and it wouldn't cost nearly \$6,000. Personal touches could be put on it. I feel like it's a good idea to tie into robotics or an existing program. Also said there was an art contest for the logo of the North American Auto Show and a Novi High School student won it, so there's definitely talent in our school. If there's interest, we could pitch it to one of the administrators at the school.

Commissioner Staab asked what revenue from this would go back to? Deputy Director Ringle said it would go back to dog park amenities.

Commissioner Bauss said the feedback on the benches said he would've expected the response about not having it on the ground. Would prefer it on seat, but that's not an option.

Representative Singh said he understands and wouldn't want to be walked on either. Could be considered disrespectful. Asked about putting plaque on a nearby tree, as it would tie things more into the environment in the park and cohesiveness without the extra cost of the benches.

Commissioner Thomopoulos said she agrees with the comments of the medallion on the ground, but is also concerned about the aluminum pole sticking up. I think that's a better option than the one in the ground, but I don't think we've found the right solution yet. Somehow, I think this recognition needs to be more attached to the bench. I understand the issues and don't want to harm the benches.

Commissioner Bauss said maybe it could be stamped into the concrete, not where your feet go.

Commissioner Jewell said he's seen it at golf courses where it's etched into a brass plaque set into a rock.

## **STAFF REPORTS**

### **A. Administration Division – Director Jeff Muck**

#### **1. Project Updates**

Director Muck said we're still going through the budget hearing process. The ice arena is replacing its condensing tower, as it's reached the end of its lifespan. Suburban Ice has been in contact with an individual to bring in a skating treadmill and rent space from the arena to have those trainings. Suburban Ice is working with our City Facilities team to bring that in. Meadowbrook Commons had its parking lot paving project approved by Council for May to repave the parking lot. Car ports will stay. We may have to golf cart some residents around. The Grand River soccer fields, with Blair Bowman and Suburban, will be finished off this spring with irrigation. Turf is starting to be established out there, but we don't anticipate putting programs out there until the fall. Parks maintenance has

been out cleaning up trees the winds knocked down, including a large pine at Pavilion Shore.

Commissioner Staab asked where all the cars would go during the Meadowbrook paving process.

OAS Manager Kapchonick said the project will go in four phases, starting in the back, so those cars can go to the front of the parking lot and south of the building, and then shuttling. Will have signage on site and contacting residents' families about what's going on. Hope to keep the communication open for a smooth transition.

Commissioner Bauss said he used to be in property management and was surprised after walking that parking lot recently.

Director Muck said it's the original lot and there's been some issues with rutting and patches of ice under the car ports.

Manager Kapchonick said there will be concrete under all the car ports instead of asphalt.

Commissioner Bauss asked whether the funding would be self-funding coming from the rent or from the greater community?

Manager Kapchonick said its coming from two funds: The Water & Drain Fund and from the Meadowbrook fund.

B. Recreation Division – Deputy Director Tracie Ringle

1. Program & Services

Deputy Director Ringle said summer camps are right around the corner. Registration began March 1. For a 16-day recap, we have 482 summer camp registrations so far. Last year was at 142 through 16 days, so it's a 240 percent increase. Had 50 offerings in 2016, 54 in 2017. Camp PowerPlay we know took off and we have three weeks completely sold out and a fourth 97 percent sold out, so that was a great addition to our programming. The camp info has only been on our website since 3/14, but we did do social media marketing. People can continue to register on the waiting lists.

Tonight was our spring soccer coaches meeting. Practices begin 4/10 and games 4/22 for house soccer, all weather pending. Select team tryouts are 6/17 for the fall 2017 and spring 2018 seasons. Detroit Pistons Camp has a \$31 discount if registering this month. Had 14 this time last year and 27 now.

Cultural Arts has "Alice in Wonderland Jr." next weekend. Tickets are \$10 each. One show Friday, two shows Saturday, one show Sunday. Kids are rehearsing tonight. Novi Concert Band is performing 2 p.m. Sunday at the Civic Center.

C. Older Adults – Older Adult Services Manager Karen Kapchonick

1. Program & Services

Manager Karen Kapchonick said Honorary Irishmen was yesterday at Meadowbrook with 102 attending. Gave out 30 boxes of food through FOCUS: Hope and TEFAB this week. Both are income-based food programs, but there's also an intake base, too. FOCUS: Hope is offered once per month and TEFAB offered quarterly. Important to recognize Novi students who pack the boxes and other volunteers who help take the boxes out. We have a Euchre Tournament 4/1, Welcome Spring luncheon 4/6, Novi Travel Fair 4/20, Silly Auction 4/21, Senior Stock 4/27 in Northville. AARP Tax Assistance program is very popular every Wednesday at the Civic Center 10 a.m.-3 p.m. Appointment-based; contact Novi Older Adult Services. Will serve more than 300 people by the end in April.

Commissioner Staab asked how the 300 people compares to last year?  
Manager Kapchonick said we just opened 9 a.m. appointments, so we will have more served than any previous year.  
Commissioner Staab asked how the management company at Meadowbrook handled the power outage on 4/8?  
Manager Kapchonick said the power was out for 12 hours and the management site stayed on site for 12 hours with two staff on site. They traveled out toward ranches to check on people. Power went out when it was light out, so some residents made plans to go stay with families.  
Director Muck said it was budgeted for the upcoming fiscal year to have a backup generator installed.

**CITIZEN COMMENTS:**                      None

**COMMISSIONER COMMENTS:**

Representative Lee said his name and he is a sophomore at Novi High School. Said he's in a lot of clubs, but likes to volunteer for Relay for Life.  
Representative Singh said he's a junior at Novi High School. He volunteers here and there, but likes to give back to those around him. Helped tutor kindergarten neighbor to help count for 1-10. Was the varsity B captain for tennis this year. Does HOSA, DECA. Asked when the next meeting was (4/20; third Thursday of each month). Said it was a pretty good meeting, he learned a lot. It wasn't as boring as he thought it'd be. City Council was a lot of agree, disagree and monotone voices.  
Commissioner Dooley said thanks to the commissioners for awesome presentations this evening. Always learns a lot about the city. Also thanks to commissioners for listening to Director Muck and the Grants Committee about the MNRTF grant. We looked at a lot of options for the most viable that we could participate in. With your generous assistance in approving, I'm sure City Council will come to the same decision.  
Commissioner Jewell said welcome to the student reps. Looks like you guys have a lot of energy and I'm looking forward to your great ideas. Also, thanks to everyone, I wanted to apologize to everyone. I'm out of my travel mode now. We'll save the tree fund.  
Commissioner Staab said welcome to the student reps. On 3/5, the Concert Band and Choralaires had a joint concert at the facility and had a couple hundred people. Had a fundraiser at Library Pub afterward and haven't seen that many people on a Sunday afternoon in a long time. The Concert Band has a new event coming up this weekend and the Choralaires have a sneak peek at the library early in April. If you ever get a chance to attend a joint concert, do it. There are a lot of people who participate a lot in those two groups. Good information on the grant and so on. I appreciate it.  
Commissioner Thomopoulos said welcome to the student representatives and participating in the conversations. Its beneficial to the City overall. I also wanted to thank Director Muck for sharing the maintenance infographic we got in the email. I think that's very helpful. I think we should attach it to the minutes and post it. I also wanted to acknowledge the mayor and City staff for making this facility available as a warm facility for people to reside during the extended power outages from the storm. The ice arena also did that. Thankful. Later in April we start the volunteer sessions, Novi CARES. Arbor Day I think it Rotary Park. We've talked about it at a couple meetings regarding plantings and a plaque for Rotary members. Asked to have a presentation at the next meeting on Rotary Park plans and projects for the future.  
Commissioner Bauss said welcome to the student representatives. Appreciates their participation and willingness to serve the community and make it a better place.

Thanks to our staff. I echo all the comments made here and appreciate everyone's participation here.

**ADJOURNMENT**

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

**Voice Vote**

**Unanimous**

The meeting was adjourned by Commissioner Bauss at 8:23 p.m.

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

\_\_\_\_\_  
Doug Bauss, Chairperson

\_\_\_\_\_  
Jay Dooley, Vice Chairperson