



will be more activities in the near future to continue those fundraising efforts. Commissioner Staab mentioned because there is a new executive director, Pour on the Shore will not happen until 2023. Commissioner Joseph finished by saying there are many ideas for smaller events to stay relevant and in front of residents which will be ranked by do-ability. The residents of the city continue to do fundraising efforts especially with Jessica Splash Pad. The ideas that were in the email are just preliminary and will be discussed at the next meeting.

C. Grants Committee – Commissioners Joseph & Joshi

Commissioner Joshi stated that there was not a meeting last month or this month but there will be one next month April 21<sup>st</sup>. Director Muck continued that the committee will be looking a lot farther ahead than we typically have in the past. The Grants Committee typically looked at the current and next year as to what grants could be applied for. He said, “we need to start lining up three – four-year plans because it takes a lot of work to get these grants put together and materials submitted”.

Director Muck explained the announcement regarding the state budget funding proposal which is a bipartisan support for infrastructure that parks and recreation is included.

The proposal was 250 million for state parks and trail infrastructure.

- 30 million is allocated for the development of a state park in Flint.
  - 200 million for state parks and trail infrastructure:
  - 20 million to the Great Lakes Sports Commission for Copper Peak in the U.P.
  - 55 million to downtown Grand Rapids for the Grand River Greenway.
  - 60 million to Detroit for the Joe Lewis Greenway.
  - 65 million to the DNR for local park's grant programs.
- mParks will be having a policy meeting to discuss next week. The amount is a little disappointing because the original proposal had 150 million discussed for locals and now it is at 65 million. With hundreds of municipalities and local agencies 65 million can add up really fast.

D. Parks and Facilities Updates

1. Villa Barr Art Park – Commissioner Torimoto

Commissioner Torimoto showed a panoramic view of the park along with the Google map. He described the location as being close to ITC Community Sports Park. The city website for the park is incredible. It includes a layout of all the art pieces. When you click on the items there is a video that talks about the significance of the art. There is also a QR code on some of the displays which will access the information.

Commissioner Torimoto's favorite piece was Isaiah. David Barr was a sports fan, this piece combines basketball, geometry, art and was named for Isaiah Thomas. The piece looks like a snake, but it actually is the travel path of the basketball dribbling in and doing a dunk shot.

At the entrance of the park a is a display of the hours, rules and events going on in the city. The park is open all year dawn to dusk. People gravitate to the signs that explain the park and pieces of art. In the back of the park there is a pond, and the view is very pretty.

The crew does a fantastic job with the maintenance but naturally materials will

decay over time. Commissioner Torimoto also mentioned drainage, some spots having more water. Deputy Director Ringle addressed the condition of the art. The strategic plan that was created two years ago set aside money annually to take care of the sculptures. We have had some sanded down and repainted. Koan, the large sculpture in the back, is scheduled for work this year. Everything was power washed last year which will be done every other year. Deputy Director Ringle said "it is challenging to keep up with the art, but we do have a plan and money set aside to address as much as we can every year".

## 2. Village Wood Lake Park – Commissioner Riggins

Commissioner Riggins began by saying she had never been to Village Wood Lake Park. She got a little lost while trying to get there with Google. She added it is tucked away in a nice community. The rules and hours are posted at the beginning of the park as well as a sign for the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund that allocated money for the park. She showed a picture of the pond and houses in the back. Commissioner Riggins suggested the benches be repainted due to chipping and markings. She also commented that the path be paved due to dirt and rocks. Commissioner Staab said the park has come a long way. Director Muck added the team is working on the pathways, clearing out invasive species, creating the park bench area with plans to add a few more. It was concluded that the park is a hidden gem for the community.

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

#### A. Novi Water Tower Property RC Racetrack Proposal

Director Muck introduced members of the Parks and Municipal Grounds Team, Matt Turco and Jeremia Pilarski. "Jeremia brought forward this idea to Matt who came to myself and Rob Petty who oversees facilities and grounds management. We were blown away with his presentation and thought process". Jeremia began his presentation by saying he has worked in parks maintenance for fifteen years. "My idea for the water tower property is to build a 1/8<sup>th</sup> scale radio-controlled racetrack and driver's stand." The vision statement for the project – "It's the ultimate vision for this area to create a family friendly, sport park where people of all ages and skill levels can come and feel welcome to practice, race, promote and enjoy the RC racing hobby that is loved by so many in Oakland County and the surrounding area." The water tower is the perfect location for a RC racetrack because it is an industrial area with high traffic, so it is a poor location for a traditional park. The water tower has a race car on it already. It is walking distance to Town Center, restaurants, and shops. Novi also has a racing heritage. The property is actually the location where the engines for the Novi Special race car were built.

Mr. Pilarski continued that it is a great opportunity, the different events would bring people into the community, staying at hotels, spending money at restaurants and stores. Business owners are already interested in hosting events at this site. The races such as the East vs. West bring 150 people on average to an event.

He described plans for the parking lot, driver's stand, and landscape. Examples were shown of indoor racing facilities proving it is not just for elite athletes. Young

kids, older people and citizens with mobility devices can be competitive. Examples of racetracks in other parks were shown, Hines Park in Plymouth, Riverbend in Shelby Township and Grand Woods Park. Jeremia believes that ours is going to be much better than any of these parks. The plans for use of cooking oil donated from local restaurants to keep the dust down were also described. Most of the race cars will have electric powered motors because they are easy to understand, maintain, and quieter than older nitro cars. 80 – 90% of RC enthusiasts run electric. One day a week, certain times / events will allow nitro cars.

The estimated costs were outlined for the initial building of the track and drivers stand. Electricity could be added later. The project has already been approved, work started, with hope for the soft opening May 1<sup>st</sup>. Director Muck mentioned the large support for this project and complimented Matt Turco's and Jeremia's leadership to bring it forward.

Comments and questions from the commissioners followed on subjects such as the maintenance, rentals, economic impact, metrics for measuring success and volunteers.

#### B. 2021 PRCS Annual report

Deputy Director Ringle said looking back at 2021 it was an interesting year for us. Speaking with professionals at the annual mParks Conference we agreed the toughest challenge with COVID was coming out of COVID, deciding what to offer, how to offer it, how to explain, and how to implement change. A good number of the changes were actually for the better. This report focuses and highlights our core values which are innovation, inclusion, excellence, integrity, and environment. These can be tied to each one of our programs on a regular basis. She went on to touch on a few items that were in the packets. The Special Outreach Services initiative was created by the Mayor and City Council a year ago. They asked PRCS to take it and move forward. We have made thousands of informational phone calls to the senior population, a programming survey, a special services resource guide which was in the last issue of Engage. Judy Klein is the S.O.S lead in the office. She has been distributing the guide to doctor's offices, churches, and senior living facilities. The transportation and loan closet have increased in usage. The accessible playground at Power Park and outdoor exercise equipment at Wildlife Woods were included in the S.O.S. initiative and part of that budget.

The first year of camp happened at the new Lakeshore Building. Parents, staff, and kids were happy and excited to be in that building. Director Muck took on the lead on the water tower repainting project.

Fuerst Festive Nights fell under innovation. It was time to revamp the holiday event due to COVID, gathering numbers, an outdoor location, and make some of it self-directed. The lights were there for a whole month. The event has really good building blocks to do something bigger and better this year.

COVID showed parks are a popular necessity and we need to continue to invest in the infrastructure and maintenance to keep them looking good. Shelter rentals increased 110% over the previous COVID year.

The commissioners all expressed support for Fuerst Festive Nights especially the great lights and wanting to keep them up longer as well as positive comments about the resource guide.

## **STAFF REPORTS**

### A. Administration Division – Director Jeff Muck

1. Land Swap Agreement Between Novi Community Schools & City of Novi. Director Muck began saying that the Novi Community School District and the city have been working towards a land swap agreement. There has been a longstanding relationship of sharing resources, land, and facilities. This is a cumulative effort to keep us moving forward. The land swap is exchanging approximately 140 acres all within the city. Each entity, the city and school district, swap about 70 acres. Director Muck showed a graph with the current configuration versus what is proposed. At Wildlife Woods Park, the exchange will square everything off. We coordinate the use of the tennis and basketball courts which will continue but gives Novi Schools plenty of opportunity to do additional work in these areas. The soccer fields on the Eleven Mile stretch are not in the greatest condition, they are not irrigated, with poor drainage. We are currently leasing the northern forty acres on the Bosco site. The proposal is we would take full control of the entire Bosco facility including a couple of storage buildings. This sets up the trail connector into the property with full ownership. There will be more potential for grants when the property is owned outright. A tiny parcel at Fuerst Park is in the land swap agreement. At Ella Mae Power Park, the school district does have their baseball field and some other facilities currently on city property. We will turn this property over to them including the woods as part of this deal. The schools worked with us during COVID to establish a cross country track throughout here because they were having issues scheduling at other facilities. This would allow them to permanently put in a home cross country track and not have to leave their campus.

This makes sense to square off these properties, it frees up existing athletic fields for other uses, continuous acreage, and demonstrates a commitment for collaboration. This has been being worked on for a number of years. Multiple city council and school board members have been involved in discussions. It is now in the attorney's hands. We hope to have everything signed off on this summer.

### 2. Park Projects

Director Muck reported we were awarded the Parks Design Award at the mParks conference a couple of weeks ago for Lakeshore Park. The committee made comments on the innovation, accessibility, structures, building, and pedestrian safety. He showed a picture and the plaque. The award is not just for the staff but for the Commission, City Council, and residents. People have flocked to Lakeshore en masse, and it has been a wonderful renovation to the park system. Director Muck continued to speak about Fuerst Field of Honor which is a brand-new event. Mayor Gatt wanted to do something to honor those who passed and those who served. This is taking place of the Memorial Day parade due to concerns with lack of participation and veteran's other commitments which

effected the parade. The Fuerst Field of Honor will be on Wednesday May 25<sup>th</sup>. It will be a community event with a concert featuring patriotic songs. The event will still have the same elements that occurred with Memorial Day, wreath laying, playing of taps, 21-gun salute, a moment of silence and reflection to remember those who were lost. Similar to Fuerst Festive Nights the park will be ringed with flags which will have medallions to honor those who passed in service. Along the trail, service members can be read about. Veterans are encouraged to come out. There will be a special meal for veterans and free refreshments for the community. The flags will be up until the following Wednesday however, it was suggested by Commissioner Staab that the flags stay up longer.

Bosco Fields are scheduled to open April 4<sup>th</sup> for soccer practice. There will be a grand opening on a weeknight that all the commissioners will be invited to.

The Wildlife Woods connector is scheduled for mid-April. The ITC trail will be connected into just South of the pickleball courts and exercise equipment.

Some of the topsoil from the ITC project will be utilized at the water tower.

The site planning phase of the splash pad has started including the engineering work on the water, sewer, electrical, restroom and changing building.

There has been quite a bit of activity at Rotary Park. The water, sewer and holding tank project is supposed to finish up this summer. Once this is complete the trail will be reestablished from Nine Mile into the park and down towards the tennis courts. Four outdoor exercise stations will be added along the trail.

Buckthorn is also being removed along Nine Mile. Buckthorn is an invasive species that is bad for the environment and wildlife. We are trying to reestablish the natural ecosystem which is a long and labor-intensive process. Songbirds and pollinators are coming back to the areas that have previously been treated.

## B. Recreation Division – Deputy Director Tracie Ringle

### 1. Program & Services

Deputy Director Ringle said the April – June edition of Engage is on the web and it will be in mailboxes soon indicating that summer is almost here. The staff has been planning summer for six months.

Recreation Supervisor Cristin Spiller has left the City of Novi and she is now the Director of South Lyon Area Recreation Authority. Jeff Johns has been hired and will start April 5<sup>th</sup>. He comes from Independence Township and has experience with camps, programming, and splash pads. Thank you to Commissioner Staab for being part of the interview process.

Camp Lakeshore and PowerPlay registration began March 1<sup>st</sup>. It was a very busy day in the office, online and for the treasurer's department as they reconciled all the registration revenue. There will be seventy-five campers per day at Lakeshore and forty at PowerPlay. Camp counselors are currently being hired. There have been many great interviews and a lot of people are coming back to the position from previous summers. In addition, we are hiring junior counselors which are young adults between 16-18. They do not count towards the licensing ratios but support the counselors. It is also a great feeder program.

Dawn Roe will be the new resident at Villa Barr beginning April 4<sup>th</sup>. She is a professor and practitioner. During her stay she will work with the Rouge River and head to the Upper Peninsula. She will host two programs called Marking Time With(in) Water on Monday, May 23<sup>rd</sup>.

Theatre tickets for High School Musical Jr. have been selling strong for the show the second weekend in April. There are seventy-four participants in two casts. Today a segment was filmed by Studio 6 for social media and the Public Access Channel about the theatre program. May 1<sup>st</sup> is the dance recital for the growing program including 120 dancers.

The Sizzling Summer Art Series will continue on Wednesdays at 10:30 this year. This program is strong, well-attended and enjoyed by mothers, fathers, children, and caretakers. Instead of doing outdoor movie nights we are moving forward with Tuesday Tunes. This will feature family bands (Jeff Phillips and Friends, Local Hero's Band, and Detroit Retro Society) that everyone can enjoy. Tuesday Tunes take place June, July, and August.

Upcoming programs include the second season of flag football, outdoor cornhole, youth cricket, and a youth tennis team. T-Bolts tennis team will have the opportunities to play from mid-June to the beginning of August.

We are bringing back Nature, Nurture Novi that took place previous to the pandemic. Information will be in this edition of Engage. Topics will include sustainable methods for veggie gardeners, patio vegetables, birding, toss it or turn it (recycling and composting), and adaptive gardening for health and wellbeing. The programs are for ages twelve plus, so we are expecting a variety of ages.

Deputy Director Ringle recognized the hard work that Recreation Supervisor, Greg Morris has done with AED's (automated external defibrillators). He worked for a year on this project and coordinated with other departments. A new AED will be placed at Ella Mae Power Park that will be available for all. The cabinet will call 911, has video surveillance, temperature control, real time information and allows the AED to have year-round use outdoors. Power Park has had the need for an AED and is a very active park. We hope to expand to other active parks.

The Eggstravaganza will take place at Lakeshore Park April 9<sup>th</sup>. The event is already sold out.

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

##### 1. Programs & Services

Director Muck spoke about the Special Outreach Services and Judy Klein delivering the resource guide to churches, doctor's offices, senior living centers, and rehab facilities around Novi. Many have reached out asking for more copies. There has been a good impact with new transportation riders, marked increase in requests for files of life, and loan closet borrowing and donations since the guide was released.

There were several St. Patrick's events held this month. The Shamrock Shuffle which was a themed walk at Lakeshore Park. There were thirty participants ages forty to eighty five who enjoyed exploring the trails and socializing. A St. Patrick's Day luncheon was held at Meadowbrook Commons on March 17<sup>th</sup>. The ninety - two people registered enjoyed lunch, Irish music, and a game of Truth or Blarney. According to the survey in September walking clubs, nature and travel were the most desired programs. We are starting a walking group April 7<sup>th</sup> which will rotate between different parks and trails each week. There was a trip to the DIA which brought a bus of forty-five residents. A webpage on the City of Novi website has

highlights of the upcoming trips and we have received registration from people finding the trip online. There will be a travel fair on April 18<sup>th</sup> at the Civic Center. A highlight will be the launching of the Grand Experience Mackinac Island trip in partnership with mParks. Many agencies around the state participate with great response. Our first trip will October 24<sup>th</sup> – 27<sup>th</sup>. The accommodations are at the Grand Hotel and this trip provides a very good deal for attendees.

A three-part brain health series will be starting April 6<sup>th</sup> at Meadowbrook. It will feature lectures on brain strategies, brain exercise, nutrition, and brain health. We are working on offering a circuit class utilizing the brand-new Wildlife Woods outdoor exercise equipment this summer. Livonia modeled our outdoor exercise facility into a new project for their community.

The Oakland County Veteran's Resource Fair will be hosted at the Civic Center on March 31<sup>st</sup> from 9:00-12:00. Local representatives will be on site with free, non-perishable food boxes. The Detroit VA will hold a vaccination clinic. Oakland County Veteran's services will be offering assistance regarding benefits and free Meijer gift cards. Many other agencies will provide information, health screenings, programs, and resources.

The Area Agency on Aging is doing a mobile outreach center here on April 8<sup>th</sup>. A tech class called Cutting the Cord targeted for seniors will be on April 21<sup>st</sup>.

The theme is we are not just focused on cards and bingo but getting seniors active and into the parks. Madison LaChance has been a great addition to our team and has really hit the ground running over the last six months.

### **COMMISSIONER COMMENTS:**

#### Commissioner Talkacz

Another great discussion. I have had two experiences and am continually very impressed with the great things going on. Good work for the team.

#### Commissioner Joseph

I am always impressed with the number of programs that are going. I am super excited the weather is starting to break for the parks. Not that they weren't active in the winter but back to a much higher attendance. Looking forward to all the things on the docket.

#### Commissioner Torimoto

Great meeting tonight. I am really impressed with the restructure proposal taking advantage of the situation. It is perfect for all parties. I was walking my dog by Bosco Fields and saw the field layout signs for the soccer field locations. The opening is April 4<sup>th</sup>. It will be great to see it up and running. It was nice to hear about how effective the resource guide is for people that perhaps need help. So again, overall good meeting with a lot of really good stuff going on.

#### Commissioner Joshi

I'm not sure I can talk about everything that is happened today because there was a lot, all the presentations and the RC racetrack. The award was a great achievement. I was at the Lakeshore building for my son's fencing class. It was amazing to see the interest in the building and activity at the park. People are blown away and asking

what kinds of events happen at building. That's another pat on the back for this department.

Student Representative Raghunathan

I do like all the reports we discussed at the meeting. I live close to Village Wood Lake Park and like to walk there often in the summer. It is a beautiful park. I agree with Commissioner Riggins that we should implement pavement rather than gravel.

Commissioner Riggins

Novi is always forward thinking down to the AED's lifesaving at the park. It is a wonderful idea to implement the brain exercise series. There is so much to offer. I want to congratulate you on the design award, well deserved. I was glad to hear the Jessica Starr splash pad (fundraiser) was a success.

Commissioner Staab

I want to thank Director Muck and Deputy Director Ringle again for the opportunity to participate on the interview team. It was an excellent experience with an excellent candidate pool. Our new hire that's coming on board April 5<sup>th</sup> is impressive, will hit the ground running, and do well for us.

For the many years I've sat here witnessing presentations I continue to be very appreciative of all the hard work, information flow, breadth and scope of activities going, from racing to seniors to youth activities. From the informational opportunities, resource guide plus hitting the veterans and families we cover the gamut.

Chairman Dooley

And you wonder why people want to move to Novi. I can echo all of these comments this evening. I wrote down so many days. There is something to do pretty much every day the rest of the year which involves many different aspects of what brings the city together. I echo the comments about the resource guide and inclusive parks. This is what makes Novi great, all that diversity and inclusiveness. It's just an honor to sit at this table with my fellow commissioners and hear the great presentations. So, kudos and compliments to both of you and your very fine department.

**ADJOURNMENT**

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

**Voice Vote**

**Unanimous**

The meeting was adjourned by Commissioner Dooley at 8:48p.m.

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

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

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Charles Staab, Vice Chairperson