

PARKS, RECREATION & CULTURAL SERVICES COMMISSION

Thursday, April 15th, 2021 – 7:02 P.M.

ELECTRONIC MEETING

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

ROLL CALL:

Commissioner Dooley read a State Mandate of the Open Meetings Act, that all members will identify their location by stating the county, city, and state from which he or she is attending the meeting remotely.

Dooley (Present) from Novi, Oakland County, Michigan, Staab (Present) from Novi, Oakland County, Michigan, Joseph (Present) from Novi, Oakland County, Michigan, Joshi (Present) from Novi, Oakland County, Michigan, Riggins (Present) from Novi, Oakland County, Michigan, Smith (Present) from Novi, Oakland County, Michigan, Torimoto (Present) from Novi, Oakland County, Michigan.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA:

Voice Vote

It was motioned to approve the agenda by Commissioner Staab and seconded by Commissioner Smith.

Voice Vote

Unanimous

CITIZEN COMMENTS:

None

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Approval of March 18th, 2021 minutes.

It was moved that the minutes for March be approved by Commissioner Riggins and seconded by Commissioner Joshi.

Voice Vote

Unanimous

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

A. Walkable Novi – Commissioner Riggins & Smith

There was no April meeting. The next meeting will be held in May.

Commissioner Staab questioned completion of the sidewalk on the North side of Grand River between Haggerty and Meadowbrook, a stretch of 150 yards.

Commissioner Smith will look into the priority of this area. Commissioner Dooley added concern of south side of Ten Mile west of Beck, a sidewalk just stops. If it would continue it would go all the way down to the bike trail and ITC.

Commissioner Riggins stated what I am showing for Meadowbrook Road is Village Wood Lake Park to Chapman they are going to do some pavement. The other route that you are speaking of, we will have to get back to you. Commissioner Smith agreed that we definitely want to get the short sidewalk gaps closed off.

Commissioner Staab added north of Cadillac of Novi on the east side of the road that the sidewalk stopped. It picks back up by the medical center there is

sidewalk on the south side but that means you would have to cross the street and come back. Eleven Mile and the designed bridge that goes over 696 with access to the trail that takes you to 275. A lot of bikers go up and down Meadowbrook between Grand River and Twelve Mile. Commissioner Smith agreed it is a good route to access 275 trail and continue to Thirteen Mile and Airline Trail north of Maple. The newest park, Beacon Hill, which has a bike station across from Tollgate was also mentioned.

Commissioner Riggins corrected that the next meeting will be June 10th. She will get information to answer these concerns.

B. Novi Park Foundation – Commissioners Joseph, Staab & Torimoto

Commissioner Torimoto stated there has not been a Parks Foundation meeting since our last Parks Commission meeting. The next meeting is scheduled for May.

C. Grants Committee – Commissioners Dooley & Joshi

Commissioner Joshi stated there has not been a recent meeting. Director Muck added there will be a meeting in the summer due to items that they are looking at. The department did apply for a small grant just the other day. Deputy Director Ringle added that it was the Keep Michigan Beautiful Awards / Grant which is \$500. It is a small grant that we would apply towards the garden restorations at Villa Barr. This will be discussed a bit later in the strategic plan report. We should know in late May early June if we get the award.

Commissioner Dooley asked if they anticipate hearing anything from any of the other grants, we have applied for in the past couple months. Director Muck answered that they will not hear until June or July. At that time, they will do a site visit. That would be the first time we hear anything. Then we get initial scoring typically in July or August which allows time for supplemental information. Right now, we are looking good.

D. Parks and Facilities Updates

Commissioner Dooley introduced this discussion. The commissioners find it very rewarding to be assigned various parks within the City of Novi. We have the opportunity to visit those parks and we rotate these assignments throughout the year. It gives us an opportunity to present to the citizens the parks we are responsible for. It gives an idea as to just how amazing the City of Novi is with the resources that we have within our various parks. Tonight, we have three presentations: Brookfarm Park, Village Wood Lake Park and Wildlife Woods.

1. Brookfarm Park – Commissioner Dooley

There has been marked improvements done to Brookfarm Park in the past couple of years. It was known for regular use by Novi Youth Soccer whether it be travel or select. Commissioner Dooley, describing pictures stated being there recently and walking through the park "I could not believe how fascinating the park has become". There is benches and a sidewalk on the south side which goes to the area of the river which separates this park from the school. I actually watched people walk down this path which years ago it was not there. There is great improvement, and it is very clean. Grass is starting to grow. There was an eyesore makeshift bridge with a lot of vegetation growing around. It was not a safe

passageway in my opinion. The work that has been done is a really strong foundation. They have cleaned out the vegetation. You can view the river pretty freely as a result. This is a wonderful addition that the City of Novi has done to leverage both the park and the school. It is a very nice bridge and well-marked. The signage / labeling is a nice touch. There is new growth of tree plantings. Added protection of the trees to prevent the deer from eating the bark especially in the winter months which keeps these trees strong. There is nice signage for Arbor day along with the recent plantings that were being done at this park, really nice evergreens, and trees. The fact that this park has been identified as the park where tree plantings were being taken to add to the foliage and beauty of the park." Commissioner Dooley added he was impressed with the work that has been done and the cleanliness of the park. "Soccer is still going on with two nets. It was a joy to walk through the park and I was very, very impressed." Commissioner Staab agreed that the grass and turf look good since the last time I had Brookfarm assigned to me a few years back. And I am really happy to see the benches there too. Commissioner Smith added it looks like a totally different place than when I coached soccer twenty years ago. Director Muck added that the sign is original Land and Water Conservation Fund grant information. The other was a newer one posted at the park entrance. The park is very clean and tidy these days and the sign is prominent.

2. Village Wood Lake Park – Commissioner Dooley

This park will be presented at the next Park Commission Meeting 5/20/21 due to technical difficulties.

3. Wildlife Woods Park – Commissioner Staab

Commissioner Staab stated he was out at Wildlife Woods last Sunday. He described pictures of park. The entrance coming in from the middle of school Deerfield. "There is good signage as Jay mentioned in Brookfarm. Park rules are displayed down by the parking area by the subdivision. It was wet on Sunday but not in bad shape. A little seeding is needed but that will come as we move further into spring. The pickleball courts are being constructed. They are funded by a joint effort between City Council and the Parks Foundation. The shelter has clean trash cans. It was clean for the most part except some folks had a snack or sandwich they did not clean up, but that is going to happen at times. Fields are a little wet. If you take the walkway in from the middle school parking lot to the west where the Bobcats use to practice, but it will dry out. There are lacrosse nets as well and in the background a couple of baseball diamonds."

Commissioner Staab asked when the pickleball courts will be up and running? Director Muck answered we are waiting on weather so the acrylic can be put down on the concrete. The court lines and nets will be added which will probably be Mid May. It is good to see this project come into fruition. A lot of what is referenced with the seeding would still be included in restoration.

Commissioner Staab added he noticed a lot of activity at the play structure and many people playing tennis even at 11:00am on a Sunday. "It is great to see activity in conjunction with our parks and the schools."

Commissioner Joshi asked a question about parking at the entrance for the Villas of Stonebrook.

Director Muck explained there is an agreement which allowed them to put in an easement to build that road because we also wanted a road with access to Wixom Road. It is a shared drive in from Wixom Road between the subdivision, gas rig, and the park. Commissioner Staab added he saw a man with two good size dogs off their leash and they were starting to run. He asked if that was allowed. It was stated by Director Muck in every park, dogs are supposed to be on a six-foot leash per ordinance. The only non-leash area is the dog park. This is stated on all our park rules signs.

MATTERS FOR COMMISSION DISCUSSION AND/OR ACTION:

A. Special Outreach Services (SOS) program

At the March 22nd City Council Meeting, Mayor Gatt brought forward the Special Outreach Services program initiative. We have identified and taken action on several steps. The first to incorporate accessibility and sensory features into the playground renovations at Ella Mae Power Park. We looked at data on where higher concentrations of seniors and those of special needs are in the community. We have started to research how to expand the senior transportation program to include partnerships with ride share and delivery services. We have brought back a staff member to assist with outreach efforts and personally connect with those who are in need but do not normally ask for assistance. We have also started initial phases of developing a resource guide that would go out to all the households in the city. This would include not only parks and rec resources; social services and things police and fire may offer. This is targeted to those 55 and older and is a rapidly changing initiative with a lot more to come.

B. Ella Mae Power Park Inclusive Design Playground

One of the first things we did was to move to an all-inclusive playground at Power Park. This playground was originally scheduled to be replaced in fiscal year 2021-22 but on a much smaller scale. The new initiative makes it one hundred percent truly inclusive with things such as above ground wheelchair access, landing decks that are designed to provide appropriate turning space and gather points for wheelchair users. The ramps lead up onto the structure. A We-Go-Swing, which is designed to allow wheelchair users to swing with their friends both in wheelchairs and not. There will be poured in place safety surfacing which is a rubberized surface. It is on the existing Power Park Playground and it is very wheelchair and walker mobility friendly. There will be multiple sensory play features that make the park very inclusive. We have auditory and visual stimulation throughout the playground. We are combining the existing playgrounds that were renovated in 2014. The Novi Parks Foundation paid for the poured in place surfacing at that time. This project is going to meld those two playgrounds together so it will be one seamless area. The other playground that is currently there has inclusive features but now it this is going to be one giant playground very focused on inclusivity.

A video about the We-Go-Swing was shown with positive reaction.

Director Muck added that he is pretty sure it will be the only one in Michigan. We contacted many of the teachers in special education department in Novi schools. At least six, sent letters of support and congratulations on it moving

forward. Director Muck also spoke with the Executive Director of the Paralyzed Veteran's Association of America who was completely in favor of the project. This was approved by council on Monday night. It is a \$350,000 project. We anticipate being open mid to late May. However, that is weather and shipping dependent, and COVID not affecting the construction or delivery crews. We will certainly be having a grand opening and inviting all our parks commissioners, Novi special education teachers, paralyzed veterans, and City Council. Commissioner Joshi asked if the We-Go-Swing has been used in other parts of the country, adding concern about liability when wheelchairs are transported. Director Muck answered it is in use in other areas. What really attracted us to this was it is for all ages. "Grandma and grandpa can wheel directly from the parking lot right up here and swing with the grandkids. That is part of being inclusive is it is not just for kids, it's all ages." Commissioner Joshi asked about the areas being combined. Director Muck also clarified how the two areas were going to be combined into a seamless transition with use of the visual aids. Commissioner Riggins asked if there would be a timer on the equipment for people who might be on too long. Director Muck did not think this would be a concern. Commissioner Torimoto inquired about age limits on different play structures. He asked if the age range was encompassing everybody now and how it worked? Director Muck explained the different structures and age ranges with the visuals provided.

C. Outdoor Exercise Stations

One of the council members suggested they wanted to see outdoor exercise stations as part of the initiative. We currently have one at Meadowbrook Commons which is a four-station exercise area. Part of the special outreach is to put these in another park or parks. Director Muck stated he wants to get the thought process of the Parks Commissioners and bring for discussion at the next meeting. Director Muck added there is several ways to approach this; put all the exercise stations along a trail / existing pathway or cluster similar to Meadowbrook. Parks to consider having outdoor exercise stations are Brookfarm, Village Wood Lake, Wildlife Woods (by the new connector between ITC trail and the sidewalk pathway by the pavilion). Other options include Bosco, the water tower or Nine Mile and Garfield. Director Muck plans to have a presentation with representative samples and estimated costs at the May meeting. Commissioner Staab asked about usage of the outdoor exercise stations at Meadowbrook besides the residence. Director Muck answered that since you must walk onto the campus to get there it is mainly used by the Meadowbrook Commons residence. Prior to COVID some fitness classes we held out there and the residence would love to get back to doing that again. Commissioner Staab suggested behind Power Park as a location since it already has a lot of activities. He added that there was a similar course with obstacles and exercise stations at this location back in the 80's. Also, there is a lot of subdivisions in that area. Director Muck finished, we have a blank canvas that we can take to City Counsel. This is open for discussion with the commissioners and their preferences as to which of the parks, pros and cons and ideas. Director Muck suggested the commissioners walk through Brookfarm, Village Wood Lake and Wildlife Woods

and think about where the exercise stations could go and rank one, two and three. Commissioner Joseph asked for clarification about a cluster of stations. Then added one that stands out in my mind is along Hines sequential route next to the running and riding pathway. The stations seem to be in a state of disarray as of the last couple of years. Keeping them in one place seems easier to stay focused and for upkeep as opposed to scattered along a few miles.

STAFF REPORTS

- A. Administration Division – Director Jeff Muck
CAPRA reaccreditation will be happening virtually the week of May 17th. We will provide an update at the next meeting.

1. Park Projects Update

Lakeshore Park is coming along. It is in full use by people, using the playgrounds and trails. We've set up picnic shelters with tables. Shelter rentals start May 1st. There is still a lot of work to be done with landscaping. Landscaping did start last week after a delay due to COVID hitting the crews. There is a lot of landscaping that still needs to be done.

The second course of asphalt still needs to be poured as well. Recent snowfall does not help with getting the asphalt plants opened. When it gets into the thirties at night they cannot. That is part of the reason why the gate / fencing is still up. You cannot drive all the way back to the trailhead and must walk to shelters two and three plus the playground. We cannot open the fence until we get the second course of asphalt due to accessibility issues leading back further into the park. We had grills and tables being added last week and some benches got installed.

The target date for the water tower project is May 31st for the restoration and painting to happen. There was some concern the project might not happen due to PPG painting supply chain not being able to get product.

We acquired a small piece of property to expand Pavilion Shore. It is a triangular piece of property that is bordered with some split rail fence and an old dock into Walled Lake. We will be taking down the fence, the dock out and rip up some old bushes and overgrowth. That makes the entire shoreline complete because we did own the other piece of property on the west side. Everything is now tied together.

As we mentioned in Commissioner Staab's report of Wildlife Woods it is two – three weeks before the acrylic to go down on the pickleball courts. It is weather dependent, and April 29th would be the earliest. The ITC connector trail will be constructed late summer.

2. Lakeshore Park Stewardship Workdays

A resident contacted Director Muck concerned about the growth of invasive garlic mustard in Lakeshore Park. She had participated in a volunteer day last year and wanted to see if the city would be willing to help with an event in 2021. She and her husband are putting together a map that would designate areas of concentration to focus on these two days. This will be self-directed. Participants can come any time between 9:00-12:00 for any amount of time, fifteen minutes to three hours or more. We will be handing out trash bags, gloves, identification

cards, maps, and refreshments. These can be taken right out onto the trails. It is an activity for all ages six – eighty-six. These workdays will take place 4/24 and 5/8.

B. Recreation Division – Deputy Director Ringle

1. Program & Services

Deputy Director Ringle stated that the spring programs are currently running and we're ready to transition to summer. We are following MDHHS guidelines and return to recreation protocols. Our athletes between 13-19 years old are being tested for COVID which is required. We have had success getting those reports in a timely manner. We anticipate that we will continue to be successful in running programs and athletics as we transition to more outdoor sports and programs. Our fields are open and ready. Adult softball has begun as well as soccer both the Lightning and Thunder leagues.

Recreation Supervisor Greg Morris is putting together pickleball lessons and leagues.

Three of David Barr's statues came back to the City of Novi. They were on loan to the City of Farmington for a couple years. They were placed in Fuerst Park. We are currently working on signage for those and replacing all the signage for the art in Fuerst Park. The DPW sign shop is doing the work.

Commissioner Riggins inquired about when the lessons for pickleball would start. Deputy Director Ringle answered that Greg Morris is working with a contractor to see if they are interested and willing to do the lessons. Deputy Director Ringle said dates will be shared when we know.

Deputy Director Ringle also clarified the start dates for each of the soccer programs.

2. Villa Barr Strategic Plan

Deputy Director Ringle stated since the inception of Villa Barr Art Park there has been numerous supporters who want to see it continue to evolve. The ideas have been in a lot of different directions for programming, investments, and marketing. It is very broad across the ways of what people think Villa Barr has the potential to become. There has been a lot of thought around Villa Barr Art Park so we determined it was time for us to do a strategic plan to get us focused on what our priorities should be for the park. The strategic planning process included several members from the community. We had members of City Council, this commission, Historical Commission, Cultural Arts Advisory Board, Older Adult Advisory Board, Beautification, and the Friends of Villa Barr. It was a broad group of folks. The process started in February of 2020 and had some delays due to COVID.

We determined that there were four major themes, priorities, and actions. One of the themes that kept coming up was an educational resource with opportunities to tie in the Novi School District curriculum, sponsor special programs and events, nurture and invite multidisciplinary inquiry to serve multiple populations including seniors and those with special needs and capitalize on the artist in resident program. One thing we did during this process is encourage those folks that participated to also volunteer to take on action steps and lead the initiatives.

Another theme was a means of connecting the city, region, state, and world with all that Villa Barr has to offer, the knowledge, experience, uniqueness and richness of David, his work, and Villa Barr. That is technology, apps, and QR codes. How do we really get the word out to reach the world? We need to do that broader than here in Novi, so we've got technology behind it, tours virtual and onsite, marketing. Names are tied to these too to help support the staff and what we need to do.

The third theme was an unprecedented opportunity to be a community convener and respectfully, authentically preserve the legacy of David and his Villa Barr through intentional community engagement by honoring and preserving the contemplative nature and positioning as a destination to inspire, engage, imagination and educate.

A community culture institution that would benefit from some form of tracking and evaluation. Which could assist with cultivation, advocates, and supports applying for grant funding. Possible using an online survey and statistics to track success which is important when applying for funds. In addition to talking to people about value of Villa Barr. Lastly, a sustainable park with a variety of funding sources to ensure the long-term attraction of the park and residency program. The funding sources we identified were grants, revenue producing programming and future park rentals.

The meetings started a year ago, people who joined have gotten tasks and we completed a number of things. Last month educational resources started. There is the art park activity book for children created and placed on the website. We also have an educator's guide that has been given to Novi Schools for review. This ties together math, nature, art, and science to Villa Barr which David Barr was interested in all. This comprehensive guide was put together by an Eastern Michigan University educator and his intern. In addition, a Villa Barr suggested reading list has been compiled which is on the website including everything from kindergarten picture books to adulthood themes.

The garden replanting is underway with butterfly friendly plants. It will be an ongoing process and we will continue to add plants and move perennials around. The botanical tour has been recorded for placement on the IZI Travel app. This was done by the EMU professor and student. The tour includes information on the planting David Barr did there. Originally it was a corn field so everything that was planted was done by David, Beth, and their family. This adds another layer of interest when touring the park. The sculpture tour has been approved for recording for the IZI Travel app as well. This app is community driven, and the app can be downloaded on a phone. Anybody can add tours to the app. It has Detroit tours including walking tours of churches, Hart Plaza, and museums.

Residency listing has been updated on the Alliance for Artists Communities. We had five applications for the artist residency program.

The park has been added on the Pure Michigan website as a destination location in the state.

Under the community convener and preserving legacy theme the sculptures have been power washed, cleaned and maintenance priorities identified. Some sculptures need paint and sanding which is on our funding list for potentially occurring by the end of this fiscal year which ends June 30th. Three sculptures

have been identified that would start the process and continue with one or two sculptures a year as funding allows.

For tracking and evaluation, we have set up Google alerts to track mentions of Villa Barr in newspaper articles or online to interest. Additionally, this report will be shared in novi.org/villabarr. We are updating pages as the city does a website refresh.

We are getting quotes to re-side the red studio building. In addition, we applied for a small grant through Keep Michigan Beautiful. We are getting to work on this strategic plan, updates will be shared with the commission and on the website as well as progress reports.

Commissioner Joshi thinks it looks great and hopes they explore the benefit to the school district just to put a spotlight on that park.

C. Older Adults Division – Director Jeff Muck

1. Program & Services

As part of the SOS initiatives, we did bring back Judy Klein. Judy previously was a part-time recreation programmer focused on older adults. Prior to COVID she handled a lot of the parties and special events at Meadowbrook. She is now making phone calls to residents. She is only working three days a week however, she made 175 call the first week. Judy started with the 90 plus age bracket and is working her way down. These are wellness checks. Judy has made several referrals to our city's transportation and the loan closet.

Another of the initiatives was the rideshare service. We are looking at a program called GoGo Grandparent which would supplement our transportation program. It bridges the gap for demand of service hours between our program and Uber and Lyft.

We are also looking at a lawn and landscaping referral program. Many seniors have difficulty finding a landscaper or someone to do one-off lawnmowing if they are gone for a month or medical issues. This would not pay for people's lawn service or landscaping.

Bingo has started up again at the Civic Center this month. We hope to get Commissioner Dooley will be lined up to call future bingo games.

COMMISSIONER COMMENTS:

Commissioner Joshi

Thank you for the updates as always. It's nice to know what is happening. Just wanting to wish everyone a safe weekend and good night.

Commissioner Torimoto

I would like to thank the professional staff and everybody for the contributions. The conversation was very interesting today as the parks redefine themselves, matching the needs to the real possibilities. Commissioner Joseph discussed the soccer fields. The new pickleball courts and usage of Wildlife Woods is really changing and you're seeing new possibilities with connecting the trails. I'm actually going to vote for trying to get the equipment there as it connects and redefines the park. Seeing some activity restarting but also future possibilities is very positive.

Commissioner Riggins

I would like to thank everyone for all the updates. What really blew me away was the We-Go-Swing. I am excited for that. It's going to be an aim to include everyone and integrate our people to have fun and do things. I'm excited for everything that was talked about tonight including my homework that I have to do.

Commissioner Joseph

I'll echo what Commissioner Riggins was saying. It's exciting to see that inclusive play going up. When I was growing up the playground was a bit of a death trap with these steep steel slides and whatnot. It is good to see the progression over the years. It was a super informative meeting tonight. Thanks for all the information, a lot to digest. Let's hope the weather finally starts to break so we can enjoy these activities. Let's get out there and enjoy the parks.

Commissioner Smith

I second Commissioner Joseph about the old Power Park. Taking my kids there in the early nineties it was definitely a death trap. There has been so much work in that park. Keep up the great work. Looking forward to the next meeting.

Commissioner Staab

I really appreciate your comprehensive plan on Villa Barr to bring it over the finish line. Starting in pre-COVID days in February 2020. It's a good road to work on with benchmarks for going forward. I appreciated the ability to get out and go through Wildlife Woods. We were also able to participate with our two grandchildren in Eggstravaganza before Easter. It was well run and organized on that cold, wet, windy day. The Easter bunny was even there. I appreciate all your reports, hard work and look forward to the meeting in May.

Commissioner Dooley

Miss Amazing is coming up May 15th at Fuerst Park. It is a pageant for special needs young ladies. I certainly hope that if the playground is up, we can showcase that too for the folks visiting Novi. If anybody has an opportunity to come out on Saturday May 15th we would appreciate. It is a fun event.
Thank you, Director Muck and Deputy Director Ringle, for your great presentations and also the fellow commissioners for again another robust and informative meeting.

ADJOURNMENT

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

Voice Vote

Unanimous

The meeting was adjourned by Commissioner Dooley at 8:33p.m.

DATE APPROVED: _____

Jay Dooley, Chairperson

Charles Staab, Vice Chairperson

