

**PARKS, RECREATION & CULTURAL SERVICES COMMISSION**

**Thursday, January 20<sup>th</sup>, 2022 – 7 P.M.**

Novi Civic Center – Council Chambers

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. with Commissioner Dooley presiding.

**ROLL CALL:**

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

**APPROVAL OF AGENDA:**

Line item 6D was moved to the February meeting due to the absence of Commissioner Riggins. Commissioner Dooley motioned for approval of agenda. The agenda approval was seconded by Commissioner Joshi.

**Voice Vote**

**Unanimous**

**CITIZEN COMMENTS:**

None

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES:**

Approval of December 16<sup>th</sup> 2021 minutes.

It was moved that the minutes for the December meeting be approved by Commissioner Dooley and seconded by Commissioner Joshi.

**Voice Vote**

**Unanimous**

Commissioner Dooley introduced Joe Tolkacz the new member of the Commission. Commission Tolkacz added he has been a Novi resident since 1992. He has three boys who went through the parks and recreation soccer, baseball, and basketball programs. He was involved in the tennis league. Commissioner Tolkacz is an avid runner, biker and walks his dog often. Being on the Walkable Novi committee will be prefect. He said he is really looking forward to the opportunity of being a part of Parks Commission.

**COMMITTEE REPORTS:**

- A. Walkable Novi – Commissioner Dooley & Tolkacz  
Commissioner Dooley stated there was not a meeting in January. Director Muck said there will be a meeting in the upcoming months.
  
- B. Novi Park Foundation – Commissioners Joseph, Riggins, Staab & Torimoto  
Commissioner Torimoto said there was a meeting in December and the next will be in February. Director Muck announced that the donations for the Jessica Splash Pad have hit the \$100,000 mark with major donations this week from family members. There will be more announcements soon.  
Melissa Agosta is transitioning to the executive director role for the Novi Parks Foundation. The Foundation is happy to have her in place and she will be a great

addition. Director Muck expressed thanks to former director, Rachel Zagaroli for all her efforts over the years.

C. Grants Committee – Commissioners Joseph & Joshi

Commissioner Joshi said there was not a meeting last month, but one is scheduled for February. Director Muck added that in February we will be diving into potential grant applications, so it is an important meeting with decisions to be made on applications. We did submit a grant application to Oakland County for the Northwest Park Development. We should hear in April on the status. Director Muck continued that for Monday night's City Council meeting there is a property acquisition for consideration. This was discussed during grants committee but not at this table. It is Elm Court - Shawood Lake, more information can be found in the City Council packet.

D. Parks and Facilities Updates

1. Novi Dog Park – Commissioner Riggins

Tabled to February meeting.

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

A. Novi Ice Arena Presentation – Erik Carlson, General Manager

Director Muck introduced Erik Carlson and added that he is very impressed with how Suburban runs the ice arena and staffing. The general manager is very good at interacting with coaches, user groups, renters and still gets on the ice himself.

General Manager, Erik Carlson said he appreciates the opportunity to speak and share what they do at the Novi Ice Arena. The ice arena has had a wonderful relationship with the city for the past twenty years, running programs and the facility. The building opened in 1998 and the partnership began in 1999.

Suburban Sports Group is a facility management company that operates six arenas around Southeast Michigan and one in Lansing.

The Novi Ice Arena is 80,000 square feet with two NHL regulation ice surfaces. It is home to Olympic ice dancers, a skating club, Novi Youth Hockey Association, Novi High School hockey and figure skating and Northville High School hockey. The last twenty months has been a challenge with COVID. Erik Carlson believes they have done a wonderful job keeping the building safe and working through the mandates. They will continue to skate through COVID.

Next he provided a look at a day at the ice arena. The day starts with a unique group of people that train at the arena Monday through Friday all year long. We have a world-renowned ice dancing coach, Igor Shpilband. Many ice dancers train at the facility every day 6:00am to 4:00pm. This group has been training with us since 2012. At the 2018 PyeongChang Olympics there was five teams from Novi Ice Arena competing. Gleb Smolkin and Diana Davis will be competing representing Russia at the 2022 Olympics. They train at Novi Ice Arena every day. He said it is a real pleasure to get to know these young athletes, watch how hard they work every single day for seven minutes every four years. We currently have fifteen ice dance couples that are chasing their Olympic dreams for 2026.

The Skating Club of Novi has over eighty members that train every day. These are all figure skaters. We host a series of summer and holiday exhibitions and an annual ice show. The most important program in the facility is the learn to skate. There are over 2000 participants per year among our Suburban Sports Group which is ranked number one in the nation for participation. Next is the Aspire Program which is the pathway to freestyle figure skating as well as the Novi hockey development program. During the early evening hours, the youth hockey programs take place. Novi Youth Hockey Association offers house recreational and travel hockey. Erik Carlson is the hockey skills coordinator and works closely with the teams and developing players. The high school side is right after school with the Novi and Northville teams being a staple in the building. The night ends with the adult leagues which are all experience levels and over 100 teams participate throughout the year. Erik Carlson said he is proud of all our ice sport athletes and is just looking to continue to grow each year.

## **STAFF REPORTS**

### A. Administration Division – Director Jeff Muck

#### 1. Capital Improvement Program Update

Director Muck stated that we are in the heart of budget season for the City of Novi. The budget process is a yearlong activity but now we are getting approvals, having interactions with City Council, and moving forward with setting budgets. Director Muck explained the Capital Improvement Program also known as CIP. Capital assets have an individual cost of at least \$25,000 and estimated useful life of five years. The CIP committee consists of three council members and two planning commission members. They are tasked with discussing the CIP presented by the staff then make a recommendation to both Planning Commission and City Council. These recommendations are not set in stone. City Council has the ultimate say and decides on moving forward with projects. The City operates on a July 1<sup>st</sup> – June 30<sup>th</sup> budget. Director Muck started with fiscal year 2022-23 which includes the tunnel underneath South Lake Drive at Lakeshore Park. This is important because it will address handicap accessibility, drainage, and structural integrity. 2023 also includes Meadowbrook Commons roofs at five of the ranch units and a fire panel replacement. The Ice Arena needs a major roof restoration and public address system.

Director Muck continued with fiscal year '23 – '24. The first project discussed was the Novi Cemetery enhancement project including installing a gravel pathway around the southern perimeter and a crushed gravel pathway through the main drive. The next four of nine ranch roofs will be replaced at Meadowbrook. Then we would start on window replacements in the main building and ranches. The windows are twenty years old and starting to have issues. The ice arena dehumidification unit is on the list. As well as Rotary Park parking lot and sidewalk improvements for handicap accessibility to connect the parking lot to the tennis courts, shelter, and trail system.

The next big project would be the Lakeshore parking lot reconstruction from the midpoint of the park going back to the trailhead. The Motor City Mountain Bike Association is planning to fund and construct a new changing area with storage and kiosk at the trailhead. The parking lot will be paved, realigned giving more

space and utilizing the area more effectively for additional vehicles. The trail system at Lakeshore Park is booming and people want access.

Looking beyond to '24 - '25, the splash pad and Northwest Park are in as a place holder. We can pull some of these items forward if the fundraising comes through faster or a grant is available. We would work with the finance department and City Council to prioritize these projects and shift funding. Also, in '24 – '25 we are looking to upgrade the theater lighting and stage curtain because the theater program is growing. The Ice Arena HVAC units and elevator repairs are on the CIP project plans.

Director Muck explained that we are always looking ahead about six years. The future of ITC Community Sports Park has been discussed, renovating, replacing and changes for current usage needs. It may be appropriate to add more tennis and pickleball courts with Bosco Fields opening up this spring. There will be public meetings, hearings, and big discussions the next couple of years.

The theme is that there is a lot of infrastructure. The need is to plan out and address our parks that have been a haven for people to escape during COVID for mental and physical relief. Director Muck said we need to invest in the parks. The totals for the next three years 1.6 million in parks, 1.2 million in the Ice arena, and 1,000,000 in Meadowbrook Commons, these are subject to change. City Council is doing an early budget input session on Monday Feb. 7<sup>th</sup> before the scheduled Council meeting. City Council will give staff direction on their goals, priorities and moving some of these projects up or back. The Planning Commission reviews and recommends in March. The recommended budget goes to Council after staff has adjusted based on input. In April is the Council budget session public hearing adoption. The budget needs to be passed in May then in June the final budget documents are published, and July starts the fiscal year.

There were questions regarding the cemetery project, connecting neighborhoods to trails and discussion on the land swap between the City and school district.

## B. Recreation Division – Deputy Director Tracie Ringle

### 1. Program & Services

Deputy Director Ringle said the recreation team is anticipating spring. Currently a lot of work is behind the scenes, gaining sponsorships and putting contracts together. Our sports division is coordinating a youth tennis team for the first time. Youth tennis lessons have been overwhelming and added classes keep filling. The team is an initiative of Recreation Supervisor, Chase Root as another option to keep kids engaged, take what they learned in lessons and applying it. The team will be called the T Bolts. Todd Beyer the lead instructor for lessons will be the coordinator and coach. The participants will have league play throughout the summer and tournaments. There are no restrictions on ability however, most will be above the beginner level. The program is partnered with South Lyon and Northville and will be cross promoted in those communities. Tennis is growing in Novi, so we look forward to bringing more opportunities. Adult tennis registration is open. This year there will be designated times at courts for league play. Pickleball leagues round two is open for registration and filling quickly. The February - March lessons are filled already.

Softball registration is open for returning teams for the spring season. New teams can register starting Feb. 28<sup>th</sup>. Recreation Supervisor, Greg Morris is getting the softball leagues set as well as field rentals. Some new tournaments and rentals are moving to Novi based on our fields and maintenance standards.

Deputy Director Ringle continued with updates on the youth and teen programs starting with the Daddy Daughter Dance. The program will just be held on Friday and Saturday nights instead of three dances. The Saturday afternoon time has been eliminated due to numbers and COVID concerns. The Mother Son dance is open for registration. Recreation Supervisor, Cristin Spiller is coordinating the dances as well as the Egg Hunt and Finding Big Foot. The seven-foot Big Foot has been retired but there will be different ways to find him in the parks. Camp counselors can apply now with the hiring process starting. Registration for camp begins March 1<sup>st</sup>. Camp Lakeshore is planning for seventy- five campers with forty in Camp Powerplay at the Civic Center. Additional counselors will be hired to cover the increase to stay within our licensing ratios.

Recreation Supervisor Alyssa Golles is busy coordinating dance classes. The dance program has grown exponentially over the last six years. There are one hundred children enrolled in traditional dance classes (ballet, tap, hip hop, etc.). The cultural dance classes Mexico Lindo and Polynesian will be starting soon. Rehearsals for High School Musical started tonight. There will be two full casts with the seventy-two actors registered. The production will take place April 7<sup>th</sup> – 10<sup>th</sup>. Shelter reservations open Jan. 11<sup>th</sup>. Reservations are going well with a number of rentals on the first day. Last year was a great growth and learning year. We came across things we had not in the past, so we have tightened the refund policy and date changes which require a lot of administrative work. The new Engage February – March will be in mailboxes next week with programs that will get us into spring.

After being asked about soccer numbers Deputy Director Ringle said she expects more registrations since basketball numbers were bigger than 2018. Director Muck added that the numbers are great at the Ice Arena.

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

##### 1. Programs & Services

Director Muck started off with the AARP Tax Aid Program is off and running and as of January 18<sup>th</sup>, 222 appointments out of 330 have been scheduled. These will return to a single appointment format with COVID safe distancing protocols in place. An aging in place program is scheduled for January 27<sup>th</sup>. The topic is planning for your driving retirement. The presenter is from the Aging Driver Coordinator for Michigan Department of State. The presentation will focus on resources available through the safe driver smart options keys to Lifelong Mobility website. Novi Senior Transportation brochures will also be distributed. A tech support class was held today focusing on outsourcing memory with iPhone notes and reminders. We are hosting the Disability Network Eastern Michigan's Mobil Outreach on March 11<sup>th</sup>, the first in person information program.

OAS held an evening winter walk last Thursday at the ITC trail. It was lit with lanterns and had trivia along the way. There were ten participants. On Saturday OAS is holding a snow painting event at Meadowbrook Commons for kids, parents, and grandparents to decorate the grounds around the gazebo. Being

innovative our team worked with the Ice Arena to bring in snow and ice shavings.

The Secretary of State mobile office visited Meadowbrook Commons today and was open to all residents. All the appointment slots were filled. This was coordinated by the Meadowbrook staff in conjunction with OAS. There was a great response. We are planning to bring it back again.

On Friday January 28<sup>th</sup> we are partnering with Fox Run to hold an informational meeting about Honor Flight with guest speaker Angie Pettit from Talons Out. This will be held at the Lakeshore Building. The Honor Flight is a great opportunity for veterans to be appreciated. They travel to Washington D.C. for the day to visit monuments and memorials. A recap video was shown at our Veteran's Day celebration.

OAS staff member Judy Klein has made over 300 calls within the last month making sure that people are prepared for winter, the resource guide information, referrals to the loan closet, meals on wheels and transportation. Callers have stated that they are happy the city is checking in on them. The S.O.S resource guide is online via the city website it will also be a pull out in Engage.

### **COMMISSIONER COMMENTS:**

#### Student Representative Raghunathan

I like the update of the programs, services, sports, Valentine's Dance, and tennis. It sounds really cool.

#### Student Representative Bheemineni

It is nice to see we are addressing a lot of handicapped issues in the fiscal year '22 – '23. I took private lessons from Todd. It is nice to see him coach the tennis team.

#### Commissioner Joshi

I would like to welcome Commissioner Tolkacz. Just overall amazing presentation by Erik about the Suburban / Novi Ice Arena. Thank you both for the presentations Director and Deputy Director.

#### Commissioner Tolkacz

I must say it has been a great learning process over the past couple of days. I met with Director Muck last night and filled up a notebook of things I did not know. I've been here for 32 years and did not know many of these things were going on. We have a lot to offer. Maybe that's part of the role here is to figure out how to better communicate.

#### Commissioner Torimoto

It was interesting to see the presentation from Erik Carlson for the Ice Arena. I have gone through the learn to skate, ice hockey and open public skating as a family. I would echo the comments on the investments. I think we are not only going back before COVID but beyond. People are appreciating and there is going to be greater participation, engagement opportunities beyond what was before COVID. We are looking forward to playing tennis and all the different programs.

Chairman Dooley

It was a timely report on CIP. Thank you for being so comprehensive and breaking it down by years. I agree with the amount for disability awareness. Miss Amazing takes place in the City of Novi, and it is a tribute to the fact that as a city we can take on that role and responsibility. Being part of that contest is a beautiful thing to see and watch. The fact that disability awareness is such a big part of the city is a great tribute to Novi. We are in good hands, and we are very blessed that we get a chance to talk every month.

**ADJOURNMENT**

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

**Voice Vote**

**Unanimous**

The meeting was adjourned by Commissioner Dooley at 7:57p.m.

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

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Jay Dooley, Chairperson

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Charles Staab, Vice Chairperson