

PARKS, RECREATION & CULTURAL SERVICES COMMISSION

Thursday, November 20th, 2025 – 7 P.M.

Novi Civic Center – Council Chambers

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

ROLL CALL:

Commissioners: Joseph (absent/excused), Riggins (present), Dooley (present), Gopalakrishnan (absent/excused), Staab (present), Bagley (absent/excused), Torimoto (present)

APPROVAL OF AGENDA:

Agenda item 8A was moved to the December meeting.

Commissioner Staab motioned for approval of agenda and second by Commissioner Riggins.

Voice Vote

Unanimous

CITIZEN COMMENTS:

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

It was moved that the minutes for the September 18th meeting be approved by Commissioner Dooley and second by Commissioner Riggins.

Voice Vote

Unanimous

PRESENTATIONS

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

- A. Novi Parks Foundation – Commissioners Riggins, Staab & Torimoto
Commissioner Staab said the last meeting was November 12th. The primary objective is replacing the Executive Director. Twelve – fifteen resumes were received which were narrowed down to four. Commissioner Riggins and Torimoto conducted the first round of interviews through Zoom this week. Commissioner Riggins elaborated that after the initial interviews the candidates will be brought back for a face-to-face meeting. In response to Commissioner Dooley's question about the qualities that they are looking for, the Foundation members said, energetic, involved in the community, detail oriented, ability to oversee fund raising, being visible and networking. The hope is to have new Executive Director in place for the December 9th meeting. New technology was used to evaluate resumes; it has been very innovative in selecting candidates.
- B. Active Mobility Committee – Commissioners Gopalakrishnan & Dooley
Commissioner Dooley said he just came out the mobility meeting which was still in progress. There was a lot of discussion this evening. Councilman Dave Staudt has

joined the Mobility Committee in addition to Brian Smith. The discussion tonight involved the sidewalks in the Nine Mile corridor from Farmington Hills to ITC / Napier Road. It was a good conversation, and it is probably still going with other topics as well.

C. Commissioner Parks and Facilities updates

1. OAS/mParks Mackinac Island Trip – Commissioner Riggins

Commissioner Riggins prepared a wonderful presentation with many pictures of the fall leaves, hotel, plus views of the water. She started by saying that Novi offers many different trips which Seniors can participate. She went on the Mackinac Island trip in October. The group stayed at the Grand Hotel which has been open since the 1800s. It is a step back in time since the island does not allow cars. People need to travel by horse and carriage or walk. The hotel is famous for its porch that is 660 feet and wraps around the building. While sitting in the white rocking chairs beautiful views of the water and flowers can be seen. It is a peaceful and nice experience. The chaperones, Madison and Shannon were there to support, guide and take great care of the group.

Commissioner Riggins advised what to bring for the trip, fancy clothes, singles for tips, comfortable shoes for walking and weather essentials for a variety of temperatures. It was required to dress up for dinner each evening, which was very exciting.

A booklet was distributed that listed all the activities. Day one was all about food. Dinner was a five-course meal each day. The wait staff and food was excellent. Day two she went on a carriage tour of the whole island. Time was spent at the Arch Rock that has been there for 4000 years. Day three she spent with her new friend Alice who she met the first day of the trip.

Commissioner Riggins suggested everyone book the trip to Mackinac next year. OAS Manager Kit Keiser said the dates were announced today, October 13th - 16th. The trip filled with a capacity of 56 by February. If you are interested, watch for registration and sign up early.

Director Muck said historically (eight years) the commissioners have been assigned park reports. Everyone has done a monthly report and rotated through the parks. PRCS Account Clerk, Derek Brooks who compiles the meeting minutes had a suggestion that the Commissioners change it up and present on a program or event. This will be brought up for discussion at the next meeting. 2026 instead of doing park reports everybody will take a month and identify one – two or several activities, events, sports, OAS program or other service we offer to attend and give a presentation.

MATTERS FOR COMMISSION DISCUSSION AND/OR ACTION:

A. Shawood Lake Island – Tabled to December.

STAFF REPORTS

A. Administration Division – Director Jeff Muck

1. Park Project Updates

Director Muck provided a brief update on park projects. The Ella Mae Power Park pathways and parking lot reconstruction was completed the last week of October.

He is pleased with the results. There have been many positive comments about the wider pathways and well-marked lot have been received.

Monday night, City Council agreed to a spring / summer 2026 contract with the Michigan Department of Transportation MDOT for a pathway construction between the existing ITC Trail and Bosco Fields. This has been discussed several times as it came out of the Mobility Committee several years ago. Federal funds with a small portion of city funds will be used. Planning and construction will begin this March, depending on the contractor's availability. The project will continue through soccer season. However, no work can be done after 5:00 on weekdays or weekends due to practice and games.

The Shawood Lake Island discussion is tabled until December so the whole Commission can participate. The demolition of the building has been delayed due to a communication issue with one of the utility providers on disconnecting service.

2. Smoking and Vaping in Parks update

Director Muck stated that smoking and vaping in the parks was discussed at the last meeting. The topic did go to the City Council Ordinance Review Committee. They considered the PRCS Commission's recommendations regarding smoking and vaping. They agreed an ordinance would be too strict and the idea of a park rule being enacted is more appropriate. City Attorney Schultz was directed to put this in front of City Council as a resolution on a consent agenda to make it a park rule to prohibit smoking and vaping and put up necessary signs. This will be on a future agenda for implementation. Director Muck thanked the Commissioners for their recommendation. Commissioner Dooley reminded all to put cigarette butts in the trash.

B. Recreation Division – Deputy Director Tracie Ringle

1. Programs & Services

Deputy Director Ringle said new speakers and microphones have been installed in the four quarters for a better experience for theatre and city event attendees. These were first used at the Veteran's Day Celebration earlier this month.

Lunch with Santa is scheduled for December 13th. Registration is going well. Prices did increase slightly just to offset cost increases. We do anticipate a sellout. Winter break camp will take place on the Monday, Tuesday and Fridays between the holidays. Registration is ongoing but we have already hit the minimum numbers. The summer camp counselors are coming back from school or job to help and make sure everyone is safe and having a great time.

This weekend there will be a theatre production on Friday and Saturday for young actors' kindergarten through fourth grade. It is called Press Start. More than 230 tickets have been sold to family and friends to see these young actors in their first stage performance. The Concert Band will have a holiday concert on December 13th at 2:00 at the Civic Center. The Choralaires are having two performances December 7th and 14th. The details will be available on their Facebook page and website. The Villa Barr residencies are completed for the year. The next resident arrives in the spring.

The Senior Golf League at Riverbank has been a successful program for many years. Registration is a hot button item because many folks are trying to get a spot on the league. Since the men's league is always sold out a second has been added. Mondays at 8:00 and 11:00 should allow us enough space to accommodate more golfers. The

golf league is facilitated by Recreation Supervisor Steve Fellhauer. Registration opens January 8th and can be done online or in person.

Winter youth basketball and volleyball registration is open, and some divisions are already full. The school gyms are used which creates capacity and difficulty with scheduling. The fall league will end in December. Many of the players will roll over into the winter league.

Erin Junge joined the team this week as a recreation supervisor in the sports division previously held by Chase. She has experience in other communities in Ohio and Portland, Michigan. She will lead adult softball, tennis, youth and adult volleyball, basketball, field rentals, Memorial Day Run, and a variety of classes and camps. Steve Fellhauer will lead soccer since he has experience coaching, he is the president of the WISL, and a lifetime player. We have confidence he will continue to grow and enhance the program where Chase left a solid foundation. He will also oversee pickleball, karate, golf, archery, flag football and a variety of classes and camps. Sean Penndorf will continue to assist with soccer.

Commissioner Staab asked for additional information about the new hire and art council. Director Muck explained appointments for boards and commissions are going to be streamlined so they are consistent on timing and process.

2. Diwali Fest Recap

Deputy Director Ringle continued with a recap of the Diwali Fest that was held October 16th. Jenneva Kayser was the lead liaison to the planning committee. The committee included Swami and Council member Priya. It was a great group of folks dedicated to bringing the theme and flavor of Diwali to Novi. There were numerous vendors and performances which were well received. The entire team played a part in coordinating this event. Approximately 3000 people were in attendance, and the building and parking lot were full. The event was a success.

Following an event there is always an after-action report. We met with the committee to discuss lessons learned for the first time festival. We know more food vendors are needed because the lines were long. More seating and an outside stage to spread out people were recommendations. Parking at the high school and sharing information about traffic were other suggestions.

Feedback was very positive for the first time event. Next year the Diwali Fest will take place on November 5th because the date for Diwali fluctuates.

Commissioners Staab and Dooley attended the event and agreed that the Diwali Fest was a success. Director Muck added that the committee and community appreciated the City Council and city leadership participating in the dance and song. It showed the commitment to bring this type of festival to Novi.

C. Older Adult Division – OAS Manager Kit Kieser

1. Programs and Services

OAS Manager Kit Kieser provided a report on activities in OAS. The Veteran's Day Celebration was held on November 6th. Over 200 people participated this year. 111 were veterans, which was a few more than last year. The participants loved the food and the Jeff Phillips Band. There was a performance by the Novi High School Choir, and the winning essay was read by Mathi Shyamsundar. OAS Manager Keiser thanked Commissioner Dooley for serving as the Master of Ceremonies again this year. Overall, the event was a wonderful success. Since the Diwali Fest will be on November 5th next

year the Veteran's Celebration will move to the Tuesday before Veteran's Day November 9th.

Nature Nurture Novi will host Wild Birds Unlimited at Lakeshore Park on December 9th. There will be a lecture for adults and a hands-on pellet dissection for kids followed by a night hike in search of owls.

Today there was a Thanksgiving Luncheon at Meadowbrook Commons with eighty attendees. It featured a traditional Thanksgiving meal from Moe's on Ten. A fantastic old-style crooner named Jeffery Cavataio was the entertainment. There will be two more social events for this year. Merry and Bright Trivia Night will be held at Lakeshore Park December 10th. There will be prizes for best dressed and the top trivia teams. A holiday celebration will be held at Meadowbrook Commons on December 18th. It will include a hot chocolate bar, holiday treats, and live entertainment by Vinyl Misst. OAS Manager Kit Keiser continued with the social services updates. The Medicare Assistance program has changed names to My Options. This program provides support for people navigating Medicaid and Medicare. Open enrollment is October 15th – December 7th. All of our twenty-six appointments are filled for Medicare Part D counseling. Other social services highlights include Grandparents Raising Grandchildren support group meeting, Activate Your Brain, Medicare 2026 Presentation for general information, and two Talking to AI presentations. The AI programs were very well attended and will be offered again soon.

AARP Tax Aid training of volunteers started on November 12th. Appointments can be scheduled starting January 6th. The service is free for simple tax returns. Last season more than 400 people had their taxes prepared by AARP volunteers at the Civic Center. Additional comments and questions were asked by the commissioners. OAS Manager provided details on the Medicare and AI programs.

2. PEX Update

OAS Manager Keiser shared some data about People's Express. Ridership has increased significantly since they began and continues to trend upward. In fiscal year 23/24 Novi Senior Transportation provided 14,400 rides. People's Express provided a total of 33,000 rides the following fiscal year, which is more than double. Demand has continued to grow into the first quarter of this fiscal year with an additional 15% ridership since July. This is attributed to awareness, community partnerships and need. In October People's Express had their busiest month with 4171 rides. People's Express continues operating from a satellite location in the Civic Center. They continue to search for a new facility to accommodate fifty vehicles with a secure perimeter and office space. City staff anticipates the subsidies for Novi residents 55+ and with disabilities to continue. The continuing agreements go to council December 1st. 88% of the rides provided are to those 55+ or with a disability that prevents the person from driving. Further conversation occurred about People's Express with the Commissioners.

COMMISSIONER COMMENTS:

Commissioner Riggins

I think it was a great meeting. I was glad I was able to share my Mackinac experience. I will see you all on next year's trip. I am glad it is not the same time as the Diwali Fest next year so I will get to experience that too.

I was thinking about the AI program. I have been using AI a lot more myself. Recently chat GPT helped me redesign my bathroom. It is really amazing. The report on People's Express was really good. 4000 rides in October is amazing. It is good we have that service because people are using it. Happy Thanksgiving to everybody.

Commissioner Torimoto

I would like to thank Salene for her presentation. I am interested in making that trip. It looks like a good time.

It is good to hear about the walkway which is actually by my subdivision. We originally got the letter from planning and provided feedback. It is good to see it is going to happen. This will make Bosco Fields very accessible.

Unfortunately, I had something come up so I was not able to attend the Diwali Fest. It is exciting to hear how receptive and accommodating the city and parks staff were. They did a fantastic job. I am looking forward to it being a standard future event. Maybe other similar events could take place to show what this community is about. I want to welcome Erin. I am looking forward to hearing more about her background and experience.

Happy Thanksgiving. Help a neighbor if you can.

Commissioner Staab

Happy Thanksgiving everybody.

I look forward to December's meeting. I got pictures from Shawood Lake on Sunday. It will be a good occasion to talk about it.

Thanks to Commissioners Riggins and Torimoto for stepping up on the interview process for the Executive Director for the Foundation. I am looking forward to the next steps.

The information on the park projects was good and there was a lot going on there.

Thanks for the update on smoking and vaping in the parks. I look forward to the final product coming from Council and Attorney Schultz.

There are many activities going on with Deputy Director Ringle's purview. Diwali was a great resounding success. I look forward to attending in 2026.

I look forward to meeting the new Recreation Supervisor, Erin, and working with her for the parks.

PEX has just been phenomenal. I see the vans going up and down in our subdivision a few times a day. It is great we have that service for citizens and the numbers are great. I appreciate all the updates.

Happy Thanksgiving.

Commissioner Dooley

It goes without saying I echo all these statements and comments tonight. You two (Director Muck and Deputy Director Ringle) continue to amaze us and the city with everything that you both do, leading by example the various departments that you represent. It is an absolute joy to be able to sit here and listen to your presentations and everything that is being done for children, adolescents, teenagers, all the way to older adults. There is something for everybody in the city. Director Muck, thank you for being the leader of this incredible Parks Commission and Parks Rec and Cultural Services department. It really is amazing.

I had the opportunity last Saturday to place wreaths at the Novi Cemetery on Novi Road. The Historical Society in Novi puts on a wonderful presentation about the history of the wreaths placed initially. The cemetery has Revolutionary War and Civil War veterans. The only war that is not represented is the Korean War. Mayor Fischer and a few dignitaries were at the event, which was a rewarding experience. We can't forget those that sacrificed so much for the freedom that we enjoy today. Veterans are remarkable people and teach us so much. The ones that came back can share stories about those that did not make it back. The memories that they share amongst each other is impressionable.

The last thing I would like to say to those who want to get involved in the city is to take advantage of signing up for the Novi Ambassadorship. Another class is coming up very soon. It is a great way to get involved in the city and see how it works. It is highly recommended. Those who recently have gone through the program really appreciated just how much the city has to offer whether recreational or business. The city is truly amazing.

Happy Thanksgiving. I look forward to celebrating the holidays with you all in December.

ADJOURNMENT

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

Voice Vote

Unanimous

The meeting was adjourned by Chairman Joseph at 8:07p.m.

DATE APPROVED: _____

Joseph, Chairperson

Dooley, Vice Chairperson