

PARKS, RECREATION & CULTURAL SERVICES COMMISSION

Thursday, June 20th, 2024 – 7 P.M.

Novi Civic Center – Council Chambers

The meeting was called to order at 7:00p.m. with Chairman Joseph presiding.

ROLL CALL:

Commissioners: Joseph (present), Riggins (present), Dooley (present), Joshi (present), Staab (present), Tolkacz (present), Torimoto (present)
Student Representatives: DiDomenico (absent / excused), Sid (absent / excused)

APPROVAL OF AGENDA:

Chairman Joseph requested to postpone the Villa Barr Art Park presentation to the July meeting.

Commissioner Dooley motioned for approval of agenda and second by Commissioner Joshi.

Voice Vote

Unanimous

CITIZEN COMMENTS:

Mike Duchesneau, 1191 South Lake Drive wanted to let everyone know that the Walled Lake Civic Fund is putting on fireworks Saturday night. In the past there has been more advertising. He extended an invitation to the commissioners and residents to come to Pavilion Shore to enjoy the show.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

It was moved that the minutes for the May 16th meeting be approved by Commissioner Riggins and second by Commissioner Staab.

Voice Vote

Unanimous

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

- A. Novi Parks Foundation – Commissioners Joseph, Joshi, Staab & Torimoto
Commissioner Staab said on Monday June 17th Foundation members attended the City Council meeting. An overview of the past twenty years was presented in honor of the twenty-year anniversary of the Foundation. A check was presented to the city for \$321,000 for the Jessica Splashpad.
July 26th is Pour on the Shore at Pavilion Shore Park from 6:30-10:00. Ticket sales began June 3rd online.
The new and refreshed website went live this week.
- B. Parks and Facilities Updates
 - 1. Villa Barr Art Park – Commissioner Joseph - tabled until July
 - 2. Ella Mae Power Park – Commissioner Riggins

Commissioner Riggins started by saying she had the pleasure of visiting Ella Mae Power Park on a super busy Tuesday at 9:00. Many activities were happening including softball leagues, yoga and kids using the playscape. It was hard to take a lot of pictures due to the number of people at the park. She explained the three entrances: from the Civic Center parking lot, neighborhood and the playscape. She started at the Civic Center entrance and walked through the softball field area. The six fields are the highlight of the space. She noticed a sign saying watch out for foul balls, meanwhile a ball flew right over her head. Another sign warned against moving the rocks. The rocks help with erosion and keep the park beautiful.

Next, she visited the playscape, which had a lot of activity. There are two structures indicated for different age groups. One structure's swing was removed and roped off due to an issue with the connectors. It is currently being repaired. Another issue she noticed was a picnic table that needed paint or replacement. Commissioner Riggins thought the concession stand not being opened was a missed opportunity because the park was so busy. It is open in the evening and during tournaments. She complimented the parks maintenance team. They always keep the parks nice and clean, lining the fields plus taking care of the restrooms. She also pointed out the sign in the parking lot that said not to drink alcoholic beverages. A sign with the map of the area needed to be cleaned and refreshed.

3. Bosco fields / Jessica's Splashpad - Commissioner Staab

Commissioner Staab said the inaugural day was May 18th and the opening was Memorial Day weekend. The first thing noticed at the splashpad is the donor wall. There is an AED apparatus and a commemoration plaque which explains what the park is all about. He did go into the restrooms which were very clean. The fence around the facility is helpful. Commissioner Staab visited with his grandchildren on a beautiful day. He commented on the showers, pergolas and soccer fields that were not in use the day he attended. He interviewed a few of the other guests and many expressed that they were impressed with the facility. The main suggestion he had was for the staff to walk around the area more frequently. There was additional discussion from the commissioners and Director Muck regarding the parking lot, capacity, and mechanical shutdowns. Commissioner Staab presented the report on the twenty-year anniversary of the Parks Foundation that was shown at the City Council meeting on Monday. It recognized Councilman Staudt as one of the founding members and Mayor Fischer as the former treasurer. In the past twenty years \$1.5 million has been raised to improve and develop parks, in addition to giving scholarships for programs to people who cannot afford to participate in parks and recreation activities. Some of the large projects include Jessica's Splashpad, the play structure at Power Park, over \$100,000 to Pavilion Shore Park, improvement and trail development at ITC. The significant event for the Foundation is Pour on the Shore which began in 2015. It has been every year except during COVID. This year it will take place on July 26th.

MATTERS FOR COMMISSION DISCUSSION AND/OR ACTION:

A. July Park and Recreation Month Recognition

Director Muck introduced the topic of Parks and Recreation Month and said he wanted to recognize everybody before July 1st.

Since 1985 the United States has celebrated Parks and Recreation month in July to promote building strong vibrant and resilient communities through the power of park and recreation. The month also recognizes the 160,000 full time professionals along with the hundreds of thousands of part time employees, seasonal workers and volunteers who maintain our country's local, state and community parks. Parks and recreation agencies nationwide are recognizing the month with summer programs, events, contests, commemorations and celebrations. The services that park and recreation employees provide are vital to our community's from protecting open spaces and natural resources, helping to fight obesity, providing activities and resources for all people. Park and Recreation Month encourages everyone to reflect on the exponential value parks and recreation employees bring to communities. Tonight, the members of the Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services team joined the Commission meeting to introduce themselves and report on their duties.

Recreation Supervisor John Gillingham said he oversees youth programming and camp. Summer camps started last week. The first week and a half went very well. This week involved a lot of indoor games, water breaks and water games to keep everyone cool with the extreme heat. Tomorrow the field trip is to Greenfield Village. There are a lot of precautions in place due to the heat including more frequent breaks, resting in shaded areas, spray bottles to mist the kids and wagons to carry water and backpacks. Ten councilors are involved in the Councilor in Training program and are doing fantastic. There has not been much push back on the \$20 transfer fee. However, there have still been a lot of cancellations. Due to people wanting to secure their spot since the camps fill up quickly. The parents are not concerned about the cancellation fee. Bon Voyage Camp traditionally has a daily field trip. This year there is an issue with the busing situation since Novi Schools start a week sooner. Recreation Supervisor Gillingham said three of the field trips will remain and alternatives to bring activities such as an escape room and bounce houses to the camp will be made.

Recreation Supervisor Gillingham explained some of his other programs including Nerf Night on Friday. Saturday he will be joined with Recreation Supervisor Madison Lachance for an Outdoor Explorer program from 10:00-12:00 at Lakeshore Park. The children will receive a passport which will lead them through five activities.

Recreation Supervisor Chase Root from the sports division gave all the commissioners a pickleball key chain to show his appreciation for the new courts.

The main focus of his duties are soccer and tennis. The spring soccer season just wrapped up with 965 players which includes 350 in the Lightning (select and premier league). The U15 2009 boys team made it all the way to the MSYSA Michigan State Cup which is impressive for a parks and recreation department team to compete at such a high level. The tryouts for the Lightning program were a few weeks ago. Over 800 kids pre-registered. There will be 38 – 40 teams with 480-500 players which is up by ten teams. Registration is open for Thunder, the recreational league.

Recreation Supervisor Chase Root went on to inform everyone about the tennis league that just started this week. The program is in the morning, so the heat was not

a huge factor. 173 players ages four to eighteen are participating including his son. Questions from the commissioners regarding priority registration and volunteer coaches were answered.

Recreation Supervisor Madison Lachance talked about the recent and upcoming events in the Older Adult Services Division. The summer kicked off at Lakeshore Park with Sip Sip Hooray. This year Sporcle Trivia was the entertainment. Teams enjoyed having a drink and snack with friendly competition. Winners received gift cards to Guernsey's. Positive feedback was received with requests for more trivia events. The sound dampening project had a great impact to help the success of the program. Today a Tiki Luau took place at Meadowbrook Commons. Over fifty attendees watched performances by the Polynesian Dancers of Michigan. Participants learned a dance, enjoyed pina colodas and pineapple upside-down cake. Recreation Supervisor Lachance continued highlighting upcoming programs including an ice cream social after Bingo on July 12th at 4:00. July 16th Harmony Town Chorus will be performing patriotic music at Meadowbrook. Novi Parks partnered with the library for DIA Inside Out. A bingo sheet encourages people to explore artwork and participate in events throughout the summer. The artwork will be displayed through October. There will be a DIA Inside Out bus tour on July 24th. To celebrate Park and Recreation month a program called Get Outside Novi has been developed. It encourages people to spend 100 hours outside in the parks. Participants will receive a sheet to track their hours. Participants who complete the challenge will be entered in a prize drawing.

The Mackinac Island trip is full as of Tuesday. There will be fifty-six people traveling. Madison is looking forward to another exciting year!

Recreation Supervisor Steve Fellhauer said he is the other half of the sports team. Recently 426 people registered for the Memorial Day Run. 239 finished the 5K, 101 completed the Fun Run and approximately forty were no shows. Last week T-ball and coach pitch leagues started at Wildlife Woods and ITC. Adult summer softball begins next week with seventy-six teams registered between Monday – Friday. July 8th resident registration will begin for the youth fall basketball and volleyball leagues.

Sandy Fisher the Social Services Coordinator said the loan closet is always her busiest program. She is also the answer lady because she is always directing people to different resources throughout the city and community. Lifelong learning programs including the popular Estate Planning, Retirement and Investment Planning, and a new program called Senior Outreach with Easterseals will take place this summer. In July and August One on One Technology Assistance will be held. This program always gets a great response because people get individualized help with their device. The TFAP program had over eighteen pieces of good food distributed this quarter. Many of the participants were happy and surprised.

In the fall Social Services Coordinator Fisher will be hosting Matter of Balance along with regular programs. A new provider MSU Extension will be offering a sleep program which she is excited about.

Director Muck summed up the staff reports by saying it was great to see the passion and enjoyment the team has for their jobs. He gave the commissioners a chance to speak about what parks and recreation mean to them and why they enjoy being a commissioner.

Chairman Joseph spoke first saying that parks and recreation along with the cultural

aspect bringing the community together at different locations. Small groups can gather in the home but having facilities outside the home to go to and enjoy is great. We are fortunate as a city to have such great facilities with opportunities to relax or play sports. It is about being an active community and togetherness. That is why I am here.

Commissioner Riggins said it is about fellowship, going out in the community and meeting people, enjoying the different programs and parks, being neighborly. I want it to be inclusive and I am here to represent that.

Commissioner Dooley stated that he has been doing this for quite a while. It is the inclusiveness of what parks and recreation is all about. I think we are very lucky to have a diverse board which was not by chance. It is because of the passion that this group has. As well as prior groups we have been privileged to work with. It is about connecting with people. It is about making yourself available. It is about answering questions. It is about what we love to do on a monthly basis. We all take responsibility in visiting the parks in our city. We saw two incredible presentations this evening. We all do those presentations at the various parks to showcase what our parks are about, what is offered, amenities and their beauty. The Novi Parks department does an incredible job maintaining those parks so folks that live in and outside of Novi can enjoy it.

The dog park is better than any dog park in Oakland County and receives many compliments. The fields are better than any other. Coaches and parents from other communities compliment every single weekend. They complement our fields and parks; we are just very lucky. This commission really believes in what we do, and we do it for you, the citizens of Novi and we love you all. That is why we are here.

Commissioner Joshi said people generally think about the outdoors, which is a great part, but the programs are great. We have the cultural services. Programs for every age group from children to adults to older adults. We don't just look at our parks and outdoors which are beautiful. Since she has been a resident of Novi and a Parks Commissioner the parks have grown, amount parks have increased including Northwest. In addition, the variety and number of programs has been expanded as described by the programmers this evening. It is amazing to have all of this in the city, a lot of other communities are vying for that. Commissioner Joshi said she has had an amazing time being on this commission.

Commissioner Torimoto said the key word is connect or disconnect. Get off your phone and the virtual world. It does not have to be just sports it is any type of programming or opportunities through the facilities Novi has. We are definitely very fortunate. We can connect with nature, really understand yourself being healthy mentally and physically.

Commissioner Tolkacz said parks and recreation is about getting active, social, putting electronic screen down. Get out and interact with people. In many areas since COVID attendance is down. People are withdrawn into their cocoons of their homes or apartments. I do not think we see that in Novi. That is a tribute to the folks in this room that have created these great programs to draw people out to interact with people.

Commissioner Staab articulated that in his estimation parks and recreations make us an inclusive community. Back in the day it got kids out from watching TV now from being on their phones, pads or whatever electronic device, to be with other folks of their age group or just mingling and making new friends. We offer book end services

from play structures to Meadowbrook Commons and lots of things in-between. Pickleball courts for the active, Villa Barr Art Park with cultural services, the concert band and Choralaires we hit all the bases. It makes Novi a great place to live, work and have fun.

Director Muck wrapped it up on behalf of the entire team thanking all the commissioners for their support. A lot of parks and recreation commissioners around the State do not get along as well as ours do. You enjoy each other's company, being a commissioner and responsibilities involved, that makes our job easier. We wanted to get ahead of this as July approaches invite the community out to our parks this July and every other month. Thank you.

Chairman Joseph summarized we may get along, but we also have an easy job because of the work you put in. It is very much appreciated.

STAFF REPORTS

A. Administration Division – Director Jeff Muck

1. Summer Park Projects

Director Muck explained the major summer project that is ongoing at Meadowbrook Commons. Pickleball court and parking lot construction is happening. The fence and shade structure installation are now complete. The paving is scheduled for tomorrow but that is heat dependent. The contractors still need to provide nets and put the acrylic coating on the courts before they can open which should be in mid-July. After Meadowbrook Commons pickleball courts and parking lot open, the construction will shift to Wildlife Woods for their parking lot and four additional courts. Those courts should be done in the fall. Deputy Director Ringle provided an update on Northwest Park. Unfortunately, the weather this evening was not conducive to meeting out there then coming back here for a commission meeting. The popsicles in the park event will be rescheduled. The park is done with some minor tweaks including extra plantings. It is fully functional, and people have been using it and we encourage guests to continue to visit.

2. Jessica's Splashpad Update

Director Muck recapped the splashpad with more information from the earlier discussion. The long-awaited opening kicked off with a VIP and Distinguished Donor Private Preview on May 18th. Thanks to those on the commission who attended. There were 100 attendees who enjoyed hotdogs, cookies and a short program with remarks from Mayor Fischer and Jessica Starr's mother, Carol, before the water was turned on. The official public opening was Saturday May 25th. That morning was a little chilly but twelve people were there when the gates opened at 10a.m. Attendance grew throughout the day with a high visitation hour of eighty-seven. The capacity is 100 which is set by the state. Since the opening there have been a few closures due to weather and two days for mechanical. We established a weather hotline because there were too many different social media channels and websites to update. The number is (248)567-0373. The hotline can be updated quickly and remotely. We want to remind all visitors and community members that the hours are subject to change due to weather, mechanical problems or staffing issues that are beyond our control. We will be monitoring attendance statistics throughout the summer. Many times,

there have been 80-90 people per hour. The operational aspects such as hours, site amenities, rules, policies, will be evaluated during the season so adjustments can be made for 2025 if needed. We have been getting calls from people who want to rent the splashpad for events and parties which is not an option. The splashpad is meant to be open to the public at all times.

3. Strategic Community Recreation & Master Park Plan

Director Muck said we are in the process of creating a new five-year plan. Part of the process includes conducting surveys and gathering public input. Recently three in-person input sessions were held. Participants were given the chance to rank their top choices for programs, parks, and facility amenities. The consultant, Spicer Group, are currently tabulating those results which will lead to the formation of an online survey to the whole community that will dive deeper. They will also meet with our team in late July to discuss and formulate the strategic plan and goals. Please watch the survey on social media and Cityofnovi.org in July.

B. Recreation Division – Deputy Director Tracie Ringle

1. Programs & Services

Deputy Director Tracie Ringle provided an update on the two divisions that were not represented earlier. The popular theatre camps are filling. In the Mitten Productions who produces our shows accommodate as many people as possible in camps. Dance camps are scheduled for July and August and have good registration numbers. Sizzling Summer Arts Series started and will be on Thursday mornings at 10:30. July dates will be held at Lakeshore Park. June and August dates will be at Fuerst Park. Novi Concert Band has a performance tomorrow evening at 7:00.

Samantha Miller, who was the Facilities Supervisor, resigned her position effective last week so the position is now posted. There are some highly qualified applicants that we look forward to meeting with to fill that position. In the meantime, Torry Yu will be covering the facilities position for the summer. Priority registration is starting July 1st. It has been communicated through the email list. The 48167 zip code is impacted. Information has been put on social media. There has been no response. We need to serve Novi residents first and foremost. We do anticipate some people being surprised when registering for programs in the next few weeks when this comes to fruition.

C. Older Adult Division – OAS Manager Kit Kieser

1. Programs and Services

OAS Manager Kit Keiser completed the updates from OAS that were not covered by Sandy and Madison. The Older Adult Needs committee is continuing to meet but will be ending soon. They are currently working on their final report finalizing on July 8th. The presentation to City Council will be on July 22nd.

2. Transportation Transition

OAS Manager Kit Keiser continued by saying the transition to People's Express is about a week away, July 1st. A full color brochure has gone out to all Novi residents with frequently asked questions, expanded days and times and service area also details on how to schedule a ride. There has not been feedback or

concern from the riders. July rides are currently being scheduled with the new service. Several of the Novi transportation staff are going to be working with People's Express. To help facilitate the best service for the residents, support our current staff will keep a base in Novi. The riders can see familiar faces as they experience a change in service provider. June 17th City Council approved a comprehensive agreement between the City of Novi and People's Express. The agreement includes provisions for office and parking space that is designated at the Civic Center. They will be maintaining a satellite location at the Civic Center. The rear parking spaces along the west side by the tennis courts will be utilized for vehicles. Fuel at DPW will be used and invoiced to People's Express. Space has been cleared out to make room for People's Express dispatch and driver operations. They will be setting up their office next week to prepare for the July 1st start date.

COMMISSIONER COMMENTS:

Commissioner Joshi

Chairman Joseph announced that this was Commissioner Joshi's last meeting. She has been part of the Parks Commission for six years. She shared her parting words of wisdom. "I am so honored to be part of this commission and have loved every minute of it. I want to thank you all. Continue doing everything you are doing. I have loved being on this commission with all the past and present members. Unfortunately, I will not be staying on. Thank you."

Commissioner Dooley

I would be remiss if I did not mention a few names this evening; Linda Constantino, Tim Shroyer, Kim Capello, Brian Bartlett, Randy Balconi, David Paul, Mark Adams, Bob Cerullo, Tracie Ringle, Rachel Zagaroli, Randy Auler, these people along with Dave Staudt got the Parks Foundation going twenty years ago. These people should always be remembered for the passion they had in the very beginning. It was an absolute pleasure to work with these people to help us gain awareness for the Novi Parks Foundation. The money that was raised from golf outings to galas was a beautiful thing. Don' forget those names because they were the foundation from the very beginning and will be remembered today.

In early May I had the opportunity to attend a reunion for the Novi Ambassadors. It was interesting to see the different classes including members of class number two which I was lucky enough to be a part of. I would encourage anybody listening tonight that if you want to get involved in the City and learn about the nuances of Novi take the opportunity to become a Novi Ambassador. It is an eight-week course when you visit the various departments in the city. You come to appreciate how lucky we are to represent the city whether it is an elected official, volunteer, or the incredible department that we have the opportunity to lead. We are all in this together. I was pleased to see the attendance at the reunion, it was great.

Sandy wears a lot of hats. It is so impressive to watch what you do with Novi Youth Assistance. I have been blessed to be see her address the group of teachers and caseworkers. She is so ingrained and so valuable. Sandy is an incredible member of Novi Youth Assistance.

Supriya, it has been an honor and privilege. I can't believe it has been six years. It went by very fast. I am proud of you and wish you the best of success in the future.

Commissioner Tolkacz

I want to thank Commissioner Riggins and Staab for the great reports. I find that even though I am familiar with the parks in the city there is always a tidbit or two I did not know.

I want to wish Supriya well. Unfortunately, your day job got in the way of your night job. Good luck on the new assignment and challenges.

This meeting is one of my favorites not just because of the free dinner. Director Muck expressed that we get to see the passion from the whole team for their part of the portfolio. We see the passion from the directors monthly, but it is great to see the team behind them. We certainly appreciate it. You do a great job.

Commissioner Torimoto

It is great to have a month called Park and Recreation Month. Just to be reminded how fortunate we are to have the programs, people and personal staff that is here to do the best job. Thank you and best wishes to Commissioner Joshi.

Commissioner Staab

I want to thank the team for their presentation. Tonight is to meet with everybody, feel free to join us every third Thursday of the month if you desire. We have action-packed meetings. I want to thank Jeff, his crew, Tracie and Kit for everything you do in the city. That is what makes Novi different, a better place to live, work and have fun. That is one of my monikers I adopted thirty years ago. I appreciate the great presentations.

Supriya, I hate to see you go. You are always welcome on the foundation board. We only meet sporadically but it is intense this time of year. I appreciate your input and patience.

I wish everyone a successful and happy Parks and Recreation Month. I look forward to being with you next month.

I want to remind everybody of Pour on the Shore on July 26th at Pavilion Shore Park 6:30-10:00.

Vice Chair Riggins

I want to thank everybody for the presentations tonight, it was a window to see what everyone does. It was awesome to see. There are lovely things happening here and it was presented tonight.

I am excited for the new park. I will check it out for myself, and I encourage everyone here to do so as well.

I am going to miss Supriya, good luck on your endeavors.

Have a happy and safe 4th of July.

Chairman Joseph

The tough part about going last with this commission is there is not much to add so I will just reiterate. Thank you, Supriya you are going to be missed.

Thank you again to the staff. We know who does the hard work. Don't be strangers, we enjoy having you present.

Charley mentioned Pour on the Shore. Get your tickets. It should be a great event.

It was an eventful meeting. I echo Joe that this is probably the best meeting of the year having the staff here and the pizza helps a little.

ADJOURNMENT

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

Voice Vote

Unanimous

The meeting was adjourned by Chairman Joseph at 8:18p.m.

DATE APPROVED: _____

Joseph, Chairperson

Riggins, Vice Chairperson