

PARKS, RECREATION & CULTURAL SERVICES COMMISSION

Thursday, March 20th, 2025 – 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 (absent/excused), Gopalakrishnan (present), Staab (present), Tolkacz (present), Torimoto (absent/excused)

Student Representatives: DiDomenico (present), Sid (present)

APPROVAL OF AGENDA:

Commissioner Staab requested a discussion about the April meeting. It was added to Matters for Commission Discussion or Action. Commissioner Joseph asked to table his Villa Barr report to April.

Commissioner Gopalakrishnan motioned for approval of agenda and second by Commissioner Tolkacz.

Voice Vote

Unanimous

CITIZEN COMMENTS:

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

It was moved that the minutes for the February 20th meeting be approved by Commissioner Staab and second by Commissioner Riggins.

Voice Vote

Unanimous

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

A. Novi Parks Foundation – Commissioners Joseph, Riggins, Staab & Torimoto

1. Recognition of Melissa Agosta

Commissioner Staab introduced Melissa Agosta who was the Executive Director of the Novi Parks Foundation from 2022 to the end of this month. She has moved on to other things since her work has become more challenging and life changes. She was recognized for all her hard work, support of the Foundation and PRCS with a token of appreciation.

Melissa Agosta thanked everybody. She was involved with the foundation as a volunteer for three years before she became the Director. She worked with Rachel Zagaroli on Pour on the Shore. It was an honor. She thanked everyone for helping and recognition. Melissa will continue to assist Marla.

Commissioner Staab continued with an update from the long meeting that occurred on Tuesday. The foundation voted and approved in January to contribute to Shawood Lake \$8,750.

Mayor Fischer presented the three conceptual plans for the pathways at Villa Barr. General business included gearing up for Pour on the Shore on July 18th at Pavilion Shore Park. Tickets are now on sale through Eventbrite. Currently the contributions are \$12-\$13,000 with more outstanding. Marla has done a good job with the Executive Director duties due to Melissa's tutelage. Hopefully, Pour on the Shore 2025 will be bigger and better than ever.

Commissioner Riggins mentioned that the next meeting is April 24th.

Commissioner Joseph added the revitalized push for social media. Board member Mark Somerville is leading the charge to get engagement increased in the community, raising donations and awareness of our parks through that avenue. It has ramped up very quickly.

People's Express will be providing transportation for Pour on the Shore, bringing attendees from Emagine to Pavilion Shore.

B. Active Mobility Committee – Commissioners Tolkacz & Dooley

Commissioner Tolkacz explained that the backlog of items has been cleared by this committee. Meetings will be quarterly going forward. The next meeting is in May.

C. Parks and Facilities updates

1. Villa Barr Art Park – Commissioner Joseph – tabled to April

MATTERS FOR COMMISSION DISCUSSION AND/OR ACTION:

A. Jessica's Splashpad Rules/Procedures

Director Muck said it is hard to believe we are thinking about the splash pad considering today's weather. The first season was very successful. However, before our second year of operation there are some potential items for discussion and improvements. Recreation Supervisor, Milah Loose, is here to present some procedures that the department is considering changing based on last years' experience.

Milah Loose thanked the commissioners for the opportunity to present this topic. Before the second summer of operation Milah was tasked with reevaluating the rules and procedures for Jessica's Splash Pad and she is seeking feedback from the commission.

Last summer the hours were 10:00-8:00. It is being proposed to change operating times to 10:00-7:00. Based on last season 7:00-8:00 was the lowest attended period of day. The main reason is because the target audience bedtime conflicts with the last hour. Closing earlier would ensure better resource management and fiscal responsibility. The next rule proposed for change is expanding upon only water permitted in the splash pad enclosure. It would be changed to no food, glass containers or alcohol allowed. The reason for this change is because only water was hard for the staff to enforce. By keeping the rule of no food, glass containers or alcohol would reinforce safety and cleanliness which are the key factors. Last year there was not a set operating procedure for inclement weather. After researching other communities in the area, Recreation Supervisor Loose came up with proposed guidelines. The splash pad will remain closed if the temperature is not expected to reach 70' actual temperature. Humidity, sunlight and wind conditions also affect the decision to open or close. In the case of inclement weather such a thunderstorm or rain forecasted for most of the day the splash pad may remain closed or operate for limited hours. If inclement weather occurs during operating hours, visitors may be asked to seek shelter in their cars and the splash pad could close for a thirty-minute weather delay. The splash pad will immediately close following lightning or thunder and the weather hotline will be updated. It is important to have something in place for the public to refer to when the weather is not the best. The verbiage offers some flexibility for closures.

Recreation Supervisor Milah Loose also created a *Know Before You Go* Section that outlines common questions and occurrences pertaining to the splash pad from last summer. This would reinforce the no food, glass containers and alcohol policy.

Strollers are allowed but not on the splash pad surface. Reservations, large groups or field trips are not accepted because of the capacity limits. There was a lot of feedback from staff concerning parents changing children in the open. This will reinforce the family restrooms with space allocated for changing. The *Know Before You Go* document will also address the seating. Benches and tables are located throughout the park and personal chairs are discouraged. Questions from the commissioners were answered. Overall, the commissioners agreed all the proposed changes were good suggestions.

B. April MTG

Discussion occurred about adjusting the date for the April date because Good Friday is the following day. After consideration of alternative dates it was decided the meetings will take place on the scheduled day as long as there is quorum.

STAFF REPORTS

A. Administration Division – Director Jeff Muck

1. mParks Conference Recap

Director Muck said staff attended the Michigan Recreation and Park Association Conference and Trade Show the week of March 3rd. The 2025 conference and trade show brought together 485 attendees for an inspiring and educational gathering of parks and recreation professionals. The trade show featured over 200 representatives from eighty companies showcasing the latest park and recreation industry innovations. There were eighty-nine educational sessions covering a wide range of topics that support the growth and success of park and recreation professionals. Five of our attendees are certified parks and recreation professionals and obtained continuing education units at the conference which is required to maintain the certification.

Several of the team members presented at the sessions. Kit and Madison presented *ChatGPT for Dummies*, which had a full house. Steve Fellhauer contributed to youth sports is more than just a game and a session on navigating conflicts in sports. Director Muck led a session on leadership and executive presence. He also presented *So You Want to Be a Director?* with colleagues from Lansing and Petoskey.

The event celebrated excellence in the field with the parks awards honoring outstanding professionals, innovative programs and impactful projects that are making a difference in Michigan communities. Director Muck was proud that we accepted an award for Park Design for Jessica's Splash Pad. Personally, he was honored with the Fellowship Award. The Parks Fellowship Award is presented to a member who consistently demonstrated significant investment, support and guidance to fellow professionals. Honorees exemplify the highest level of professionalism in all aspects of the profession, within their own organization and association membership. Director Muck said it was a big honor, and it was a great night being surrounded by his friends and family. Deputy Director Ringle and OAS Manager Kit Kieser both said the conference was very beneficial, especially the connections made with peers.

B. Recreation Division – Deputy Director Tracie Ringle

1. Programs & Services

Deputy Director Ringle said today the draft for the June – August edition of *Engage* was finalized. It should be in mailboxes the week of April 14th. This will cover programs June through August including some registration periods for programs in the fall.

Registration is open for some summer sports, dance and theatre camps. Camp Lakeshore and PowerPlay will open April 8th for residents / April 14th for non-residents. Families have been reminded to log into their accounts to update information to ensure a timely registration on that day at 8a.m. There will be four staff members answering phones and assisting with registration on April 8th. We are seeking additional lifeguards certified at least eighteen years old to be part of the camp staff. A lifeguard is required for any water activities at the beach. Many counselors are returning this summer leaving about ten spots to be filled between the two camps. Positions are open for junior counselors ages 16-18.

The field trips are being finalized and are being made public prior to registration. The \$20 transfer and cancellation fee will continue to discourage families from doing blanket registration. The penalty has been helpful.

Recreation Supervisor Jenneva Kayser, along with six site supervisors and volunteers have been freshening up the Villa Barr studio and house in anticipation of three 2025 residents. The studio is being cleared of old paint, broken tools and miscellaneous items that have no bearing on the legacy of David and Beth. Historical pieces are archived through Wayne State's Walter Ruether Library.

Aiden Rickel, the Artistic Director of the Novi Choralaires was featured in the last edition of the Now You Novi Podcast which came out this week. It is posted on our Facebook and is posted on the city's YouTube channel. The Choralaires are celebrating their 50th anniversary with a concert May 10th at Novi Middle School. Deputy Director Ringle is working with Recreation Supervisor Fellhauer to supply pitching nets for pitchers who prefer extra protection in the adult softball leagues. The Pistons camps will be held in the field house at the high school. This will help tremendously accommodating more children in the program. The Pistons camp has also been added to the resident priority list as we typically have a waitlist. The final invoice for the facilities for the basketball league came in with a \$6000 increase due to the middle school not being available. Next year this cost will be passed along to the participants. Gym space is at a premium. Chase and Sean are working on the spring soccer leagues and preparing for June tryouts for the fall season. They will be a future agenda item to provide a detailed overview of what it takes to manage a soccer program with nearly 1,000 kids, four different leagues, field scheduling, referees, state paperwork and much more. It is intense to run a program that size.

The sponsorship numbers were presented at the January meeting. At this time, the department is fully staffed and trained. \$11,000-\$11,500 has been secured for program sponsorships this year. This is a third of what was brought in during 2024. Deputy Director Ringle answered a question about The Claw. 178 people were in the audience for each show. These numbers have doubled from last season when we offered the younger children's production for the first time.

2. 5k Requests

Deputy Director Ringle receives a number of requests for park space to conduct 5K runs and walks. A lot of these are non-profit groups looking to raise money or for-profit businesses that cater to runners. With the completion of the ITC Trail the requests have been funneled to that location. These events will no longer take place at Lakeshore Park. The only large-scale program at Lakeshore is the MCMBA Tree Farm Relay since this group is fundamental in maintaining the trail system at the park for all users. People planning to host a 5K will utilize ITC and meet additional requirements. The shelter must be rented to ensure there is enough parking. Money may not be exchanged on site. If the race crosses Ten

Mile as part of the route the organization must coordinate separately with the Novi Police department and cover the cost of the officers. Races are not allowed on Saturday mornings due to the Park Run group. Sundays or evenings are potential times.

C. Older Adult Division – OAS Manager Kit Kieser

1. Programs and Services

OAS Manager started with the Memorial Day activities. She encouraged community organizations to join the parade. Currently there are nine groups registered. Enrollment runs until mid-May. The City of Novi website has all the information for the parade, Fuerst field of Honor and the Memorial Day 5K Run at cityofnovi.org/memorialday.

The 2025 AARP tax aid service is running smoothly. It was filled with 460 appointments in record time this year. The tax season finishes on April 9th.

Meals on Wheels are celebrating March for Meals this month in Michigan. It is their 53rd anniversary. Novi's Meals on Wheels provider is Western Oakland MOW. Last year Novi delivered almost 40,000 homebound meals and about 5,400 lunches were served at Meadowbrook Activity Center. The daily lunches are a great time for Meadowbrook residents to get together, converse and make connections.

Cutting the Cord will be presented on March 27th. The annual Financial Crimes Scams and Identity Theft program will be held in early April.

OAS Manager Kieser updated the upcoming Nature Nurture Novi programs. March 21st Captain Theisen is hosting A Buzz About Bees at Lakeshore Park. He is a beekeeper and will share his experience and explain the life cycle of a honeybee. There will be an opportunity to try honey straight from the comb. Toward the end of April, we will be celebrating Earth Day and Arbor Day at Lakeshore Park with a weeklong series of events. The activities include a guided hike, bird watching walk and tree facts posted along the trails. Novi Youth Council will be leading environmental challenges. The week will conclude with an Arbor Day celebration on April 26th that will feature tree sapling giveaways, informational tables from local organizations plus the annual garlic mustard pull. We are seeking individuals and organizations interested in participating in the garlic mustard pull.

The annual Euchre tournament will be held Saturday, April 5th. Participants will get lunch, compete in eight rounds of euchre and the top three will be awarded prizes. The Novi Chorales will host Songs and Sundaes at Meadowbrook Activity center on April 21st at 7:00p.m. This will be a sneak peek of their upcoming spring concert.

The DIA trip mentioned last month is full plus a waiting list. The spring Travel Fair will be held April 8th at 5:30 at the Civic Center. The event provides an opportunity for the companies to showcase all the upcoming trips. Already there has been a 30% increase in travel from last year. The fair should give it an additional boost.

OAS Manger Kieser invited the commissioners to visit the OAS office since it was just remodeled. The office received a fresh coat of paint, new carpet and rearranging of space. It was a long-awaited refresh.

There was clarification and questions from the commissioners.

COMMISSIONER COMMENTS:

Student Representative Sid

I think the new rules and procedures for the Jessica Splash Pad make sense and will improve the park. I did not have the opportunity to go last summer but I am hoping to check it out this year. The new rules should keep us safe.

Student Representative DiDomenico

I remember when I worked a shift last summer at the splash pad. The last hour was just me there. Not a lot of people come during that time. The new rules are fair and will improve the splash pad.

Commissioner Riggins

I agree with all the proposed changes at the splash pad. They all make sense. I am excited for all the activities coming up for the community to enjoy. I am excited to be at the Memorial Day Parade. It should be fun.

Commissioner Gopalakrishnan

Thank you, Commissioner Staab and the Novi Parks Foundation for recognition of Melissa. Honoring her was wonderful. Thank you for the updates provided on the Novi Parks Foundation March meeting and Pour on the Shore. I am looking forward to that event.

I agree with the student reps that the splash pad rules are fair and good. I think it will be an even better year with attendance since it is very popular.

Thank you, Director Muck, for your updates, being there at the mParks event and everything the team did. Your award is very deserved thank you for representing the City of Novi. It is awesome that the splash pad got an award as well.

Tracie was on fire today.

Thank you, Tracie, for the Camp Lakeshore and Villa Barr updates, as well as other things. The 5K rules make sense. Thank you, Kit for the Memorial Day activities. I love being a part of the parade.

Meals on Wheels is such an amazing thing we do with food assistance. There are many people in need, it is awesome we can serve them.

Earth Day is a nice kick off welcoming spring and being outdoors. I have been to Earth Day events at Farmington Hills Heritage Park. This year I will be in Novi at the mustard pull.

So many social programs are happening. The travel is always a hot one. I want to attend April 8th to see the travel trips I could go on. I would love stop by the office to see the upgrades.

It was another great meeting, great updates, thank you.

Commissioner Tolkacz

I would like to congratulate Director Muck on the mParks award. It seems like a lifetime achievement award. But I am sure you have more to give and maybe you can get multiple.

I was interested to hear about the Park Run group as I have not heard an update since they were here. I am glad they are off and running.

The Abror / Earth Day hike and bird watching sounds interesting, and I hope to check it out. I would be interested in more information.

Commissioner Staab

I appreciate the ability to review the rules and guidelines for the splash pad.

Congratulations to Jeff and staff for the awards. Congratulations to the city on the design award for the splash pad.

I saw on the Novi channel a redo of the 20th Anniversary of the Novi Parks Foundation video of Jeff, Melissa, Mayor Landry and myself. It included a video of the original Tim Pope play structure.

A lot of good activities are coming up. I will attend the Travel Fair on April 8th. The events around Memorial Day sound very interesting. The event close to my heart is Pour on the Shore July 18th. We need volunteers. Check out our website or contact us through Parks, Recreation and Cultural services.

Chairman Joseph

Thank you for coming to share the splash pad rule changes. We love hearing updates from the Directors, but it is great to hear from the ones truly doing the work. We challenge you to have more staff presentations.

ADJOURNMENT

A motion to adjourn was made by Commissioner Riggins and seconded by Commissioner Tolkacz

Voice Vote

Unanimous

The meeting was adjourned by Chairman Joseph at 7:56p.m.

DATE APPROVED: _____

Joseph, Chairperson

Dooley, Vice Chairperson