

PARKS, RECREATION & CULTURAL SERVICES COMMISSION

Thursday, June 18th, 2026 – 7 P.M.

Novi Civic Center – Council Chambers

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

ROLL CALL:

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

APPROVAL OF AGENDA:

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

Voice Vote

Unanimous

CITIZEN COMMENTS:

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

It was moved that the minutes for the May 21st meeting be approved by Commissioner Dooley and second by Commissioner Gopalakrishnan.

Voice Vote

Unanimous

PRESENTATIONS

A. Kakizome Calligraphy Artwork- students of Japanese School of Detroit/ Novi
Commissioner Torimoto introduced three students from the Japanese School of Detroit which is based in Novi. Every Saturday 800 students from Novi and the surrounding area converge in Novi. The students and families learn the Japanese curriculum, education system, traditions, and art. The students have a chance to respect their background and continue to grow in that context. Their teacher, Masako Hirokawa, was recognized. She is in charge of the high school students and is a certified instructor for calligraphy. Aimi Ishikawa, Moe Umemoto, and Ecoy Ojiro students from the school thanked the Commissioners for the opportunity to display and present their pieces. Today they will be introducing Kakizomi and the culture behind it. They explained the history and traditions behind the craft. The techniques were demonstrated as well as the phases symbolized explained and their artwork was presented. The students said they felt improvement in skill throughout the process and the experience was very satisfying. Two pieces showed the positive progression of hope and sense of purpose that defines our future.

The students sincerely thanked the City of Novi Parks and Recreation and Cultural Services for the opportunity to show our Japanese tradition art of calligraphy. Novi is an important city to the Japanese community. It is an honor to show how Novi embraces cultural art.

Commissioner Bagley said the presentation was informative and thanked the students for sharing. Commissioner Torimoto had the students in math class. He added they were part of student government. He challenged them to contribute to the community and be global citizens.

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

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

Commissioner Staab said the last meeting took place on June 3rd. The Executive Director and Event Coordinator gave updates on the progress of securing the venue and vendors. As of yesterday, there are over \$10,000 in contributions. The ticket count is unknown at this time. Prior attendees can take advantage of discounted prices for tickets for the 2026 event which will be held at Pavilion Shore Park on July 24th.

Commissioner Torimoto explained the new and different forms of marketing strategies being used to promote Pour on the Shore. A partnership with 96.3 radio station is being pursued. It is an effective package to sell the brand and promote the event. Starting July 13th, thirty spots will air periodically throughout the day.

The next meeting is July 9th.

B. Active Mobility Committee – Commissioners Dooley & Gopalakrishnan

Commissioner Gopalakrishnan said there was not a meeting last month and he will give an update at the next meeting. Director Muck added that the Mobility Committee plans to meet in July. The PRCS Commission meeting will likely be cancelled, which happens after the Mobility Meeting. He reminded Commissioners Dooley and Gopalakrishnan to let Rebecca know if they cannot attend to ensure quorum.

C. Programs and Services Update – Commissioner Dooley

Commissioner Dooley and Social Service Coordinator Sandy Fisher presented together on her area of expertise. Sandy is a certified program planner and obtained that title at a conference in Boston. She has been with the City of Novi since 2009. She is under the Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services Older Adult Services Division. A fun fact about Sandy is that she collects stress balls.

Commissioner Dooley listed her current job duties including food assistance, nutrition programs, health and wellbeing, chair volleyball, lifelong learning, volunteers, expert advice, support groups, community resource advocate, therapeutic massage, and durable medical equipment. She is the spearhead for the AARP Tax Aid Program which is the largest in the State of Michigan. AARP has 3600 locations nationally with 29,000 tax aid volunteers which are IRS certified. The city will host the Oakland County Veterans Resource Fair again under Sandy's supervision.

Many details about Focus Hope and TFAP emergency food assistance were shared including the income requirements. Sandy and Commissioner Dooley are also involved with Novi Youth Assistance which is a nonprofit organization.

The items on the wish list for the DME loan closet are wheelchairs, knee scooters, shower chairs, and transfer benches.

Sandy also oversees the Memorial Day Parade. Commissioner Dooley helped with the veteran's float. This year twenty-eight organizations participated, which is manageable. Commissioner Dooley said these are just a few of her great moments. Sandy is an advocate and friend. He thanked her from the bottom of his heart. "The City of Novi is blessed to have someone like Sandy. She is what this city is known for, and I can't say thank you enough."

D. Program and Service Update – Commissioner Gopalakrishnan

Commissioner Gopalakrishnan started his presentation by highlighting how great the Parks and Recreation service we have in Novi. There are over 1400 acres of parkland, fourteen developed parks and twenty-eight miles of trails. The department was recently CAPRA re-accredited.

Commissioner Gopalakrishnan introduced Milah Loose, Recreation Supervisor in charge of Facilities and Events. She leads Civic Center rentals, park shelter rentals, Lakeshore Park, beach, splash pad, and Novi Dog Park. Her core responsibility is leading a large

team of forty-three site supervisors / event specialists. They set up this building for rentals as well as special events and plans onsite support during the events.

Milah lives in Novi whereas many employees do not. She received her bachelor's degree in business from Siena Heights University in 2022 where she was on the softball team. She is originally from Elk Rapids. Milah started with the City of Novi in 2024. Community events are a big part of what she does including the Daddy Daughter Dance, Mother Son Game Night, concert band performances, Fuerst Field of Honor, Memorial Day Parade, Novi Community Fest, Sizzling Summer Art Series, Festival of Chariots, and Pour on the Shore. Internally she handles the Employee Wellness Fair and the quarterly employee recognition programs. Milah also oversees operations for elections, Lunch with Santa, and the Diwali Fest. She is busy from February throughout the rest of the year. Every event in the city she is a part of! She leads her team and takes care of it all. Recreation Supervisor Milah Loose said her team handles all the behind-the-scenes stuff. We are the people who make it happen, setting it up and tearing it down and supporting events throughout.

Rentals at the Civic Center happen in the four quarters, activities room, fitness studios, Council Chamber, atrium, conference rooms and kitchen. Milah and her team manage the rentals, open and close the Civic Center. A lot happens to make these events successful.

Another big highlight is the Jessica Splash Pad especially in the summer. Last year there were 14,698 visitors. There is always a staff member on duty. Milah's team handles Lakeshore Park rentals as well as Rotary Park, ITC, and Wildlife Woods. Last year there were 545 shelter reservations with revenues just over \$28,000.

The dog park is also managed by her team. The membership of the park is about 350. It is a \$30 yearly membership fee with a \$20 fee for the key fob deposit. There is no staff present at the park; it has a gated system. Vaccinations and dog license are verified when joining and renewing. Milah hosts a special Doggie Dive In event at Lakeshore Park for dog park members at the start and end of each beach season. Milah has a dog named Willow who was pictured in the presentation. She also enjoys fitness classes, pickleball, teaching Sunday school and traveling up north to visit family.

A picture was displayed of the site supervisor staff during a training. Commissioner Gopalakrishnan summarized that Recreation Supervisor Loose is doing a wonderful job she is the backbone of all the events we hear about each month. She makes it happen. Thank you for making Novi a wonderful place to live. Milah answered the question about her favorite event by saying that it is Community Fest because all the departments come together cohesively to make it happen. Thousands of visitors came to the Civic Center Campus to enjoy the event.

MATTERS FOR COMMISSION DISCUSSION AND/OR ACTION:

A. July Parks and Recreation Month

Director Muck began by saying that for forty years the United States has celebrated Parks and Recreation Month in July to promote building strong vibrant communities through the power of Parks and Recreation. This month is dedicated to recognizing and celebrating the more than 160,000 full time professionals along with hundreds of thousands of part time and seasonal workers and volunteers, who maintain our country's local, state and community parks and recreation programs. Director Muck said usually there is a canned proclamation but instead he wanted to share statements that were developed by our team during the staff retreat. These explain why Novi Parks is essential.

- We provide accessible spaces outside of the home and work that promote community connection and wellness.

- We strengthen our community by facilitating connections, building relationships, and making memories.
- We provide affordable, inclusive recreation opportunities and services to all people.
- We protect and preserve green space for our community and future generations.
- We offer meaningful and skill-building employment and volunteer opportunities.

Director Muck feels these statements from the retreat summarize everything that is tied to what we do in Novi. Commissioner Bagley made a motion to recognize July as Parks and Recreation Month. It was seconded by Commissioner Dooley.

B. Get Outside Novi

Older Adult Services Manager Kit Keiser introduced the Get Outside Novi program which celebrates Parks and Recreation Month. Five parks will be featured. After signing up participants will get clues through email and Facebook posts. At the parks there will be informative signs, QR codes to submit the visit. Participants will be eligible for nature themed prizes. This program is about getting outside, engaging in our community, exploring fantastic parks and celebrating Parks and Recreation Month. This will enable people to experience nature in our own backyard and connect with the community. There was a flier in the commissioner's packet about the program. It is for all ages, and it is free! The department wants to encourage everyone to get out, enjoy the parks, weather and connect with the community.

STAFF REPORTS

A. Administration Division – Director Jeff Muck

1. Park Project & Initiative Updates

Director Muck updated began his report with the long-awaited Villa Barr pathway project. It began this week and is anticipated to take two to three weeks. This project was initiated by City Council to take the path around the entire pond. It will make the path more accessible and user friendly.

It is good news that the Bosco connector project has started. The work is being done down the trail by the gully / ravine. The contractors are installing supports for the boardwalk. The project will be longer and more labor intensive. It is targeted to be complete in August, so it does not interfere with the soccer season.

The city has received multiple complaints about the use of e-bikes and motorized scooters and similar types of vehicles being on the trails, pathways and sidewalks. The city currently does not have an ordinance specifically regarding e-bikes. We are aware of the increase in those modes of transportation, the safety concerns of pedestrians and non-motorized bicycles sharing the sidewalks and trails. Policy and ordinance options regarding the matter are currently being explored. It will be discussed at an upcoming Mobility Committee meeting. Director Muck and OAS Manager Keiser are involved in a small work group of staff, Community Relations and Public Safety, to discuss the issue. It will be decided as a city how to address the complaints and concerns.

The Commissioner's packets contained information about the upcoming November CIP milage. City staff has started making the rounds at HOA meetings. There was information at Community Fest and the website was launched.

Director Muck shared good news that Milah Loose, Steve St.James and Marc Tolsdorf were recognized by the city for their problem solving with water testing at the splash pad. This showed working across departments to find a solution. John Gillingham received his CPRP certification. He joins six other team members with this distinction. He passed his test the Saturday after the first week of summer camp which shows his dedication.

Commissioner Staab reinforced that the Novi Parks Foundation contributed \$11,000 to the Villa Barr pathway.

B. Recreation Division – Deputy Director Tracie Ringle

Deputy Director Ringle said Saturday officially started summer and the department is off and running. She shared information from the soccer tryouts over the weekend. 691 bibs were given out, 546 players received offers, 498 have been excepted. Registration is not due until the end of the month. There is going to be forty-three Lightning Select teams, which is two more than last year. The program is continuing to grow. Steve and Sean were onsite during the tryouts. Deputy Director Ringle said It was great to watch them in action. They did a wonderful job. Steve and Sean already have initial thoughts on how to improve for next year. The Thunder House and Travel Rec Team registration is open through July 15th. These teams play in Novi and travel locally. Tiny Tykes registration is open until August 5th. The office is very soccer centric right now!

NFL girls flag football for 4th -8th grade open for registration. This will be an early season at ITC. Northville is offering a league for girls too so we will look into collaborating. We have also been working with the Athletic Director at the Novi High School to promote because they have a girls' team.

Adult Spring Softball wrapped up this week. The weather was tough all season so the Tuesday league will either have co-champions or meet on a day for a playoff. Summer softball begins next week. Currently the annual Michigan Generals Tournament Ultimate Fastpitch Showcase Tournament is being held Thursday through Sunday at Power Park and ITC.

The Sizzling Summer Art Series kicked off Wednesday June 10th. It was led by Villa Barr artist Amanda Thatch. Yesterday the DIA was onsite for a project. More than 1200 people have registered. Pre-registration is required to account for supplies. Recreation Supervisor Jenneva Kayser has done a great job tying Villa Barr to the series. Every one of the summer residents will be taking part with a project appropriate for kids in their purview. This has helped us lower costs and provide for larger audiences. The next resident arriving in July is Gabriella Boros. She is a print maker. Shannon O'Connor is currently working in the red studio. She is a Southeast Michigan painter and ceramist. Novi PRCS offers twelve different camp options with forty-six offerings over a twelve-week period. With the exception of PowerPlay and Camp Lakeshore these are led by partner instructors. Our team handles the contracts, facilities, marketing, online registration, weather rescheduling, surveying participants and payment processing for instructors. Behind the scenes it is still a lot of work for our team.

Deputy Director Ringle clarified some questions from the Commissioners. There are options for all soccer players, no one will be left out. The biggest hurdle is space as soccer continues to grow. NFL flag football takes place on Sundays which is a light day for field space.

C. Older Adult Division – OAS Manager Kit Keiser

1. Programs and Services

Since Sandy Fisher, Social Services Coordinator was in attendance she presented information about her areas in OAS. Sandy started by adding to the update about the parade from earlier. Additional barricades were installed this year around the Civic Center entrance which increased the safety. Every year, the big goal is to have a safe parade.

Sandy said besides all things she does lifelong learning is a big deal. The Matter of Balance Program presented by Ageways is in progress with fourteen people learning about improving their balance. This program is held three times a year.

Technology is still her most popular topic. Thirty-six people are registered for Talking to AI in July. Each month a one-on-one technology class is held. Sandy mentioned "it is one

of her favorite programs because everyone is so grateful". An Alzheimer's support group will be coming soon. The group said this new location will be great because of the lit parking lot. This is another level of support for Novi residents.

Fall prevention month is in September. Sandy has been working with U of M Injury Prevention. One of their nurses is going to host a slipper exchange which is a new program for OAS. Sandy concluded her updates with her famous quote "that's a little slice of my world".

OAS Manager Kit Keiser presented on the social program for the department. Buzz About Bee's will be back on August 18th at Bosco fields. Participants can try the beekeeping gear, see the hives up close, and learn from beekeeper Fire Captain Theisen.

The Senior Day at the State Fair will be back in September. Novi Seniors are eligible to attend a free program prior to the fairgrounds opening on September 3rd at 10:00am.

The participants will receive a box lunch, entertainment, and prizes. To sign up call the office starting on July 13th. Wristbands will be distributed later for those registered.

The Summer Games Bash will be held outdoors at Meadowbrook on July 22nd. Cornhole, bocce ball, light refreshments and lots of fun is planned. August 6th OAS will be celebrating National Root Beer Float Day with a twist of nostalgia. Root beer floats will be served, golden oldies music bingo for prizes will be played during the event at Meadowbrook Commons.

June 25th a trip to the DIA for a Motown themed Melodies at the Museum will be held. The program sold out early with thirty people on the waiting list. The Mackinac Island Grand Experience trip is now full too.

OAS Manager added that Recreation Supervisor Madison Lachance will be returning from maternity leave on July 15th.

COMMISSIONER COMMENTS:

Commissioner Torimoto

It is great to hear all the program and services updates but really it is about the fantastic job the professional staff at PRCS does. Sandy and Milah today demonstrated the scope of responsibilities. It was great to hear their excitement. The anecdotes about Milah and John with getting the splash pad up and running and certification. It is a great job they do.

Commissioner Staab

Be aware of the CIP milage coming up. It is important to remember it is no additional cost. Novi Parks Recreation and Cultural Services is recognized throughout the county as premier, and we want to keep it that way.

I appreciate Sandy and Jay's presentation and Milah and Swami's too. Sitting in this chair for many years I can appreciate all the activities and services we offer.

I have learned something from everybody's presentation.

I want to thank Kit for getting us a second bus for Pour on the Shore. Commissioner Staab finished with an old adage "teamwork makes the dream work".

Commissioner Bagley

First of all, it was a nice full meeting, and I appreciated all the information. I really enjoyed the Kakizome presentation. I love cultural sharing and it is important to see what is happening in our community. I loved the presentations from both

Commissioners and seeing everything that is taking place. I specifically was impressed with the important work that Sandy does around caregivers, older adults and vets. It is an important part of our community. I love the emphasis on technology with older

adults because so much is placed on youth, but adults need it just as much. Thank you for sharing important information, including the Novi Youth Assistance. I enjoyed the Community Fest immensely. There were so many hands involved to put it together to make it an incredible event. I enjoyed seeing the different organizations such as emergency officers. Kudos to the teams for the hard work behind all of our events.

Commissioner Gopalakrishnan

It was a wonderful evening today with a packed agenda. I echo Commissioner Bagley's comments on the Kakizome calligraphy. It was cool, unique and neat to see how they draw that with their whole body and a certain orientation of the brush. I was really impressed with Milah and Sandy's services that they offer, especially the AARP Tax Aid and food assistance.

Director Muck mentioned the teamwork involved to solve problems at the Jessica Splash Pad. It was amazing to see how talented our team is when problems arise and how quickly they handled situations.

My favorite month of the year is July. It is my goal to get outside every day next month no matter what the weather. We have to prioritize what we want to do since there is so much offered.

Thank you for all the updates on the events.

Commissioner Dooley

Wow, I do not know what else I could add to the comments.

I also attended Community Fest representing Novi Youth Assistance. The event has gotten bigger every single year. More people are tuned into it and want to learn about the different departments within this great city. Seeing the interaction amongst the city employees, Novi Parks Foundation, Police and Fire was wonderful. All the events outdoors and in the atrium, people were genuinely interested in everything the Community Fest had to offer. The amount of interest in the event continues to grow. The Commissioners previously visited the parks/ jewels of the city. The assignment given for the program and services update has been wonderful so far. The Commissioners getting to know the employees, how much they bring, their passion, and all they do to help fellow human beings. What Sandy does is absolutely incredible because she cares so much about people in need. That is her mantra for all the years I have known her. Kit thank you. Tracie thank you for what you do for the youth of the city. Director Muck is awesome!

Commissioner Joseph

Jay mentioned about the new updates that was started this year. The staff is what we want to see, the people doing the work. It is amazing. Sandy - "how do you do it all it seems like a monumental task and you are successful in all those areas".

I saw a Facebook post about John's accreditation. It is awesome news. I wish he was at the meeting to hear congratulations.

In the past we have had the opportunity to engage and interact with as many staff that are able during Parks and Recreation month. With us cancelling the meeting. Do we have an opportunity to recognize staff even if it is after hours? The Commissioners love interacting with the team.

ADJOURNMENT

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

Voice Vote

Unanimous

The meeting was adjourned by Chairman Joseph at 8:13p.m.

DATE APPROVED: _____

Joseph, Chairperson

Dooley, Vice Chairperson