

## **PARKS, RECREATION & CULTURAL SERVICES COMMISSION**

**Thursday, June 26<sup>th</sup>, 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 (absent/excused), Dooley (absent/excused), Gopalakrishnan (present), Staab (present), Tolkacz (present), Torimoto (present)  
Student Representatives: DiDomenico (absent/excused), Sid (present)

### **APPROVAL OF AGENDA:**

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

**Voice Vote**

**Unanimous**

### **CITIZEN COMMENTS:**

### **APPROVAL OF MINUTES:**

It was moved that the minutes for the May 15<sup>th</sup> meeting be approved by Commissioner Tolkacz and second by Commissioner Gopalakrishnan

**Voice Vote**

**Unanimous**

### **PRESENTATIONS**

### **COMMITTEE REPORTS:**

- A. Novi Parks Foundation – Commissioners Joseph, Riggins, Staab & Torimoto  
Commissioner Staab said the final meeting before Pour on Shore took place. The big push is tickets, tickets, tickets. The band is excellent, and beverages are diverse. Food trucks will be open for food. Commissioner Torimoto added that Mark Somerville is leading the way getting the message out on social media.
- B. Active Mobility Committee – Commissioners Tolkacz & Dooley  
Commissioner Tolkacz said the meeting just finished at the police training center. It had a couple general topics including the safe streets for all safety plans. It was a nice analysis of intersections of the city owned and partly owned streets. For example, Ten Mile and Novi Rd is county owned and outside the scope. The analysis is to understand what could be done to improve various intersections and questions about the impact of road construction. It is about halfway completed. In the fall it will be updated with more depth.  
A topic was brought up by Councilman Brian Smith to potential enforce what Ann Arbor does in terms of traffic and bike separation. Typically, there is three feet when passing a bike however in Ann Arbor it is five. There is discussion on how this

impacts roads and pushing people too far into oncoming traffic. There was a motion for future study.

There was a public comment / request to have the city look at putting a sidewalk on Quince between Novi Rd and Meadowbrook. There is a bus stop and the corner is busy.

#### C. Commissioner Parks and Facilities updates

##### 1. Wildlife Woods Park – Commissioner Torimoto

Commissioner Torimoto visited Wildlife Woods a few months ago from what he saw overall the park looked pretty good. The parks website gives an overview of Wildlife Woods. He felt a few adjustments needed to be made since the land swap occurred because the basketball and tennis court ownership. Director Muck explained these are still on the website because they are available to the public even if they are not in the park boundaries.

The shelter was very clean and in good condition. The reservation board is being used now. Director Muck sent in a work order based on Commissioner Torimoto's report of remainders from the area under construction. The parking lots and sidewalks are in excellent condition. Commissioner Torimoto pointed out the drainage issue on the multi-use fields which has always been a challenge.

Director Muck addressed this saying a fix is in a future budget year / CIP plan.

Because we can use the space and the likely closure of the Grand River fields due to the City West project Mr. Bowman is planning. Finally, Commissioner Torimoto noticed two dedicated trees at Wildlife Woods. Deputy Director Ringle explained the process for the commemorative tree program. Community members can select a park and species of tree to plant then a marker is placed.

##### 2. Ella Mae Power Park – Commissioner Tolkacz

Commissioner Tolkacz said he was inspired by the Parks and Rec staff presentation of using AI tools. So, he developed his presentation entirely with AI. It pulled text from various websites, mostly City of Novi and he inserted his own pictures. Ella Mae Power Park is the premier softball complex in the region. Various tournaments take place here including men's, ladies and girls. It is a good facility with access and parking. Leagues also take place at the park. A picture was shown of the artwork on the concession stand.

Commissioner Tolkacz discovered the nice trails behind the playscape. He appreciated the progress made with the playscapes in Novi since his kids played at many parks during his thirty years in the city. The surface of the playground is very kid friendly. The design philosophy of being inclusive for kids of all abilities is wonderful. The park is very accessible from the neighborhood.

He expressed concern of the path wide enough for a car to drive down and people getting confused late at night. The rain has caused some pooling of water. Discussion occurred about getting it drained out and a solution to the problem. Other issues noted for improvement included replacing picnic tables adding a no swimming sign on all sides of the pond. There was clarification on the paths becoming the cross-country course which is now owned by the school district after the land swap.

### 3. Jessica's Splashpad – Student Representative Sid

Student Representative Sid said he did not realize he had a presentation and will get it done for the next meeting.

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

#### A. July Parks and Recreation Month

Director Muck stated that we did not do the normal recognition since it is a bit more hectic this time of year. In the past the entire team comes to do a recognition but between a wedding, vacations, programs and multiple evening meetings we decided to take a break this time. But we still want to talk about Parks and Recreation month. This year, nationally, we're celebrating 40 years of Parks and Recreation month. It was launched in 1985. Each July, we celebrate the vital role Parks and Recreation play in enhancing the lives of tens of millions of people and strengthening communities across the country.

Parks and recreation services are essential to community health and well-being. They foster lifelong friendships, cherished memories, and strong family bonds that lasts for generations. Together, we are building sustainable parks and green spaces for today and tomorrow. Thriving community centered on health, wellness and connection, high quality inclusive programs and spaces for all, opportunities for play and connection through sports, arts, events and more.

This year's theme is Building Together, Play Together, and it honors the contributions of over 160,000 full time parks and recreation professionals across the country. That includes our 12 full-time, within our parks department, not including our dedicated parks maintenance team. It also includes hundreds of thousands of part time and seasonal staff and then dedicated volunteers, such as yourselves, who work tirelessly to maintain and improve our local parks and provide quality programs. What we would ask for tonight is to, as a commission, to acknowledge the immense benefits of Parks and Recreation and officially recognize July's Parks and Recreation Month. Make a comment about Parks and rec month, July and then make a motion and officially to recognize this month.

Commissioner Joseph started again this year by saying it is unfortunate the team is not here, but we recognize that the beautiful parks do not happen by happenstance. The hard work the team puts in, not only by being here every month, but we recognize the team is much larger than that.

Novi has world class facilities and is accredited and recognized nationally. That is kudos to the team. It is very much appreciated what everyone does and the ability for us to enjoy the parks

Commissioner Gopalakrishnan said the parks are just wonderful. I have been to most of them. It is the people who make the parks great. It is awesome that we are celebrating July as Parks and rec month right in the middle of the summer. The 100-hour challenge is a good idea and very apt for Parks and Recreation month. Great job to the team. We are so fortunate to have so many parks in the City of Novi that we get to enjoy. Thank you for everything the team does.

Commissioner Tolkacz agreed with Gopalakrishnan and continued by saying the parks are gems. He appreciates everyone's hard work maintaining and the planning that went into them. Every year we expand the facilities, which is awesome.

Student Representative Sid thinks the parks are great and is grateful for the many parks in the city. He said he has been to a lot of the parks but has yet to cover them all. Every time he is at this meeting he hears a commissioner doing a presentation about a new park he did not know about. There are so many ways to get involved in the parks with programs. I played in the soccer program and summer camp. The reach is broad. I think people do not realize how much the parks and recreation staff does, it is amazing.

Commissioner Torimoto said just as we saw in the audits, the parks and play structures keep evolving, new ideas and opportunities. The staff try new things and makes everything more accessible. It has been amazing, and we are fortunate to have the staff that we do to plan and make it happen.

Commissioner Staab stated he always felt there was three main reasons people live in Novi, municipal services (police and fire), schools and parks. Novi parks are superior to most places in the country. "I have visited a lot with my grandchildren at different parks and playgrounds. Ours are always in pristine condition compared to other places. This is why we live in Novi and keep it a superior place to live, work and have fun."

Commissioner Joseph concluded it is unanimous that all of us agree to the benefits of Parks and Recreation but also support the team. This will be the easiest motion to make to recognize July as Parks and Recreation month. It was seconded by Commissioner Staab.

Director Muck said he would share all the kind comments with the staff.

B. Get Outside Novi – 100 Hours Outside

Director Muck continued that the staff decided to do something fun to promote the 100 Hours Outside Challenge to celebrate National Parks and Rec Month. The commissioner's packets contained the activity tracking sheet and guide with suggestions on how to get out and explore our parks and track outdoor hours. People who track their hours and submit will win a prize. This is sponsored by Christian Financial Credit Union. There is a nice coloring sheet featuring the Jessica Splash Pad and quite a few activity ideas spread out the entire community.

Tonight we are debuting the fun video our staff did to try to get everyone outside. It will be shared on social media in the coming weeks to promote Parks and Rec.

The video was shown to the commissioners.

Director Muck gave a big kudos to the Community Relations team for putting the video together quickly. Deputy Director Ringle added that we are encouraging people to share their videos and photos with us. We will reach out to them if it is something we could use for marketing. It is a great way to get photos. The staff cannot be everywhere capturing all the great things happening in parks. We hope our community helps us do that. There were several questions from the commissioners.

## **STAFF REPORTS**

A. Administration Division – Director Jeff Muck

1. Park Project Updates

Director Muck updated the Commissioners on the maintenance issues on the pickleball courts at Wildlife Woods Park. They have been resolved and there has been a lot of positive feedback. The ITC tennis courts are being resurfaced this

week. They will be converted to tennis only per the discussion in April. Signage is up at the park to notify people of that change.

The Novi Ice Arena reopened after completing significant upgrades aimed at improving comfort, safety, and overall quality of the facility. Their team did an outstanding job documenting the work on social media. There are a few punch list items to complete but the facility looks great. The reopening event is Saturday July 12<sup>th</sup> and includes complimentary skating and other specials.

Eagle Scout candidate Jack Hoppesch finished the Gaga ball pit at Power Park. He will attend a future PRCS Commission meeting.

The bid opening for Power Park asphalt pathway reconstruction was held today. The project includes pathways throughout the park, concrete replacement, additional drainage, near the pavilions and parking lots. The next step is to go to council for approval. The target date for completion is September or October of this year.

Improvements continue at our newest park; Northwest Park located on 12 Mile Rd east of Napier. Work began yesterday converting the two-acre open field at the south end of the park to a prairie with Michigan native plants. To do this the existing vegetation will be removed through mowing and herbicide applications followed by a controlled burn then re-seeding. The playground will remain open unless signs are posted. The controlled burn will take place in about two weeks depending on the weather. This was planned in the original acquisition of the property. Deputy Director Ringle worked on the park improvement grant with Oakland County which included this plan too. This is the last phase of the development of Northwest Park that was planned when we acquired the property.

## B. Recreation Division – Deputy Director Tracie Ringle

### 1. Programs & Services

Deputy Director Ringle shared some good things with the commissioners. June and July is obviously our busiest months. The team is going in a thousand different directions all with smiles on their faces and hopefully bringing smiles to the community.

The Sizzling Summer Art Series started out with a bang with two free daytime programs sold out. The first evening event is tomorrow at Fuerst Park. If the weather does not cooperate the event will move inside the Civic Center. It is a Japanese Taiko Drumming with dance performances. Additional evening dates for the culture series with no-preregistration required are the Indian Dance Showcase on July 17<sup>th</sup> and the Polynesian Luau on August 1<sup>st</sup> both at Fuerst Park at 7:00p.m.

Kong Ho and Martie Geiger Ho will reside at Villa Barr for the month of July. Kong was a resident last summer. This year together they will display in the Atrium gallery. The Friends of Villa Barr along with Martie and Kong will host a reception at the library on July 23<sup>rd</sup> at 5:30p.m. We have accepted a donation of a loom and spinning wheel to create a fiber arts studio at Villa Barr. This expands the types of mediums that are available for potential residents. Applications are now open but will close soon for 2026. Three residents from anywhere in the world and three locals are being selected to use the studios onsite.

Jenneva is putting together some visual art classes for the fall. This is a segment we have not had a lot of success with, and it has been piecemealed. Since Jenneva is a sculptor we will be adding some clay sculpting classes to our offerings. We have partnered with Northville Art House to offer a kids paintbrush and pencil class for preschoolers based on books.

Auditions for Beetlejuice Junior will be on August 24<sup>th</sup>. The show will be held in January. It is a highly anticipated show with considerable demand and large casts, so we secured the license very early. The performances will be held at the Novi Middle School, which is the first time we have been able to use that facility for a production. It will benefit all; we will be able to have more children in the casts and larger audiences.

Recreation Supervisor Gillingham works on Nature Nurture Novi Junior. It is a nature based educational programming for children. Bee Creative and Mini Gardeners took place in June both had good attendance. July will have Pop Rocks, which is a colorful community rock snake along with popsicles at Fuerst Park. Animal Tracking will take place July 25<sup>th</sup> at Lakeshore Park. August 8<sup>th</sup> will be camping preparedness at Lakeshore Park. More will be planned in the fall. This will meld with the adult Nature Nurture Novi, and families can learn about the same concepts with different approaches.

Deputy Director Ringle highlighted the camp counselors. It has been a great summer so far. They are keeping the kids engaged, safe, and putting in a lot of effort. These young adults look exhausted but happy at the end of the day. Camp is open 7:00-6:00 which they work various shifts during that time. The counselors play, run, and do all the things the campers do.

Softball could use assistance with the weather. It has been rainy in the afternoons and evenings. The summer league kicked off this week and already had to cancel Tuesday and Wednesday because of the weather and field conditions.

T-Bolts tennis has 170 players. The Sand volleyball league is underway at Lakeshore Park. Soccer tryouts for select teams were earlier this month with 500 kids selected and registered. The recreation league registration continues until July 17<sup>th</sup>. Chase will be at the August meeting to give presentation on our largest youth sports program.

The site supervisor team have been champions this season. This group is mostly young adults. They support the team at events like Community Fest, Sizzling Summer, soccer tryouts and more by setting up and tearing down. They also work at Lakeshore Park and the splash pad. We could not do it without them and appreciate their expertise and commitment to the job. Hopefully they are gaining experience to take into adulthood. Deputy Director Ringle mentioned the weather a few times in her report. She explained the weather policy is comprehensive. A thirty-minute delay for site or sound of thunder and lightning for outdoor programs and the splash pad. There are procedures for air quality and heat index days. These are communicated with coaches and instructors to modify activities. Families are informed about the importance of hydration. If the heat index gets above 110 we cancel for all games and practices. Below that point it is up to the coaches and parents on decisions to hold practice. Adults are encouraged to modify activities and hydrate.

### C. Older Adult Division – OAS Manager Kit Kieser

#### 1. Programs and Services

OAS Manager Kit Kieser mentioned there is quite a bit going on despite Madison Lachance being out of the office for her wedding and honeymoon. She provided a report on her programs. Earlier this month summer was kicked off with the largest Sip Sip Hooray event. The trivia nights are very popular, lively and for all ages. There has been requests for more in the future. The first Line Dance and Lunch took place at Meadowbrook Commons with a few dozen participants. Line dancing is an activity with a lot of requests, but it is hard to find an instructor. This program brought a lot of joy the

participants. The instructor will be able to teach occasionally.

A nature photography hike was hosted in mid-June through Nature Nurture Novi. The January Atrium Artist lead participants on a hands-on hike at Lakeshore after sharing photography tips and techniques.

An artificial intelligence class was presented by our dedicated volunteer Mike Allie. The turnout was surprising with a huge registration of fifty people but sixty-one showed up. This will be offered two more times this year.

On August 12<sup>th</sup> another Stargazing Night will happen at ITC in partnership with Farmington Hills Stargazers. 200 participants are expected to view the Perseid meteor shower at the peak time.

The travel program includes two Tigers games that are full with waiting lists. July 16<sup>th</sup> is a Summer Games Bash at Meadowbrook Activity Center with yard games and popsicles. August 6<sup>th</sup> there will be a 50's Float Fest to celebrate National Root Beer Day with music and dancing.

August 28<sup>th</sup> is Senior Day at the State Fair. 80 spots are reserved for Novi residents.

Registration begins on July 14<sup>th</sup> and it will fill up fast.

Starting on July 1<sup>st</sup> the suggested donation for Meals on Wheels will increase, from \$3.50 to \$4.00. Western Oakland Meals on Wheels is increasing prices due to rising food costs.

### **COMMISSIONER COMMENTS:**

#### Chairman Joseph

Started the comments by recognizing Commissioner Tolkacz's last meeting. He will be missed as he sunsets into retirement and enjoys the fruits of his labor. We appreciate all the work he has done over the past three years.

#### Commissioner Tolkacz

Commissioner Tolkacz said his first meeting was January 21<sup>st</sup>. During that meeting the discussion was about getting a grant for Northwest Park. He attended popsicles at the park last year to see the project into fruition. He felt the same with the splash pad. At that first meeting we talked about raising money for the splash pad. What he is going to miss most is seeing projects progress. There is a lot of opportunities with the land east of ITC Sport Park and the new island.

Chairman Joseph added that he always enjoys Commissioner Tolkacz commentary from the Active Mobility committee and summarization and points.

Commissioner Tolkacz continued that it has been a great opportunity since he has lived in the city for many years. His kids experienced great programs. He has learned that the staff has way more ideas and thoughts than he can provide. The team is great, and he was glad to be part of it. I didn't think I could commit for another three years.

#### Commissioner Gopalakrishnan

Thank you for the updates on the Novi Parks Foundation and the Active Mobility Committee. Thank you, Commissioner Tolkacz, for being part of the Active Mobility Committee, I will miss you. The park presentations were awesome as usual. I learned a lot tonight about Wildlife Woods from Commissioner Torimoto and Ella Mae Power Park too. We will hear soon about the splash pad by Student Representative Sid. I was planning on visiting the splash pad last week when it was 100 degrees.

Thank you, Director Muck, for recognizing July as Parks and Recreation month in the

City of Novi. We are a city of 34 square miles, and we are fortunate to have so many parks in our system. I have been promoting our parks wherever I go and encouraging friends to host graduation parties at the parks.

The Get Outside Novi program is a cool thing. I am an outdoor person. I noticed on the list of ideas that I can go camping in my backyard, it would be awesome to do that. Thank you, Director Muck, for all your updates on park improvements including the ice arena and Northwest Park.

Thank you, Deputy Director Tracie Ringle, for so many programs. The Sizzling Summer is near and dear to me. I am planning on coming tomorrow night and then to the Indian Dance Showcase on July 17<sup>th</sup>. The day before Pour on the Shore so I will have two things that week

Thank you, OAS Manager Kit Kieser, for all your programs as well. There are so many activities in the last section of staff reports. Many things are happening and there is not enough summertime to do it all but wonderful opportunities.

#### Student Representative Sid

Thank you, Commissioner Tolkacz, for all the work you put in. I have been here for two years and every meeting you give a good summary of the various committees that you are a part of. I will miss our voice giving us the updates.

Thanks to everyone for the updates on the parks. I was at Wildlife Woods this afternoon and saw no problems with the draining after the rain.

I think it is great to have the 100 Hours Outside Challenge. I will try my best to achieve it. It is nice that Novi is recognizing Parks and rec month.

#### Commissioner Torimoto

I wanted to bring up the story about the line dance. It really summarizes the great job the staff does with programming and being creative, trying something new or bringing something back. It was a fantastic story. Thanks for the remarks and what you do.

#### Commissioner Staab

I want to thank Commissioner Tolkacz for his input. Being a fellow Meadowbrook Glen and east side of Novi person, I look forward to seeing you in the neighborhood and at Pour on the Shore.

I appreciate all the ideas on Get Outside Novi and the neat ideas. I look forward to the challenge.

Commissioner Joseph apologized for not adding an agenda action item 8C to discuss the July meeting. The meeting is scheduled for July 17<sup>th</sup> the day before Pour on the Shore and the same day as the Indian Dance Showcase. Since there are so many activities occurring and the short time in between meetings he wanted to discuss potentially canceling the July PRCS Commission Meeting. There was a motion to cancel by Commissioner Gopalakrishnan second by Commissioner Staab.

Director Muck announced that Commissioner Staab and Commissioner Riggins were reappointed. There will be a new commissioner starting at the August meeting. She has a strong background of parks and rec knowledge.

Commissioner Joseph

He summarized "it has already been a great summer with more to come. I look forward to getting to the splash pad. With some of the heat we will try to enjoy it because we will be complaining about the cold in February."

**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 8:05p.m.

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

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Joseph, Chairperson

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Dooley, Vice Chairperson