

PARKS, RECREATION & CULTURAL SERVICES COMMISSION

Thursday, September 18th, 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), Bagley (absent/excused), Dooley (present), Gopalakrishnan (present), Riggins (present), Staab (present), Torimoto (present)

APPROVAL OF AGENDA:

Commissioner Riggins requested the ITC Community Sports Park presentation 7C2 be moved to the November meeting. Commissioner Dooley motioned for approval of agenda and second by Commissioner Staab.

Voice Vote

Unanimous

CITIZEN COMMENTS:

Linda Krieger, a Novi resident since 1981 attended the meeting. She has observed that the Christmas decorations in the atrium have disappeared over the years. She was told Parks and Recreation handles decorating for the holidays. She said it is disheartening to see that there is less in the beautiful atrium. It could be filled with a 12–15-foot tree for the kids and residents. The snowflakes outside the building are no longer displayed. "I am happy to see there still is a tree with lights outside. I do not want to lose it."

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

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

Voice Vote

Unanimous

PRESENTATIONS

A. Artist in Residence Program – Recreation Supervisor Jenneva Kayser
Deputy Director Tracie Ringle introduced Recreation Supervisor for Arts and Events, Jenneva Kayser. She thanked the Commissioners for having her tonight and said she was genuinely excited to talk about Villa Barr. Recreation Supervisor Kayser explained her perspective and how she approaches the projects as a professional artist and an artist residence. Jeff and Tracie supported her this summer in pursuing residency at the Clay Studio in Philadelphia. She was able to learn from the residency coordinators from the artist's and administrative side. This has helped her attract more artists and make better use of their time while visiting.
The main reason Jenneva took this position was the potential in the Villa Barr Art Park. She identified four goals for her first year: growing the number of artists in the program, community engagement, high caliber candidates and recognition in the community (citizens visiting Villa Barr).

Villa Barr is an incredible facility with a lot of tools, and there is money allocated to support the stipends which is important in attracting quality candidates to the program. Leadership was excited to make things happen.

The studio was in rough shape when Jenneva started. The house had a deep cleaning, but the studio was untouched. A big chunk of her year was spent organizing, cleaning, sorting and making the space appealing and functional for the artists. Recreation Supervisor Kayser wanted to get the word out so there would be more applicants. She has been out in community promoting to gallery owners, museum employees, and artists but nobody had heard of Villa Barr. The two studio spaces will now be utilized to grow the program to six artists. Three visiting artists will live in the house and three local individuals that do not require housing will use the outbuilding. It will be a pair of people in spring, summer and fall which will create an immediate connection. The local artist will serve as a host to link the visitor to the community. The number of applicants has increased from twelve to thirty-four with great people to choose from. Applicants had to include a project proposal for Sizzling Summer or another way to interact with the community. Five will be participating in Sizzling Summer.

This year Sizzling Summer hands on art series in collaboration with the DIA were very successful ranging from 120 – 230 attendees. This will give the artists a chance to meet and talk with the public at these events. Some of the artists will also have atrium exhibitions.

Another challenge to programming at Villa Barr is the buildings are not ADA compliant, the parking lot is small, and the area is weather dependent. Tours have been discussed with a video option on the website for evidence of ADA compliance.

Recreation Supervisor Kayser provided details on the six fabulous artists selected for 2026 and many plans for Villa Barr. Most of the artists will be holding workshops, public engagement and one will be making an art piece.

Diwali Festival Update- Recreation Supervisor Jenneva Kayser

Recreation Supervisor Kayser continued by saying the big project of Diwali Fest is October 16th from 5:00-8:30. The committee members have been working very hard. The event is going to be beautiful, colorful, festive and exciting. All the food vendors and most of the craft vendors have been secured. The full slate of performers are booked, and the fireworks are squared away. Hopefully, all the Commission members will be in attendance since there is not a PRCS Commission meeting that evening.

There were several questions, discussion and clarification about the artist in residence report and Villa Barr. Topics included local visiting groups, the pool of applicants, as well as trends in art and what would be accepted.

An update on Deborah Redwood was provided. It was mentioned that the artists enjoy visitors.

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

- A. Novi Parks Foundation– Commissioners Joseph, Riggins, Staab & Torimoto
Commissioner Torimoto said the last meeting reflected on the accomplishments of Pour on the Shore then thinking about whether the event needs refreshing.

Commissioner Staab elaborated the meeting was Tuesday September 16th. The Foundation used evaluations / a sampling of twenty-seven surveys to look at rejuvenating Pour on the Shore and other fundraising events. The event started as a craft beer venue then diversified into spirits and wines. Food options and offerings are an area to step up. 2025 had more attendees and brought in increased money than 2024. But it is time to bring it into 2026 and beyond with new ideas and branding.
The date for 2026 is July 24th.

- B. Active Mobility Committee– Commissioners Dooley
Commissioner Dooley stated there has not been a meeting. The next meeting is October 9th. He will recap at the November commission meeting.

- C. Parks and Facilities updates

- 1. Water Tower Park R/C Raceway – Commissioner Staab
Commissioner Staab began his report by saying the RC Raceway is a hidden gem. He visited the park with his grandson on August 23rd. He was amazed with how the property was developed and maintained. When he visited the park there was a beehive of activity throughout the day. Commissioner Staab's presentation showed slides with pictures of the rules, landscaping, bleachers and rocks. Tents are used for tuning up the racers and swapping parts. Enterprising young ladies were selling snacks to the crowd. Cars run from dawn to dusk May 1st through November 1st. The next big race is this weekend. The sponsors are displayed on the fence.
Details of the race day process were exhibited in the slides and video.
Commissioner Staab said he was amazed at the activity and equipment that people bring. Commissioner Joseph loves the fact that the initiative for the park was driven by city staff. It is also great that venue is right below the Novi water tower which has been our brand forever.

- 2. ITC Community Sports Park – Commissioner Riggins – Tabled to November

MATTERS FOR COMMISSION DISCUSSION AND/OR ACTION:

- A. Commission Chair and Vice Chair Selections & Committee Appointments
Director Muck said in the Commissioner's packets there is a list of those who have volunteered for Chair - Commissioner Joseph, Vice Chair – Commissioner Dooley, Parks Foundation – Commissioners Staab and Torimoto. He asked if anyone else would like to throw their hat in the ring. If not, there would be a motion to approve those appointments as presented. Motions for approval were by Commissioner Dooley and Gopalakrishnan.
- B. Appoint Replacement to Mobility Committee
Director Muck informed the Commissioners that per Council rules two PRCS Commissioners need to be on the Mobility Committee. In addition, two City Council members and two planning commission members are required. Commissioner Gopalakrishnan expressed interest and there was a motion to appoint. Commissioners Staab and Riggins motioned for approval.

Director Muck thanked everyone for volunteering for extra duties besides to coming to this monthly meeting. He appreciates all of those who have volunteered for Foundation, Mobility Committee and leadership at this level.

C. Smoking and Vaping in Parks

The Commissioners packet received information from the City Attorney which Director Muck provided a brief overview. An individual expressed concerns about smoking and vaping in parks specifically Ella Mae Power Park. Mayor Fischer asked the Parks Commission to take this up for discussion and make a recommendation to City Council. Can the city ban or regulate smoking on city owned property? What would be the available mechanisms for doing so, and would such a regulation be enforceable to practice? The city has broad authority under the Home Rule City Act to enact regulations relating to conduct on its own property. There are already limitations on smoking near municipally owned buildings within 100 feet.

Director Muck asked the Commissioners to decide what mechanisms to use. A ban or regulation would require an ordinance which City Council would enact. Another option would be a park rule that would also be adopted by Council. The third would be to post signage with no rule or ordinance behind it. Enforcement of an ordinance would be a civil infraction with a fine. A rule is fully enforceable by the police department, director of parks or park employee has the authority to order any person acting in violation of park rules and regulations to leave a park or recreation area. Any of those authority figures could ask somebody who is smoking to leave. It would be highly unlikely that the police could react in time to a single person smoking at the park.

Director Muck asked the Commissioners to discuss and decide if it should go to City Council. All the Commissioners had input and questions regarding the topic.

Chairman Joseph clarified an ordinance would be difficult to enforce. The rule would be compared to not having alcohol in the park. It was agreed signage would be the most beneficial. The two parks that are in most need of signage are Ella Mae Power Park and Pavilion Shore. Due to the ban of smoking 100 feet from a building it could effectively be enacted without creating another rule under chapter 22. It was concluded unanimously across the Commissioners that this is something we would like to have council take on the evaluation of a potential rule or signage to start. The motion stated Parks Commission recommends the City Council Ordinance Review Committee discusses whether to enact a park rule to smoking and vaping or display signage without enacting a rule. It was approved by Commissioner Staab and seconded by Commissioner Dooley.

STAFF REPORTS

A. Administration Division – Director Jeff Muck

1. Park Project Updates

Director Muck had two quick updates. The bid for demolition of the building on the newly purchased Shawood Lake Island property is due September 25th. Nine companies attended the pre-bid walk through. Recommendations will go to City Council for approval. The demo will most likely happen late fall after the bids are opened and the companies assessed. City Council requested that the Parks Commission discuss future ideas and recommendations for the island property. This

will happen at the November meeting. Information will be sent about the meeting with EGLE. These conversations need to be complete by the budget meetings in January.

A pre-construction meeting was held last week for the Power Park pathway and parking lot reconstruction project. The project will require closing the playground and pathways to the south of the softball fields for several weeks in October. It will not affect Diwali Fest or softball.

B. Recreation Division – Deputy Director Tracie Ringle

1. Programs & Services

Cultural Arts was covered by Recreation Supervisor Jenneva Kayser, so Deputy Director Ringle started with sports updates. The department has transitioned away from the traditional sports photographer for team photos. Since everybody has a very capable phone in their hand we decided to create a sports backdrop. It will be put up on game days for soccer, basketball, volleyball and possibly tennis. This allows teams to decide when they want their team photo taken and give options for families. This will also give more visibility on social media.

Dooley Dog Day will take place at the soccer fields this weekend for all 970 players and their families. Thanks to Commissioner Dooley for this twice-a-year tradition that has taken place for many years.

Registration is ongoing for Jack O 'Lantern Jubilee which is on October 18th from 1:00-3:00. The event has been moved to Fuerst Park. New decorating ideas are being planned making it fun for everyone.

At a previous meeting, one-year findings from the splash pad were brought forth. Proposed changes included weather closings and hours of operation shortened to 7:00p.m. These edits were implemented. 14,700 visitors came to the splash pad this summer despite a slow start to the season due to the cold weather. There were many days the park did not open in late May and early June.

Deputy Director Ringle continues saying sponsorship is a source of revenue for the department, helping to offset costs, allowing us to have reasonable prices. There has been great success with sponsorship in the past, but it is becoming more difficult to garner support from local businesses and corporations. In an effort to attract new sponsors we have revamped the sponsorship package. Deputy Director Ringle will be bringing it to the Commission soon. She also asked the Commissioners to spread the word about sponsorship opportunities with the community.

Recreation Supervisor Steve Fellhauer earned his Certified Parks and Recreation Professional certification. He joins five other department members of our team in our national accredited department. Attaining CPRP designation acknowledges meeting education and experience qualifications plus illustrate commitment to the profession as well as knowledge and understanding of key concepts within Parks and Recreation. We are proud of him for taking that on with the commitment to study and take the test. Lastly, Deputy Director Ringle provided an update about the Cultural Arts Committee formed by Council in May 2024 to replace the Cultural Arts Advisory Board that previously reported to the PRCS department. The purpose exists to identify and support and promote art displays, programing and cultural events within the City of Novi. A staff liaison from the department will provide committee members with information on current practices, regional benchmarks and potential sources of assistance and

funding. The committee will report to Council at least once a year and make recommendations as needed. Regular meetings will be scheduled the third Thursday of each month at 6:00p.m., prior to Commission meetings. The committee may adjust meeting frequency based on the needs and the workload of what's happening. Potential topics for consideration, but not limited to public art opportunities, enhancements, development of art park property and programing, cultural programing and events and youth and adult art programing. The next round of interviews with City Council will be in November. Additional members are being recruited. Applications can be obtained through the Clerk's office. Hopefully the committee can get started in the beginning of 2026.

C. Older Adult Division – Director Jeff Muck

1. Programs and Services

Director Muck provided the OAS report due to OAS Manager Keiser being at the National Recreation and Parks Association conference with Steve Fellhauer and John Gillingham. A lot of activities will be going on in the next few months in this department. There will be a perennial exchange and native plant give away this Saturday September 20th from 9:00-11:00 at Fuerst Park. This is in conjunction with Oakland County Parks. Fire Captain Theisen will give a short presentation on the importance of pollinators. He will also be at Bosco Fields September 24th for the Buzz Abouts Bees program. Houseplant 101 and Houseplant Fun are brand new programs offered at Lakeshore Park with MSU Extension.

The Senior Day at the Detroit Zoo was successful on September 10th with thirty-one spots filled. A Travel Fair will be held October 7th at Meadowbrook Commons, eighty people are expected to attend. The Mackinac Island Grand Experience is coming up October 14th – 17th. The bus is filled with fifty-six people. Madison Lachance and Shannon Janes will be serving as group leaders.

Melodies at the Museum featuring Nosferatu will be October 23rd at the DIA.

An ice cream social will be held at Meadowbrook on September 19th.

On October 3rd there will be an evening euchre tournament to try to draw some newer members into that program.

October 29th Pumpkin Painting with a Twist will be back at Lakeshore Park. Participants can bring their own beverages, we will provide donuts, pumpkins and painting supplies. The Veteran's Day Celebration is coming up November 6th. Commissioner Dooley will be returning as emcee. There will be a band, entertainment, and an essay contest. Plenty of fitness classes are going on now including Elevate Your Fitness, slow flow yoga, and healthy backs.

Medicare open enrollment, Activate Your Brain and Sleep Education are other programs being offered through OAS.

A community vaccination clinic provided by Kroger Pharmacy will be held on October 15th.

Deputy Director Ringle gave specific examples of the splash pad attendance. There were several 90 degree days with more than 450 visitors. The splash pad never reached capacity. There is great flow with people coming and going.

COMMISSIONER COMMENTS:

Commissioner Riggins

I really enjoyed Jenneva's presentation and everything she is doing at Villa Barr. I previously did a presentation on that park, and I love it. It is exciting to see what she is doing with getting more residents involved. I want to meet one of the artists and get a look inside.

Commissioner Staab's presentation was awesome especially the video. I have not been to the RC Raceway yet, this gave me a little peek.

There is always something going on and that is wonderful.

Commissioner Staab

I appreciate the opportunity to be the first Commissioner to report on the RC Raceway. It was a good learning experience for me along with the amazement of all the activity. There is always a lot of activity going on keynoted by the Diwali Fest in October. I look forward to Commissioner Riggins' report from Mackinac Island.

It was a good report from Jenneva. She has done a fantastic job not only at Villa Barr but with other activities with performing arts.

Commissioner Gopalakrishnan

What Jenneva has done at Villa Barr is truly fantastic. The whole park is a jewel for us. I visited the park earlier this summer. It is a wonderful place and Jenneva has made it much nicer. I am curious to go back and see all the progress. The selection of the artist process has leveled up. I am super excited to have these new artists with the combo of visiting and local. I am excited to see this idea come to fruition.

I am part of the Diwali committee. We have been working on the event for the last six months. This is the first time it is happening in Novi. The agenda is wonderful. There will be great food, super decorations, and dance performances that you have never seen before, plus fireworks at the end.

Thank you for the Novi Parks Foundation updates and the wonderful presentation of the RC Raceway. I pass it every day, and I want to go see it when an event is happening.

It was a good discussion on the smoking ban, and we made some good calls on the next steps. Thank you to Director Muck for the park project and OAS update. Thank you to Deputy Director Ringle for the recreation updates.

There is so much going on in OAS. I particularly like the Travel Fair, and I am looking forward to it. Mackinac Island is a place I never say no to when my family wants to go. I never get bored, and it is a jewel in our state.

Commissioner Torimoto

I am definitely going to go to the Diwali Fest. It sounds very exciting. You can't help but get excited listening to Jenneva. It is fabulous to see someone in that field with passion. Thank you.

Commissioner Dooley

I echo all the comments already said. Jenneva is a great public speaker and her passion comes across. In a short period of time, she has contributed to the leadership, and we are blessed to have her.

Thank you for making the motion with a first and second in favor of the smoking and vaping. Everyone has opinions on this. The fact that we can follow the rules and take it to the ordinance committee then subsequently take it to City Council with our direction

initially. It is a strong step in the right direction to keep our parks as beautiful as we like to brag about. I will pay more attention when I visit the parks and talk to fellow patrons about pollution. I always pick up trash when I am out in the parks and around the city. I want to mention Linda Krieger, who did the three-minute presentation at the start of the meeting. I do not think we should lose sight of her passionate comments. I remember when the city got decorated for holidays and how festive it was. The city has really cut back and I do not know the reason. It would be nice to go back to how it was before when the grounds of the campus of city hall were so festive. I hope her three minutes was worth it because it certainly resonated with me.

Chairperson Joseph

I was actually going to echo very many kudos to Linda for sharing and coming forth. I think when citizens come to make their comments known it is truly appreciated by the Commission. I grew up in Novi and echo what Jay said by seeing all the festive activities, there is something to be said for what Linda presented this evening.

ADJOURNMENT

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

Voice Vote

Unanimous

The meeting was adjourned by Chairman Joseph at 8:15p.m.

DATE APPROVED: _____

Joseph, Chairperson

Dooley, Vice Chairperson