PARKS, RECREATION & CULTURAL SERVICES COMMISSION

Thursday, May 21st, 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 (absent/excused), Gopalakrishnan (present), Riggins (present), Staab (absent/excused), Torimoto (present)

APPROVAL OF AGENDA:
Commissioner Gopalakrishnan 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 April 16th meeting be approved by Commissioner Bagley and second by Commissioner Gopalakrishnan.

Voice Vote **Unanimous**

PRESENTATIONS
A.

COMMITTEE REPORTS:
A. Novi Parks Foundation – Commissioners Joseph, Riggins, Staab & Torimoto
Commissioner Torimoto said the last meeting was on May 12th. The major topics were expanding exposure to the community and Pour on the Shore. The new executive director, together with others, created a pitch deck about the history and what the foundation has done. Including the amount of donations gathered and the value to the community the foundation has provided.
Discussion occurred about expanding Pour on the Shore and the content will be highlighted in their upcoming newsletter. There has been growth through Facebook and Instagram. Lastly there was an idea about a potential podcast. Pour on the Shore tickets are now available through Eventbrite.
The Foundation will be at Community Fest on June 4th to expand exposure. The next meeting is June 3rd.

B. Active Mobility Committee – Commissioners Dooley & Gopalakrishnan
Commissioner Gopalakrishnan said the Mobility Committee, along with three Council members and city engineer, took a road trip to see areas in the city that need sidewalks. There is a list where the top twenty areas are outlined. There is discussion about applying for grants through SEMCOG. Concerns are for the areas along Twelve Mile Road between the cemetery and Tollgate, plus the ITC building along Twelve Mile Road and Meadowbrook.
Additional conversation and questions occurred amongst the Commissioners.

C. Programs and Services Update – Commissioner Bagley
Commissioner Bagley was the first presentation in the new format. She began by saying she had a wonderful time meeting Steven who is the Recreation Supervisor for sports. She learned about him, what is happening this spring in Novi and a lot about soccer. Commissioner Bagley continued, Steve Fellhauer has been with the City of Novi for two years, previously at Howell recreation. He is the current president of the Western Suburban Soccer League. In addition to soccer, he oversees pickleball, karate, flag football, and the 55+ golf league. He leads the Novi Soccer Club serving 1013 players. This is supported by a strong network of volunteer coaches with a focus on growth. Steve is a former college player at Upper Iowa University and a current coach with the Michigan Jaguars which is a Northville team. He is a lifelong soccer lover with a very involved family. His wife Nicole is a former player for Notre Dame University. His children will travel to Madrid Spain this spring where they will play soccer.
Novi Soccer thrives because of its support by volunteers. The program has a place for all ages. Once kids get to a certain level there is opportunity for them to try out and really compete on an elite pathway. Commissioner Bagley showed a slide with the pathway for youth Tiny Tikes through high school and elite opportunities with the Michigan State Premier League. Tryouts are held every June for that group because teams are tiered. Some of the top talent in the state is from Novi.
Beyond soccer, Novi Parks does an amazing job led by Steven for many other sports. The city is becoming a regional hub for recreation. This is due to high quality programming being offered at a reasonable cost, which makes Novi stand out. Commissioner Bagley stated when we invest in our youth we are truly investing in the future of children not only for the kids but in our community. We hope that they have a connection to our community in Novi. Youth sports matter because healthy active kids and keeping them moving supports long term wellness. It builds life skills, teaching teamwork, leadership and resilience. Importantly sports strengthens communities by bringing families together and building connections. Safe structured spaces provide positive environments for our kids to continue to grow are just some of the reasons youth sports matters. Commissioner Bagley mentioned that her son is involved with the Novi soccer program this season. A video with snapshots and music was played with highlights. Director Muck said Commissioner Bagley set the bar high for the new format of presentations. She thanked Steve Fellhauer and the PRCS team for the incredible programs.
Additional questions and clarification about the Tiny Tikes age level, difference between Thunder and Lightning teams, coaching and referee challenges. During the closing of the presentation Steve told the Commissioners about the trip to Spain in detail.

MATTERS FOR COMMISSION DISCUSSION AND/OR ACTION:

A. CAPRA Re-accreditation
OAS Manager Kit Keiser updated the Commissioners on the long-awaited reaccreditation process. It took place the week of May 11th. The department is very proud of the results of meeting all 154 standards. The CAPRA review team will be recommending reaccreditation for the agency. Novi first achieved accreditation in 2016 and renewed in 2021. There are only three accredited agencies in Michigan. Every staff member worked hard toward this process and Kit thanked all. She will provide a comprehensive update once the accreditation has been made official at the NRPA conference in September. Details about the breakdown of organization of standards in the department will be explained
There will be new framework in place for the next accreditation process. This will reduce redundancies and provide a rubric to remove subjectivity. There will be required

evidence of compliance instead of suggested which will help both the agencies and the review team.

STAFF REPORTS

A. Administration Division – Director Jeff Muck

1. Park Project & Initiative Updates

Director Muck updated that we are awaiting good weather to start the Villa Barr pathway project. The ground needs to dry before it is going to happen. The Bosco Trail connector is scheduled to start in June when the soccer season has wrapped up.
PRCS will host a class for the Ambassador Academy at Lakeshore Park on June 2nd. It will include overall information about the department, a tour of the building, shelters and beach. The participants are being encouraged to bring their bikes or to hike the trails afterward. Commissioner Dooley was involved with the Ambassadors from the start.
Director Muck recently accepted an invitation to attend the Parks and Recreation Summit with approximately fifty directors from across Michigan and the country. It offered a unique setting with round table discussions on topics including using technology and AI in parks, facilities, operations and management. Maintaining renovating and repurposing aging park facilities and infrastructure. Boosting department morale and team building strategies. Time was allowed for one-on-one interactions with vendors. Director Muck was able to learn about new products and advancements, especially robot mowers and field line painters. Recreation and facility management software companies are improving their user interfaces and incorporating AI and search functions. There were also playground equipment suppliers, solar powered lighting and cooperative purchasing agreement information. This was Director Muck's third time attending the invitation only event. There are a few things the department is interested in, especially the robot technology because the battery life is expanding and prices are coming down.
The Novi Chamber of Commerce held Community Impact Day on May 13th. It was a huge success. Over forty volunteers from ITC came to work on projects at the ITC Community Sports Park and along the ITC trail. The ITC crew was amazing and full of energy. Marcel the Foundation Executive Director placed signs along the trail to promote dog owners cleaning up after their pets. Ten volunteers along with staff members worked on the gardens at Villa Barr Art Park. The Beautification Committee cleaned up Fuerst Park including the pollinator gardens. The Chamber of Commerce is already making plans for next year's event on May 12th.

B. Recreation Division – Deputy Director Tracie Ringle

Deputy Director Ringle said Steve and Sean are navigating the soccer try out process and shift of age divisions. There are kids registered for try outs in every age group. We are excited to grow the program and work with the mandates from USA Soccer. Steve is also working with NFL Flag Football to offer a girl's program in the fall. We are eager to be on the front edge for parks department by having girls flag football.
Recreation Supervisor Jenneva Kayser will be leading the Sizzling Summer Series on Wednesdays at Fuerst Park. Last year the program shifted to more hands-on programs instead of entertainment to much success. This year the events will be split between the DIA and the Villa Barr artists in residence. With this model the only costs are the art supplies.
Currently there are 625 registrations for the series. A lot more are expected since Sizzling Summers has only been advertised in Engage. The numbers will climb after it is marketed on social media and E-newsletters.
Thank you to Commissioner Dooley for Dooley Dog Day last weekend. The weather was challenging in the morning but that did not stop families from enjoying hot dogs during the weather delayed games.

Applications are open for next year's Villa Barr residents. The current residents are going to be displaying their art in the Atrium in June. A public opening will be on June 2nd at 6:00. Deputy Director Ringle invited the Commissioners to stop by to have a conversation with the artists about their experiences at Villa Barr.
There are 270 people registered for the Memorial Day Run. It is a little lower than last year probably due to the weather.
The summer camp staff will begin training next week for all the big camps, Lakeshore and PowerPlay. The camps start on June 8th. All positions are hired. Recreation Supervisor John Gillingham is working diligently for another year of success for the hundreds of kids that participate.
Registration is ongoing for summer men's adult softball, sand volleyball, T-Bolts, summer sports camps and much more. PRCS is starting programs, registering and working on things taking place later this summer so it is a very busy time in the office. There has also been more field rental requests than usual. Recreation Supervisor Erin Junge is putting together process improvements for next year.
Dogs will have to wait until fall to swim in Walled Lake. The annual spring Doggie Dive -In was cancelled because of weed treatments at the lake scheduled day before. We did not want to risk any health concerns for the dog park members. Recreation Supervisor Milah Loose has already planned the fall date.
The beach will be open this weekend, however, the splash pad is not anticipated to open until Monday due to the weather threshold.
The no smoking and vaping signs have been installed in the parks. Deputy Director Ringle thanked the DPW sign shop and Community Relations for their work on the signs. She encouraged the Commissioners to go out to the parks to see the signs and thanked them for their input.
There were additional questions and conversations about camp enrollment, soccer numbers reaching 1000, age group and try out challenges with soccer. Recreation Supervisor Steve Fellhauer provided more details on girl's flag football.

C. Older Adult Division – OAS Manager Kit Keiser
1. Programs and Services
OAS Manager Keiser mentioned that the Older Adult Division has been consumed with CAPRA and Memorial Day. Yesterday was the Fuerst Field of Honor at Fuerst Park. The weather was comfortable. The amphitheater for the music and ceremony was full. Mayor Fischer led us through a lovely remembrance of our fallen heroes. Eight-five veterans were in attendance as well as their guest and public, estimated at a couple hundred in total attendance. It was a wonderful event, and many participants expressed their gratitude. Memorial Day is Monday. The parade has twenty-eight groups registered including scouts, sports teams, dance studios and businesses. We will also host veterans from VFW post 1519 and local elected officials. The weather looks to be sunny and warm.
There are three rooms left for the Mackinac Grand Experience trip in October. Register now if you are interested in traveling.
June 3rd Sip Sip Hooray will take place at Lakeshore Lodge. It will feature Sporcle Trivia. Participants can bring beer and wine, but no glass containers are allowed.
Older Adult Services relies heavily on volunteers for programs including Meals on Wheels, cards and games, and book club. April was volunteer appreciation month. OAS recognized each volunteer with a small gift bag of mints with a thank you note that celebrates their commitment to continuing to assist with our programs.
Summer registration for A Matter of Balance begins June 1st. This a program we do seasonally with Age Ways.
It was clarified that the parade participation was lower than last year.

COMMISSIONER COMMENTS:

Commissioner Riggins
I want to thank Ebony for her presentation. It was very nice. I loved the passion about soccer. Now I need to figure out my presentation.
Meeting all 154 standards for reaccreditation was amazing. I am happy for the department. All the parks and events are amazing.
I hope all the people watching will attend the Memorial Day Parade.

Commissioner Gopalakrishnan
Congratulations on getting the CAPRA accreditation. Meeting all 154 criteria items is a big deal. It is amazing and I am happy for you. It sums up how well we do on our programs and services.
Excellent presentation, Ebony has set the bar. I am next for the month of June.
As usual all the updates from the director's side, including the Park Summit, were great.
I am looking forward to the Memorial Day Parade.

Commissioner Bagley
Congratulations on the accreditation with CAPRA. I second everyone's comments that this is awesome. Kudos for all the hard work.
The mobility update was very interesting, and I enjoyed learning about those areas. Thank you for sharing
Kudos to us for possibly being the first NFL Flag Football girls' team. This is huge news. I am in a mom's group that is trying to organize one in Walled Lake, so I know there is passion and it is needed. My son plays on an NFL flag team. I think it is a great direction and I hope it happens.
I'm going to look into Sip Sip Hooray.

Commissioner Torimoto
Commissioners Bagley's presentation and content was unbelievable. My daughter played soccer and I coached her team as a volunteer. A thousand players is unbelievable. Thanks for the update.
Congratulations on the recertification. Things can't be made up during an audit. Passing all 154 standards shows what you are capable of doing the high standards of the operations.
The last meeting there was discussions about the weather. To be able to overcome all of it is displayed in the achievements in the reports. It is fantastic.

Commissioner Joseph
I echo all the comments about the CAPRA reaccreditation. It is a testament to the hard work done every single day. We knew it was going to be easy street for this department but was much more behind the scenes. We appreciate the hard work you do. It is no surprise about accreditation. Awesome job!
Ebony's presentation was great. I need some tips about the slides. Thank you to Steven for being here to share information. It was tremendous. That is why we love having the Recreation Supervisors come and speak to the group. The staff in the forefront gets the spotlight but we know you are the ones doing the actual programming. We appreciate hearing from you directly.
The flag football is a great opportunity for the community.

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

Voice Vote **Unanimous**

The meeting was adjourned by Chairman Joseph at 7:52p.m.

DATE APPROVED: _____

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Joseph, Chairperson Dooley, Vice Chairperson