

PARKS, RECREATION & CULTURAL SERVICES COMMISSION

Thursday, February 15th, 2024 – 7 P.M.

Novi Civic Center – Council Chambers

The meeting was called to order at 7:00p.m. with Vice Chair Riggins presiding.

ROLL CALL:

Commissioners: Joseph (absent/excused), Riggins (present), Dooley (present), Joshi (present), Staab (present), Tolkacz (present), Torimoto (present)
Student Representatives: DiDomenico (present), Sid (present)

APPROVAL OF AGENDA:

Commissioner Dooley made a motion for the Rotary Park presentation to be moved to the March meeting.

Commissioner Staab motioned for approval of agenda as amended and second by Commissioner Joshi.

Voice Vote

Unanimous

CITIZEN COMMENTS:

None

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

It was moved that the minutes for the January 18th meeting be approved by Commissioner Dooley and second by Commissioner Joshi.

Voice Vote

Unanimous

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

- A. Walkable Novi – Commissioners Dooley & Tolkacz
Commissioner Tolkacz said there is no update this month. Next month there will be an update because a meeting is scheduled right before the Parks Commission meeting.

- B. Novi Parks Foundation – Commissioners Joseph, Joshi, Staab & Torimoto
Commissioner Joshi mentioned that the Foundation meeting just happened this week. Pour on the Shore will be Friday, July 26th. Discussion occurred about the last event, fine tuning, and modifications to make this year.
Much of the conversation was about the goals for this year. It has been twenty years since the Parks Foundation was established. Commissioner Staab added that there will be work done on the website to highlight the accomplishments and bring more visibility to the Foundation. Much of the focus will be on the achievements including trails, pickleball courts, play structures and more. The next meeting will be on Zoom in March.
Commissioner Dooley praised Commissioner Staab for becoming the President of

the Foundation.

C. Grants Committee – Commissioners Joseph & Riggins

Commissioner Riggins said there has not been a meeting. Director Muck added the next scheduled meeting is April 18th. The tentative agenda includes a review of the past ten years of grants and a look towards the future.

D. Parks and Facilities Updates

1. Rotary Park – Commissioner Dooley – Tabled to March meeting.

MATTERS FOR COMMISSION DISCUSSION AND/OR ACTION:

- A. Introduction of PRCS Recreation Supervisors – Steve Fellhauer & John Gillingham
Deputy Director Tracie Ringle provided a brief introduction of John Gillingham, stating that he came from Howell Parks and Recreation. He served as a Youth Services Supervisor working with camps and special events. He has a bachelor's degree in sports management from Siena Heights University where he was a student athlete.

Recreation Supervisor John Gillingham elaborated about his background. He ran indoor and outdoor track in college for four years. He was a sprinter. He studied sports management but through an internship he fell in love with the recreation side. Post COVID he started in Howell as a camp counselor because people told him he is great with kids. He worked his way up from that position. Last year he was coordinating scheduling, staff, field trips, and planning activities.

Since starting in Novi, John has facilitated the Daddy Daughter Dance which had 630 participants between the three dances. The Mother Son Game Night will be in March. There will be a DJ, photographer as well as different games including cornhole, Connect 4, archery and more. Nerf Night is in March too. After those events John's focus will be on camp. Changes for this year include the start time moving to 7:30 since many people did not utilize the 7:00am drop off. Plus instituting a transfer fee which will help parents be more cautious while signing up to help serve more families.

Additional questions came from the commissioners. John Gillingham explained the timeline for camp staff hiring.

Deputy Director Ringle welcomed new Recreation Supervisor Steve Fellhauer to the podium. She mentioned that he came from Howell Parks and Recreation as well. He was also a student athlete while he earned his undergraduate degree in communications. Steve also has a master's degree in sports and exercise science with an emphasis in sports administration.

Steve Fellhauer expanded on his background. He played soccer for four years at Upper Iowa University. During his time there four different coaches worked with the team. He is originally from Colorado and has been in Michigan for ten years.

As a Recreation Supervisor for Novi PRCS, he runs youth basketball, volleyball, adult golf, and softball. 547 children are registered for basketball with 100 on the waitlist. The restraint on the program is gym space. He is hoping to grow volleyball program.

Steve implemented a new sports scheduling software for the department called Team Sideline. He had experience with the program from previous jobs. Additional explanation about the software was provided for the commissioners prompted by their questions.

Director Muck said we are extremely happy to have both of these gentlemen. In the interview process their passion for Parks and Recreation came through. Both want to continue and advance their careers in the field. They are members of the state association and bring new ideas and perspective to the department.

B. 2023 PRCS Annual Report

Deputy Director Ringle presented the 2023 PRCS Annual Report. It was displayed on the screen and all the commissioners had a copy. She said the recap was fun to put together, looking back at all that was accomplished in the previous year and how it ties to where we are going in 2024. The keys for the department are inclusion, excellence, environment, integrity, and innovation. These were all focuses through the report.

The Older Adult Needs Committee highlighted that pickleball was a big deal and continues to be something the department develops. A lot of effort over the past few years by the foundation, staff and family of Jessica Starr has been on the splash pad. The new playground at Northwest Park shows how we were able to save trees and reuse materials. The environmental focus was removing invasive species such as garlic mustard and buckthorn. A lot of dialogue occurred regarding the RC Racetrack.

STAFF REPORTS

A. Administration Division – Director Jeff Muck

1. Spring Park Projects Update

Director Muck updated the commissioners about the spring park projects. At Monday's City Council meeting the construction award was approved for the new pickleball courts at Wildlife Woods Park and Meadowbrook Commons along with the parking lot expansions. The next step is to have the pre-construction meeting which will be on March 7th. That meeting will determine the schedule and timelines for each site. It has been mentioned that the park and shelter rentals will need to be closed at some point in order to construct the new courts. Council directed the department to work with the contractor to complete Meadowbrook Commons' courts before moving to Wildlife Woods. Construction at the splash pad has been paused this winter season. At next month's meeting an update will be provided on what is left to accomplish before opening this summer.

PRCS administration will meet with the Spicer Group next week to kick off planning for the five-year Strategic Community Recreation Master Plan. In preparation for the meeting, they have been provided with the two previous plans, City Council goals, CIP plans, and results of the OAS Needs Committee Senior Survey. During the meeting a list of stakeholders, potential community survey questions and a timeline will be discussed.

Director Muck told the commissioners about several volunteer projects. A resident offered to cut down buckthorn at Rotary Park. He has support of our office, Rick Meader the city's landscape architect and his HOA. An Eagle Scout is going to be installing bat houses at Lakeshore Park. These will replace some that have been damaged by recent storms. Another Eagle Scout will be building a Gaga Ball pit near shelter 2 at Lakeshore Park. This will be the first in our park system. It will be heavily used by the camp program.

The staff retreat to the DNR Outdoor Adventure Center on January 24th was a success. It was a great day of team building with ice breakers, strategic planning, CAPRA assignments and a new cultural event was discussed. The staff hopes to make this an annual event.

B. Recreation Division – Deputy Director Tracie Ringle

1. Programs & Services

Deputy Director Ringle began by saying Steve and John gave a lot of her report during their introductions.

Shelter rentals opened in January. It was the exact same number as 2023.

Lakeshore continues to be highly in demand. Shelter 1 is booked June through August on every Saturday. There are still plenty of openings at the other Lakeshore shelters, ITC, and Rotary Park. The online reservation system has been very smooth for the staff even with the high numbers.

A new Reservations Coordinator, Brandy Brendtke started last week. She will be helping Samantha with room rental appointments and walk ins. Samantha can focus on staff development and budgeting by having this part-time position. An initiative has been started in the department to help the young adult staff. The site supervisors and building attendant / event specialist are usually first-time employees. Good habits in the workplace will be recognized with a badge. The badges can be placed on their lanyard for others to see. These were passed around for the commissioners: leadership, teamwork, accountability, initiative, and dependability. Recreation Supervisor Chase Root has a woodworking business. He came up with the design and is putting the badges together.

C. Older Adult Division – OAS Manager Kit Kieser

1. Programs and Services

OAS Manager Kit Kieser told the commissioners that the AARP tax preparation started on February 7th. There have been 450 appointments scheduled, however, there are still a few openings. AARP said a few more could be added if needed.

On February 7th an ice cream social fundraiser for the Choralaires was held at Meadowbrook Commons. Sixty people attended. It was an opportunity for the Choralaires to showcase music from their upcoming spring concert.

Memorial Day Parade planning has started. 2023 participants will be invited to return for this year. Registration will be done through Civic Rec, which should streamline the operation.

A Valentine's luncheon was held today at the Meadowbrook Activity Center. It featured an Italian meal, entertainment by the Harmony Town Chorus, Valentines made by Girl Scouts and the Novi High School pre-med group made candy boxes for each participant.

Upcoming programs were highlighted next. One on One Technology Assistance

February 16th. High school students assist folks with their phones, iPads, and laptops. February 20th OAS is partnering with the library for a poetry class. The annual Financial Crimes, Scams and Identity Theft class will be March 16th presented by Detective Stempien from the Police Department. Estate Planning Basics will be held on March 19th. March 14th the St. Patrick's luncheon will be held with Irish food from Moe's on Ten, Irish"ish" music by Vinyl Misst. March 21st OAS is taking a fifty-six-person bus to the DIA which is a free trip. The trip filled the first week of registration opening. We are looking into taking an additional bus. The Older Adult Needs Committee met on January 29th and February 12th. The conversation for both these meetings revolved around housing options. Barb McBeth from the City Planning Department discussed options for the community. February 26th the Older Adult Advisory Board will join the Older Adult Needs Committee for a discussion about what advocacy for older adults in Novi could look like going forward. OAS Manager Kit Keiser described the tax program in more detail following a commissioner's question.

COMMISSIONER COMMENTS:

Student Representative Sid

I was impressed with the 2023 highlights. There are a lot of items on there that I did not know. The RC Raceway looks really cool and interesting. I will check it out this summer. I am impressed with all that has been accomplished.

Director Muck announced that Student Rep Sid was the winner of the Congressional App Challenge from Michigan sixth district by U.S. Rep Debbie Dingle earlier this month.

Student Representative DiDomenico

A lot of cool stuff for 2023. I am interested in the RC car track. It is something I can go to with my dad. There is a lot of cool stuff with Older Adult Services that I noticed.

Commissioner Dooley

I also liked the presentation of the annual report. I think it is wonderful. Everything has been incorporated and encompassed. The Parks Department is well known in the city, state and possibly the nation. It is a great job. I want to say thank you for the presentations this evening. The commissioners always learn and enjoy.

I am welcoming Steve and John. They are great additions to the department. I have taken a bit more responsibility with Novi Youth Assistance. They have a fundraising activity going on March 1st. The commission has always supported these events by participating or making a contribution. This year it will be held at the Fifth of Novi, and it will be a cornhole tournament. I would be happy to lead if the commissioners want to partake in the event this year.

Commissioner Joshi

I wanted to welcome the two new staff members, Steve and John. The picture we take each summer is going to look very different with all the new people.

The 2023 annual report was definitely a highlight. It should be posted somewhere it can be visible to the public, maybe when people enter the building.

Student Rep Sid made a good point when saying there is a generation gap with Facebook and the communications for the RC Raceway. The younger generation might not be aware of the park.

Commissioner Tolkacz

I would also like to welcome Steve and John to the team. It is great to have them on board. They are already making contributions which is super. I appreciate them coming to the meeting so we can be introduced and put a face with the name.

I want to congratulate Student Rep Sid on the awesome job. It is great we have a few celebrities on the panel tonight.

I also liked the annual report. I remember many of the items being discussed and it is great seeing it come to fruition.

The Eagle Scout projects will be great additions. That is a great organization with opportunities for kids to show leadership and benefit the community.

The tax assistance program is really a huge help for seniors.

Commissioner Torimoto

I repeat what everybody is saying. Welcome to Steve and John. It seems like they bring quite a bit of experience and are already contributing with new ideas and efficient tools.

The key words on the annual report put everything together: integrity, excellence, environment, inclusion, and innovation. Everything we do is just fantastic, and this really summarizes.

The older adult programs are very relevant and evolving with the tax preparations and tech assistance.

Commissioner Staab

Congratulations to Sid, the student representative on the recognition and award.

I was able to attend the ice cream social at Meadowbrook Commons. The sixty people who went had a good time. The goal was 100 attendees, but it was pretty busy. There were good donations, especially from Guernsey Farms who provided the ice cream and toppings.

Great information in the end of the year report. It really brought to light the objectives, key metrics, and goals of the department.

I am really intrigued about the badge charms for recognition of employees. It is a good idea. I can't wait to hear how it is implemented.

The tax preparation is good because the older I get the more daunting taxes can be. It is a great service for the people.

Vice Chair Riggins

This was a great meeting. We learned a lot about the programs and services. Things are happening and a lot of residents are taking advantage.

Welcome to John, Steve, and Brandi, the new Reservation Coordinator. Welcome to the team.

ADJOURNMENT

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

Voice Vote

Unanimous

The meeting was adjourned by Commissioner Riggins. *At 7:58p.m.*

DATE APPROVED: _____

Joseph, Chairperson

Riggins, Vice Chairperson