

**SOUTH BEND BOARD OF PARK COMMISSIONERS  
REGULAR MEETING  
DECEMBER 16, 2019**

The Board of Park Commissioners of the City of South Bend, Indiana met on Monday, December 16, 2019, at the O'Brien Administration & Recreation Center, 321 E. Walter St., South Bend, Indiana for its regular meeting. Notice of the date, time and place of the meeting were duly given as required by law.

Park Board members present were as follows:

Mr. Mark Neal, President  
Ms. Aimee Buccellato  
Mr. Dan Farrell

VPA staff members present: Aaron Perri, Executive Director; Jeff Jarnecke, Executive Director of Venues; Annie (Gawkowski) Smith, Chief Development Officer; Jonathan Jones, Recreation Director; Tony Stearns, Director of Golf, Amy Roush, Development Director; Jim Kubinski, Marketing Manager.

Other city representatives present: Tom Panowicz, Assistance City Attorney

I. Call to Order

President Mark Neal called the meeting to order at 5:10 pm

II. Swearing in of Park Board Members: Aimee Buccellato, Dan Farrell, Mark Neal

Mark Neal suggested to the board to table the swearing in until the January meeting. Motion to table by Dan Farrell, supported by Aimee Buccellato.

III. Approval of Minutes

Motion to approve minutes of the November 18, 2019 meeting by Aimee Buccellato, supported by Dan Farrell, motion carried

IV. Consent Agenda

- i. Financial Statements – November 2019
- ii. Use of Parks Return Event – Michiana Renaissance Festival

Motion to approve consent agenda items by Dan Farrell, supported by Aimee Buccellato, motion carried

Mark moved to New Business – Item VII on the agenda due to the City of South Bend legal representative having to leave the meeting

VII. New Business

1. Park Board appointment to South Bend Planning Commission – Aaron Perri spoke on this item. It is a new commission that is a joint County and City planning commission. There are specific requirements that need to be met to be appointed. John Martinez, Facility & Grounds Director is Aaron Perri's suggested appointee from VPA. Mark Neal spoke on Aaron Perri's recommendation of John Martinez, and that he is a great representative. Mark Neal also wanted to go on record saying that it is a pleasure that John Martinez is willing and eager to serve on this board.

Motion to nominate John Martinez to the South Bend Planning Commission Board by Dan Farrell, supported by Aimee Buccellato, motion carried

Mark Neal asked legal representative Tom Panowicz if it was acceptable for Annie Gawkowski to speak on all four (4) agreements at one time, Tom Panowicz stated it was.

2. Centier Bank Naming Rights Agreement – This agreement is for the Commons Room in the Howard Park building and will include two signs in that area and their name on the donor wall
3. Phair Family Naming Rights Agreement – the area right outside of the playground area where the limestone is located. The name of the area hasn't been finalized, yet. There will be a plaque in that location as well as their name on the donor wall.
4. Neal Family Naming Rights Agreement – tabled due to a lack of quorum
5. Sieradski Naming Rights Agreement – EverBright Board that is next to the Artist wall in the Common Room.

Mark Neal asked if anyone would like to ask questions or make a comment on any of these items.

Motion to approve the Centier Bank, Phair Family and Sieradski Family naming rights agreements and to table the Neal Family naming rights agreement by Dan Farrell, supported by Aimee Buccellato, motion carried.

#### V. Interviewing of Interested Citizens

Mark Neal opened the floor for citizen comments. There were none.

#### VI. Reports by Organizations

1. Report by Director of Golf, Tony Stearns started by him handing out a paper version of his power point presentation. There is a copy on file for reference. His presentation was 2019 Report Sustainability and Development
  - i. Public perception – team effort has made a difference and the rewriting of the marketing director position has been extremely important Jim Kubinski was brought on as the Marketing Manager and has been instrumental in some of the changes. He has 29 years of experience in golf and created an advertising booklet that shows sponsorship/donation/event opportunities.  
Customer reviews through multiple resources have been positive no 1-star review which is new for this season. Erskine Clubhouse is now complete. The golf shop wasn't complete until the end of May. Tony Stearns thanked John Martinez and the F & G team for helping complete the process of construction.
  - ii. Revenue – the new space has brought in 5 HS reunions already booked for next year. Along with other events that already booked for 2020. Tony Stearns touched on the picture that is hanging in the clubhouse and now they are going to have their 40<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary celebration in 2020. He then went over the slide that went over the financials for the year, revenue was up over 2.1% for the year. Compared to the other golf courses in the area we had a 14% increase in playable rounds. There was also an increase in season pass sales because the pass was retooled. Sales were down 7.2% in food and beverage, but that was partly due to loss of income because the clubhouse wasn't open. Tony Stearns mentioned Scott Curtis at Elbel Park Golf Course and Adam Oltman at Erskine Park Golf Course as golf superintendents for the two courses and that they have been important in the daily maintenance of the golf courses. Mark Neal asked if there were any other indicators and Tony Stearns mentioned the increase in Driving Range revenue which also shows more of an interest in playing.
  - iii. The Future – Mark Neal asked Jim Kubinski if he had specific thoughts on how it could be improved. Jim Kubinski mentioned the increase in followers on Facebook and other social media avenues. Tony Stearns then talked about the future of golf and First Tee of Indiana/Michiana. He turned the program over to Jenny Zimmerman who started speaking about the partnership with VPA and First Tee
    1. 431 – life skills experience – held at Coquillard, Harrison and LaSalle as well as at Studebaker Golf Course
    2. 357 clinics
    3. 27 PGA Junior League
    4. 325+ “Kid’s Play Free” memberships
    5. 625+ Rounds – “Kid’s Play Free”

6. Jenny Zimmerman talked about the artificial turf that was installed at Studebaker in spots to assist the children to learn how to chip and hit and not ruin the course for others who are playing their daily
- iv. Concepts for Studebaker Golf Course Improvements – simulator, indoor putting green, tables and chairs, keep doing the classroom work on a year-round basis Mark Neal asked when the Park Board would see more finalized visions of what Jenny Zimmerman mentioned in her presentation. Jeff Jarnecki said in January he thought there would be something to put before the board relating to the changes mentioned for Studebaker Golf Course.

VIII. Report by Chief Development Officer Annie (Gawkowski) Smith

Annie Gawkowski started by speaking about Howard Park - \$700,000 currently raised for the park and is planning on applying for eight (8) more grants before the end of the year that would be related to different areas in VPA (programs, basketball courts). She went over the fact that the development team having a CRM allows for better tracking of the different opportunities that are available in all parts of VPA. She then mentioned the VPA Foundation and that it has been getting more attention from the development team. Her goal is to better utilize the community members who were raising individually for VPA (Studebaker Fountain, Kelly Park) Every Friday thank you's is written and sent to donors instead of the past which was an intermittent communication. Retail Kiosk started in Howard Park with the support of the VPA Foundation. It has already sold enough to break even so all sales from this point forward are revenue. The Directors' Youth Scholarship Golf Outing, Second City Fund Raiser event, Skate it Forward, were all successful. She mentioned that Amy Roush was promoted to Development Director, Matthew Moyers is Partnerships, Community and Standards Coordinator, as well as adding Amanda Parker as Special Events Coordinator and Jessica Galeano as Development Coordinator. This is the first time that the development team is fully staffed. That allows Annie Gawkowski to have the team be more focused in the coming year on capturing data that can be used to show all the things that are being accomplished by the development team. She then asked for questions. Mark Neal asked what campaigns the Board should be aware of; Seitz Park and the Morris are both future projects. Dan Farrell mentioned that Annie Gawkowski sung beautifully for the National Anthem at the Howard Park opening. Annie Gawkowski referred to how Amanda Parker, Special Events Coordinator, did a wonderful job with the donor and ribbon cutting portions of the opening night of Howard Park. Aimee Buccellato mentioned that it was extremely enjoyable.

IX. Business by Executive Director Aaron Perri

He started by reiterating how the golf courses are more diversified in use than when he first started as Executive Director and realizes that nationally golf is lessening. It is nice to see that it is not lessening locally and is also trying to be diverse in the people who can use the courses. He then talked about the development team and how Howard Park is a community park. He mentioned that the Northern Division of Indiana Parks & Recreation will have their meeting at Howard Park tomorrow. He then had all board members look at the calendar in front of them. VPA BWE 2019 picture is the October photo for the National Parks & Recreation 2020 calendar. Aaron Perri mentioned that he just found out that Jim Seitz, Sr. passed away. There will be a ground breaking for Pinhook Park in the Spring. Pulaski Park is almost finished and there will be a ribbon cutting for it in the Spring. John Martinez found a path that can be made ADA accessible at Muessel Park. Looking to find a construction team that isn't over budget for the path from Kernan Trail on Riverside from Governor Joe Kernan Park to the Farmer's Market. Aaron Perri finished by speaking about a position that will be a youth mentor/task force supervisor for the youth that we hire seasonally. That it is more intentional and help encourage them to return and grow within the department. Mark Neal asked about programming at Howard Park and Jonathan Jones gave the following information: (Yoga and Zumba) Forever Learning will start in March at Howard Park (10-week program). Free skating lessons on Saturday mornings. DJ Skate Nights have been popular on Friday evenings. Still working on the kinks for the daily routine. Mark Neal asked about Skate it Forward and if South Bend Community School Corporation has the forms? Jonathan Jones deferred to Annie Gawkowski. She answered that it the forms are being delivered and the information will be on our website for the community to find easily. Aaron Perri added a note that the Senior programs that have been at Zion United Church wanted to stay there so we are extending our partnership with them. Aaron Perri mentioned that the ice trail has pulled in over

\$80,000 for ice skating which is more than he can find in records for any season from the previous ice rink. Aaron Perri mentioned that Brian Boitano stated that the Howard Park Ice trail was the “best outdoor trail he had ever skated on in the world.” Dan Farrell mentioned that there are high school students that are wanting to be at the Ice trail. Aimee Buccellato mentioned how important to have a safe/fun place for teens. Aimee Buccellato asked about the Howard Park Public House and Aaron Perri’s best guess is April for it to be open.

No other questions or comments from the Park Commissioners, meeting adjourned at 6:16 p.m. by President Mark Neal.

The next regular meeting will be held Tuesday, January 21, 2020, at 5:30 p.m. in Event Room 1 in Howard Park.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Amy Roush