

SOUTH BEND BOARD OF PARK COMMISSIONERS
REGULAR MEETING
October 18, 2021

The Board of Park Commissioners of the City of South Bend, Indiana met on Monday, October 18, 2021, at Howard Park Event Center, 219 S. St. Louis Blvd and virtually on Microsoft Teams for its regular meeting. Notice of the date, time and place of the meeting were duly given as required by law. The public was provided with a link to join the virtual meeting.

Park Board members present were as follows:

Mr. Mark Neal, President
Ms. Consuella Hopkins
Ms. Aimee Buccellato

Park Board members absent were as follows:

Mr. Dan Farrell

VPA staff members present: Aaron Perri, Executive Director of Venues Parks & Arts; Jonathan Jones, Director of Recreational Experiences; Matthew Moyers, Partnerships, Community, and Standards Coordinator; Tony Stearns, Director of Golf Operations; Jeff Jarnecke, Executive Director of Venues; Matt Frazier, Marketing Manager; Amy Roush, Director of Development,

Other city representatives present: Clara McDaniels, Assistant City Attorney; Sharon McBride, City Council Member.

I. Call to Order

Mark Neal called the meeting to order at 5:04 pm.

II. Minutes of the Regular Board Meeting on August 23, 2021

Motion to approve the meeting minutes of August 23, 2021, by Consuella Hopkins, supported by Aimee Buccellato, motion carried. Roll call vote 3-0.

III. Consent Agenda

Motion to approve the consent agenda of October 18, 2021, by Aimee Buccellato, supported by Consuella Hopkins, motion carried. Roll call vote 3-0.

IV. Use of Parks – Returning Event

Mark Neal asked if the group was present and if not, if their paperwork was in order. Amy Roush confirmed that the group is working with Bridget Fields and that everything looked to be in order. Consuella Hopkins stated that she attended the event this year and is looking forward to the event next year.

Motion to approve Mental Health Awareness Fair event in Howard Park June 3, 2022, by Aimee Buccellato, supported by Consuella Hopkins, motion carries. Roll call vote 3-0.

V. Outstanding Partner – Recover Michiana

Aaron Perri introduced Alicia Wells from Recover Michiana. He shared that Recover Michiana has been making great use of Howard Park over several months starting with the Cook Off in the Howard Park Public House and that the Recover Michiana Fest is the largest single event in Howard Park to date. VPA appreciates the way that Recover Michiana is activating public space while bringing the community together, but also a recognition of the fine work that they do advocating for those who are struggling with substance abuse.

Alicia Wells acknowledged that Recover Michiana is a team, and the success was in part due to that teamwork and their love of South Bend. Their mission is to put South Bend on the map as a “Recovery Welcoming City” with over 800 attendees and 52 vendors at the one-day, free event that was family friendly they were acknowledged by the Indiana Recovery Network that this event was the largest and most successful event in Indiana in 2021. She recognized the support of the Board and volunteers who believe in the city, as well as a special acknowledgement to Council Member Sharon McBride for being a Trailblazer Award winner.

Aaron Perri presented the outstanding partner certificate to Alicia Wells as the Recover Michiana representative.

VI. Interviewing of Interested Residents

Mark Neal opened the floor for interested residents to speak on a topic not on the agenda. There were no comments from residents, but he took a moment to recognize Council Member Sharon McBride for being in attendance and thanked her for being Chair of the PARC committee on the Common Council and for assisting VPA in accomplishing more and more yearly.

VII. Reports by Organization – Potawatomi Zoo

Josh Sisk and Margie Anella were in attendance representing the Potawatomi Zoo. Josh Sisk had a power point presentation with an overview of what has been happening at the zoo which included the following:

1. Record breaking in attendance over 250,000 visitors and memberships over 8,700
2. This year was the first year that their P.O.S. system allowed them to track zip codes which showed:
 - a. 368 different zip codes represented from Indiana
 - b. All 50 states represented included Hawaii, Alaska, and Puerto Rico
 - c. 21 non-US representing Canada, India, and the United Kingdom
3. Giraffe and Lion project updates:
 - a. Showed overall project design and fencing placement
 - b. Giraffes at the zoo in three weeks so they are finalizing the barn space for the comfort of the animals.
 - c. They will be continuing work on the outside space after the giraffes are onsite, there are supply delays, just like in other construction areas.
 - d. Goal is to debut the giraffes during the Gift of Lights which starts right after Thanksgiving, but they won’t know how comfortable they are until they are onsite.
 - e. March 31, 2022, will be the ribbon cutting for the completed project.
 - f. Cat Habitat will have renovations during the winter and the spring of 2022.
 - g. Summer of 2022 will begin the construction for the Concession Lodge and Bear Habitat.

- h. Parking and Concessions are an area that can be underserved and harm the user experience, which is what Josh, and his team are trying to avoid.
- i. Closes October 31st to prepare for the Gift of Lights that open the Friday after Thanksgiving.
- j. He has a meeting in the coming week to speak about the parking and how to utilize the space the most efficiently.

Josh asked for questions and Mark Neal asked about the READI grant. Aaron has been assisting Josh relating to the bond.

VIII. New Business

1. MOU between Friends of Studebaker Fountain and VPA

Matthew Moyers presented the MOU to the board which replaces an existing agreement with the Friends of Studebaker Fountain. The city is seeking bids with a goal of having the work completed before the fountain is set to run in the spring. Aaron shared that the addition of the water filtration system will lengthen the life of the fountain.

Consuella Hopkins asked if the landscaping would be affected, and Aaron stated that was figured into the project. Aimee Buccellato sought clarification relating to the term maintenance costs that the Friends of Studebaker Fountain had previously set money aside for and how this affects that. Matthew shared that the Friends of Studebaker Fountain is willing to work with VPA on identified capitol related expenditures if needed in the future. Aaron shared that currently the facility and grounds are cleaning the fountain twice a week so by adding the water filtration system it will save the department employee time and better protect the features of the fountain. Mark Neal shared that the comment from the spectator, Vicki McIntire, that the fountain and its features would be cleaned when the installation is complete before it is up and running. Aaron confirmed that, yes, all lines would be cleared, and features cleaned after the installation and before the fountain is running.

Motion to approve MOU between Friends of Studebaker Fountain and VPA by Aimee Buccellato, supported by Consuella Hopkins, motion carried. Roll call vote 3-0.

2. Resolution No. 0002-2021 Extending term for Ecological Advocacy Committee

Matthew Moyers presented Resolution No. 0002-2021 to extend the term for the Ecological Advocacy Committee there are two points that have been changed since the initial resolution that were pointed out (a) that the term of the committee members was increased to two years and (b) and that no one hold the chair position for more than two, two year, terms which does not mean they have to leave the board but potentially rotate out of the chair position. Matthew addresses the two questions that were brought up at the last meeting and confirmed that a role of the Ecological Advocacy Committee is to serve as a citizen tree board to the forester and how to handle members who drop off and that currently if someone exits as long as there are five members, they adjust the quorum and would need to come to the Board of Park Commissioners if it went below that number.

Aimee Buccellato that the Ecological Advocacy Committee was created at a low time in the history of the Park Board and has helped this body through their knowledge. Mark Neal also stated that through them there has been an increase in public disclosure and public information.

Motion to approve Resolution No. 0002-2021 Extend term for Ecological Advocacy Committee by Consuella Hopkins, supported by Aimee Buccellato, motion carried. Roll call vote 3-0.

3. Ratification of MOU between St. Joseph County Board of Commissioners and the City of South Bend VPA

Clara McDaniels presented this ratification for an event that has already occurred for a rental assistance program that took place at the Charles Black Center. Purpose is to bring to attention and share the information to this highly successful program for the County.

Aimee Buccellato asked why this use had to be ratified by the Park Board and Clara McDaniels shared that the county legal team wanted to specify usage and terms and conditions of use.

Motion to approve the ratification of MOU between St. Joseph County Board of Commissioners and the City of South Bend VPA by Aimee Buccellato, supported by Consuella Hopkins motion carried. Roll call vote 3-0.

4. Presentation of National Parks & Recreation Association (NRPA) Finalist Award

Aaron Perri presented the award to the VPA Board of Park Commissioners. He shared that South Bend was one of four finalists in the 75,000 – 150,000 system size. There are a total of 12,000 park systems in NRPA. He also shared that a representative from NRPA would like to present the award to both the Boards of Park Commissioners and the City Council members.

5. 2022 Fees – Presentation of Information

Jonathan Jones highlighted the changes to fees for Recreational Experiences which included:

- a. Change in name of youth basketball program
- b. Additional Pavilions to rental list
- c. Season passes for both pools and East Race Waterway in multiple levels
- d. Field reservations updated
- e. Fee for Howard Park Ice Trail Rental during non-public skating hours

Mark Neal mentioned that the East Race Waterway has lengthened its season. Consuella Hopkins asked if Jonathan and his team had through to offer lessons for the East Race Waterway for both rafting and kayaking. Aaron shared that when there are rate changes that the subsidized fees correspondingly increase.

Tony Stearns presented a five-year plan for the fee structure relating to golf and the increases try to be aware of the changes in the demand in golf while being respectful of the users. Golf is providing a great product that now needs to help cover deferred maintenance projects. Tony shared that Elbel Park Golf Course was ranked as one of the best municipal value courses in the country by Golf Digest based on consumer reviews by value ranked top 25 (one of four in the Midwest and the only one in Indiana.)

IX. Report by Director of Recreational Experiences Jonathan Jones

Jonathan Jones, Director of Recreational Experiences, started his report by stating that this report will focus mainly on the month of September. Collective programs reach in September was 14,792 community contacts which is a 37% increase compared to 2019 key drivers were Howard Park use and community outreach programs. Year to date in 2021 172,820 community contact which is a 6.5 % increase compared to 2019. Partnership with Forever Learning in Howard Park, YMCA looking to

increase partnership programs with them and enhance the city-wide wellness program and looking at a potential incubator program in the O'Brien building. Financially beating projections for 2021 attributed to ice skating, event space rental in Howard Park, pavilion rental increases and this area is at 70% cost recovery. He ended with information on Boomer events. In the first two years of having Boomer there were about 25 deployments of the vehicle. In 2021 there have been 23 partnership events with community organizations including the Near Northwest Neighborhood, St. Joseph County Public Library, South Bend Alive and the Linden Market which is with Community Investment. Jonathan ended with the Oktoberfest and upcoming events the Treats on the Trail which is a collaboration between his department and Cynthia Taylor's department and Retro Recess in Howard Park at the end of the month.

Mark Neal mentioned his biggest take away is that the money that has been invested in parks has increased community engagement, equity and inclusion, wellness and just for fun. Consuella Hopkins asked if we offered swim lessons and Jonathan stated it takes place mainly in June and July and there are discussions with the YMCA to expand the program to infant through adult in 2022. The classes are currently offered at Riley High School for 6 years and older.

X. Business by Chief Executive Director Aaron Perri

Aaron Perri gave the following updates:

- 2022 budget has primarily been passed in full and thanked the council for their support of all the initiatives put forth.
- Funding highlight due to the American Rescue Plan Act as a one-time expenditure with the support of the council is the Dream Center which our nickname for the next Martin Luther King, Jr. Center project.
- Currently working on early analysis of square foot, style, type of activities and anticipate the project to be between \$10 and \$12 million which has been approved by the council.
- Process of hiring community engagement and architect, potentially firm called Ratio out of Indianapolis, which is 100% minority owned firm who is known world-wide but based in Indiana.
- They will come up to talk to the staff and the community where the center is located.
- Athletic courts repairs were also supported through the American Rescue Plan Act which includes 30 different tennis, pickleball and basketball courts that will be entirely restored at a cost of \$1.6 million. There will be dedicated courts to pickleball because of it being the fastest growing sport four years.
- LaSalle Park needs final approval from EPA to then be able to put in additional \$300,000 in park upgrades which includes additional connectivity, such as sidewalks, lighting drinking fountains and other potential items.
- Final side of budget that hasn't been approved is salary ordinance, although teamsters' contract has been ratified by teamsters and approved by council. Their contract is for three years with an increase 2.5% first year, 2% next two years and a one-time front line worker premium payment of \$2,000. Discussion on the non-bargaining side of a one-time premium payment who worked in the front lines. Non-bargaining ordinance increase of 2.5% and a potential increase of minimum wage to \$12 an hour for part time and seasonal employees.
- Charles Black Center update on cinder block wall cracking – the soils weren't removed, replaced, and monitored during the foundation installation so there is settling, nothing structural and the building is safe. The solution is to go in and dig out the soil, replace and reinforce the foundation with three helical screws. All cracks will be filled, painted, and restored at no cost. Aaron

thanked Clara McDaniels for her assistance in getting a favorable agreement and this should be completed by the end of the year. Full details in the report sent via email.

- O'Brien getting ready to cut the ribbon and a tour in the next six to eight weeks.
- Seitz Park is well underway with the sidewalks being much wider and Notre Dame is behind which is no surprise considering construction projects have had delays.
- 35th Street Wetlands has draft concepts and initial costs. Last big project from bond.
- Shared Spark magazine with Eva Ennis on the cover and information on the upcoming Howard Holiday Market.
- Mentioned the contract with DTSB that the Park Board has approved and that Willow Wetherell is the new Executive Director at DTSB. She started October 18th with limited hours and will begin forty-hour work weeks in January 2022.

Consuella asked if Aaron could share information about the Coal Line Trail. Aaron shared that it is moving quickly through Department of Community Investment in three phases. Mark Neal asked about the AEP project and Aaron it is on time and on budget to finish next spring. They have been careful of trees and opening portion of trails when possible.

XI. Adjournment

No other questions or comments from the Park Commissioners, meeting adjourned at 6:43 pm by President Mark Neal.

The next regular meeting will be held Monday, November 15, 2021, at 5:00 p.m. at Howard Park Event Center and virtually.

Respectfully Submitted,
Amy Roush