

SOUTH BEND BOARD OF PARK COMMISSIONERS
REGULAR MEETING
February 21, 2022

The Board of Park Commissioners of the City of South Bend, Indiana met on Monday, February 21, 2022, 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
Mr. Dan Farrell

Park Board members present and attending virtually as follows:

Ms. Consuella Hopkins, Vice President

Park Board members absent were as follows:

Ms. Aimee Buccellato

VPA staff members present: Aaron Perri, Executive Director; Annie Smith, Chief Development Officer; Jonathan Jones, Director of Recreation Experiences; John Martinez, Director of Facility & Grounds; Matt Frazier, Marketing Manager; Amy Roush, Director of Development; Bridget Fields, Special Events Manager; Eva Ennis, Marketing Manager; Jessica Williams, Executive Assistant.

Other city representatives present: Clara McDaniels, Assistant City Attorney.

I. Call to Order

Mark Neal called the meeting to order at 5:02 pm.

II. Minutes of the Regular Board Meeting on Monday, January 18, 2022

Motion to approve the meeting minutes of Monday, January 18, 2022, by Dan Farrell, supported by Consuella Hopkins, motion carried. Roll call vote 3-0.

III. Consent Agenda

Motion to approve the consent agenda of Monday, February 21, 2021, by Dan Farrell with deferment of item number IV, supported by Consuella Hopkins, motion carried. Roll call vote 3-0.

IV. Use of Parks – New Events

- a. Depaul Academy – Rite of Passage Easter Egg Hunt at Southeast Park on April 9, 2022

Mark Neal asked if the group was present. Bridget Fields stood in to discuss Rite of Passage Easter Egg Hunt at Southeast Park on April 9, 2022, hosted by Depaul Academy. Bridget Fields stated that Depaul Academy would like to host this event at Southeast Park as it is not a typical event in the area.

Motion to approve discuss Rite of Passage Easter Egg Hunt at Southeast Park on April 9, 2022, by Dan Farrell, supported by Consuella Hopkins, motion carried. Roll call vote 3-0.

V. Outstanding Partners – Laurence Okereke/UB League

Aaron Perri acknowledged UB League as the Outstanding Partner. Jonathan Jones introduced Laurence Okereke. Jonathan Jones stated that UB League takes place at the Martin Luther King Recreational Center on Sundays and has approximately 410 members. Laurence Okereke stated that he began UB League in 1977 and spoke about how he created the league to provide a haven. Now there is over 600 players registered from ages 14-45. Laurence Okereke was presented with a certificate.

VI. Interviewing of Interested Residents

Jan Richalski, a member of the public from the Botanical Society, gave treasury report. The report included the admissions for the 2021 year. A letter with color coding indicating what the society would like help with was submitted. Assessments for repairs started October 20, 2021, and the Botanical Society would like this to be placed into the budget. Aaron Perri gave thanks to the conservatory and acknowledged the issues stated. Connor Damian, a member of the public, posed concern for pricing for concessions at Howard Park. Connor asked to consider concession prices for the new upcoming Seitz Park. Aaron Perri relayed that Seitz Park will not be contracted for concessions. No further comments were made.

VII. Innovation and Technology Camera Program Report

David Finley from Venues Parks & Arts Informational Technology Department presented 10 slides and talked about the goals of the Camera Program initiative. This initiative included 5 pilot sites for research. The department evaluated the results of the pilot for improving safety in the city. David Finley stated that crime decreased during the time of the pilot. The pilot locations were chosen intentionally. Graffiti removal and vandalism decreased. Comparison charts of pilot parks showed beginning vs post results. There was a decline of criminal incidents. Resident-initiated requests for park change went down. Aaron Perri expressed satisfaction with the results and stated that everything that could be measured was moved in a positive direction. No recorded negative feedback was given.

VIII. New Business

a. Community Tree Nursery Collaboration Amended and Restated Agreement

Andrew Netter from the 14th floor of the County City building presented the Community Tree Nursery Collaboration Amended and Restated Agreement. Andrew Netter stated that three entities maintain this agreement. Legal asked that they do a restatement of this agreement. Funding now goes through a donor the agreement is adding 9 lots. Annie Smith states Donor is Sandy Wilson through Marjorie Wilson trust.

Motion to approve Community Tree Nursery Collaboration Amended and Restated Agreement by Dan Farrell, supported by Consuella Hopkins, motion carried. Roll call vote 3-0.

IX. Report by Organization

Jenny Zimmerman of First Tee of Michiana spoke about the basics of the program. Jenny Zimmerman stated that the program is 80 percent life skills and 20 percent golf. The program grew to 393 participants with initiation of the indoor program. First Tee offers ages 7-17 a completely introductory program. Jenny

Zimmerman also reached out to middle schools and had a great response in 2020. LPGA girls' program was created to be more social. Play with coach program happens Tuesdays and Fridays. More structure was added for beginners. Jenny Zimmerman stated that the Newsletter showed the programs but there were many people that did not have access. School Program extension used PE teachers to teach a class. Now First Tee coaches go into schools and do after school or golf nights. The program has grown since being able to go yearlong. Lack of equipment made it difficult to sustain this. Jenny Zimmerman explained that having one class available for every school in future is a new goal. Kids Golf Free remains the gold standard. Kids Golf Free wants to host themed events monthly as a goal for the future. Jenny Zimmerman stated that there are 87 golf courses in the simulator including an indoor putting green. First Tee National came to visit and 2nd national championship will come to the area soon. First Tee would like to implement a new fundraiser this year. An organization pledged to donate 4 years of operational funds. Jenny would like to bring ring a top golf like experience to the four winds field. The need is coaches. Consuella spoke about the continuation of this program. Mark expressed excitement about the growth of the program as well.

X. Report by Director of Recreational Experiences – Jonathan Jones

Jonathan Jones gave a Howard Park ice skating update. Jonathan stated that this was the first year that ice skating was an all-open skate experience. Last year, with Covid-19, ice skating was held in sessions. Jonathan Jones added that ice skating is now a hybrid. There was a 2% increase. Howard Park sold more season passes and private rentals have been implemented. This year 20 private events to date have taken place and 10 have been scheduled in the weeks to come. Mark Neal asked about the Skate it Forward program. Jonathan Jones explained that there were at least 200 plus participants through the Skate it Forward program. Jonathan Jones stated that The YMCA and O'Brien Fitness Center are preparing for a ribbon cutting soon. January brought in \$5000 in revenue. There will be an enhanced scholarship focus with leverage for the Skate its Forward participants in 2022. Jonathan stated that finding more age 21 and over programs is a goal. There has been a preschool for Learn to Swim program expansion with Adams High School along with VPA staff. The aquatic season extension is Memorial Day to Labor Day season and the department is in process of hiring new aquatics manager.

XI. Report by Executive Director Aaron Perri

Aaron Perri presented the 2021 Annual Report 2021. The operations cost recovery desired was 40% and is now at 38.5%. Aaron Perri discussed the happenings of the staff retreat held on Wednesday, February 16, 2022. This retreat hosted 3 meetings. One meeting with all Venues Parks & Arts directors, one with all leadership, and one with a strategic team. Aaron Perri recapped answers and overall information from surveys taken by 31 participating staff. Mark Neal asked when the new strategic plan will be released. Aaron Perri stated that it will be released the second or third quarter. Potawatomi Zoo is going to finance a large portion of their capital plan through Hotel Motel Tax funds via a bond. This is scheduled to close on March 2, 2022. Aaron Perri stated that it is time to be reaccredited this year. Updated standards documentation for reaccreditation will be presented. These documents will require board approval because renewal is every 5 years. Aaron Perri indicated there are recurring Dream Center meetings for MLK Center and Park renovation. Two remaining public forums will be held on both March 10 and April 7 at the MLK Center. There will also be a community meeting tentatively scheduled for March 8th at 6:00 pm at the Charles Black Center. Aaron Perri stated the Seitz Park tentative opening is Spring 2023. There will be a more definitive schedule when the Notre Dame project is completed.

XII. Adjournment

No other questions or comments from the Park Commissioners, meeting adjourned at 6:34 by President Mark Neal.

The next regular meeting will be held Monday March 21, 2022, at 5:00 p.m. at Howard Park Event Center and virtually.

Respectfully Submitted,

Jessica Williams