

SOUTH BEND BOARD OF PARK COMMISSIONERS
REGULAR MEETING
March 27, 2023

The Board of Park Commissioners of the City of South Bend, Indiana met on Monday, March 27, 2023, 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, Vice President
Mr. Sam Centellas

VPA staff members present: Aaron Perri, Executive Director of Venues Parks & Arts; Jordan Gathers, Deputy Director; Emily Sims, Chief Development Officer; John Martinez, Chief of Park Operations; Macy Hannah, Recreation Experiences Director; Cynthia Taylor, Recreation Community Program Director; Maggie Sullivan, Marketing Manager; Eva Ennis, Marketing Manager; Amy Roush, Director of Development,

Other city representatives present: Jenna Throw, Assistant City Attorney.

I. Call to Order

Mark Neal called the meeting to order at 5:06 pm.

II. Minutes of the Regular Board Meeting held on February 22, 2023, and the minutes from the March 20, 2023, meeting.

Motion to approve the meeting minutes of February 22 and March 20, 2023, by Sam Centellas, supported by Consuella Hopkins, motion carried. Roll call vote 3-0.

III. Consent Agenda

Motion to approve the consent agenda of March 27, 2023, by Sam Centellas, supported by Consuella Hopkins, motion carried. Roll call vote 3-0.

IV. Use of Parks – New Events

1. International Soccer Tournament – July 15, 2023 – Boehm Park

John Pinter and Andrea McCollester presented for this new event. They are working with the South Bend Lions soccer club for this event. They are also going to have volunteer help from the Young African Leaders Institute who will be in the South Bend area at the time of the event. They are working with food trucks to be on site.

2. Michiana Gospel Fest – August 5, 2023 – Howard Park

Ivy Butler presented for this new event. This event was originally held in their church parking lot, but they wanted to expand the event. It is a family friendly event that is a celebration of all types of gospel music. She expects over 200 people to come out to the park to listen to gospel music, activities for children, back to school giveaway, fitness opportunities and partake from food trucks.

3. Fun Day! – August 19, 2023 – Coquillard Park

Pastor Lee D. Ross presented for this new event. This event is a combination of over 50 churches across the state. It is a family-oriented event that will have a backpack giveaway, bounce houses, games, prizes, and free food for all attendees through the donations of the parishioners involved. He expects 200 to 300 people to attend this event. He did ask for assistance relating to port o lets, since there are no restrooms in Coquillard Park. Aaron Perri recommended he connect with John Martinez before he left the meeting.

Neither Rachael Zeiger nor Hannah Francis could be there, but Amy Roush spoke on their behalf when Mark Neal asked if all paperwork was in order.

Motion to approve the new events International Soccer Tournament, Michiana Gospel Fest, and Fun Day! by Consuella Hopkins, supported by Sam Centellas, motion carried. Roll call vote 3-0.

Mark Neal asked about restrooms in Coquillard and Aaron responded that the initial investments have been new sidewalks, new playground equipment, and a new splashpad.

V. 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.

VI. New Business

1. VPA Strategic Plan 2023 - 2027

Aaron Perri stated that this is a living document driven by our values, mission and strategic priorities. The plan is divided into four major buckets: (1. Cultivate Exceptional Inclusive & Safe Experiences, 2. Enhance & Maintain World Class Natural & Built Environments, 3. Increase Opportunities for Community & Economic Development, and 4. Create A Culture of Organizational Excellence). He started by sharing that area #4 was not achieved in the last strategic plan, so there were some items that were listed again, as well as additional items added. Aaron shared that there was a Leadership training that was held last week and fourteen VPA employees attended it. #1 includes an expansion of night and weekend programs. #2 called out specific areas to focus on in the next 3-5 years, maintaining as well as building. #3 optimizing operations, ease of use, and economic impact. The last several years has taught us that this is a plan that will continue to evolve as needs arise. He reminded the Board that the CAPRA (Commission for Accreditation of Park and Recreation Agencies) team will be visiting virtually in May and this plan is something that they will be looking over. Aaron asked if there were any questions.

Sam Centellas asked about the Boomer calendar and Macey Hanna shared that the new activity guide will be arriving in the next week. Mark Neal asked about Boomer scheduling and Aaron shared that VPA hosts close to a dozen Boomer events, but that there will be over 50 other events where Boomer is a part of a partner organization event. Sam also asked where the hotel room count was from in the document and Aaron shared that the Century Center and Morris track through “pickup” reports.

Aaron ended by sharing that the self-evaluation report has been submitted to the CAPRA team and that his team is receiving feedback on the submission. He also wanted to give a special “Thank You” to Eva Ennis for her assistance in getting this plan put together.

Motion for approval of VPA Strategic Plan 2023 - 2027 by Consuella Hopkins, supported by Sam Centellas, motion carried. Roll call vote 3-0.

2. MOU CDL Venues Parks & Arts

John Martinez shared that there is a master agreement which covers 2022 - 2024 and this supplemental MOU allows individual departments to shift pay scales through supplementals. It is for employees with Commercial Drivers License (CDL) pay rates which acknowledge their skill by holding this license with an increase of \$.75 - \$1.00 in addition to their regular pay. VPA has 18 Teamsters that have CDL (15 Class A and 3 Class B). Jenna Throw this MOU is for the supplemental change that was not in the agreement that the Board approved in 2021. John said this was not budgeted so there has already been discussions with Admin and Finance for an appropriation to the budget.

Mark Neal asked if we promoted employees achieving a CDL and John shared that we help them find a class and reimburse them upon completion. VPA has 8 vehicles that are classified A and all flat beds are B classification.

Motion to approve MOU CDL Venues Parks & Arts by Sam Centellas, supported by Consuella Hopkins, motion carried. Roll call vote 3-0.

VII. Report by Chief Development Officer – Emily Sims

Emily Sims, Chief Development Officer, started her report by sharing numbers year to date relating to volunteers and the hours they have given, donations and sponsorships received, and grant submissions. She then shared the number of youth scholarships, Skate it Forward scholarships and ice skate passes given to date. Jessica Galeano is back from maternity leave and Maggie Sullivan was recently added to the team. Emily shared that the 2023 Ethnic festival hasn't landed on a final name, but it does have a landing page for vendors and there have been some applications. VPA partnered with TJ21 to create the website for this event. With the help of the committee, we are exploring different types of interactive art features to be a part of the event. Emily shared a couple of dates with the board. The festival will be on September 9th and 10th and the golf outing is set for September 11th.

Mark Neal asked if other grant opportunities were available, and Emily shared that she contacted a contractor that writes grants. Consuella Hopkins asked about the golf outing and Aaron shared some history relating to the purpose and name.

VIII. Business by Chief Executive Director Aaron Perri

Aaron Perri gave the following updates:

- Aaron started his report by highlighting the annual report that was mentioned by Emily in her report.
- He then welcomed Maggie Sullivan and Jordan Gathers who were both in attendance.
- There was a job fair at Howard Park a couple of weeks ago and it had over 80 applicants. Josie Merriweather was the organizer of this event to help bring in summer employees to VPA.
- Upcoming events include the Summer Expo at the Century Center, as well as PJ Fashionista and the Adult Retro Recess event.
- Aaron then touched on parking. He reminded the Board that the downtown garages are under the Boards purview and that the current contract is due to expire. Andrew Schreiber oversees that portion of VPA and is working with a company on the contract.

- Sports Bill 386 seeks to increase the Professional Sports and Convention Development Area. The City is endorsing this bill which goes to House Ways and Means committee in the upcoming week.
- Senate Bill 414 removes protections for Indiana wetlands and Aaron and Mayor Mueller drafted and sent a letter in opposition of the passing of this bill.

Mark Neal recognized that Georgianne Walker has joined the Board of Park Commissioners and will be joining the meeting next month.

XI. Adjournment

No other questions or comments from the Park Commissioners, meeting adjourned at 5:56 pm by President Mark Neal.

The next scheduled meeting will be held Monday, April 17, 2023, at 5:00 p.m. at Howard Park Event Center and virtually.

Respectfully Submitted,
Amy Roush