

SOUTH BEND BOARD OF PARK COMMISSIONERS
REGULAR MEETING
October 16, 2023

The Board of Park Commissioners of the City of South Bend, Indiana met on Monday, October 16, 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
Mr. Sam Centellas

Park Board members present and attending virtually as follows:

Ms. Consuella Hopkins, Vice President

VPA staff members present: Jordan Gathers, Executive Director of Venues Parks & Arts; Tony Stearns, Director of Golf Operations; Macey Hanna, Director of Recreation Experiences; Albert (Brad) Ennis, Facility & Grounds Manager; Hannah Teshka, Pinhook Community Center Manager; Hannah Francis, Special Events Manager; Bailey Murphy, Marketing Manager; Amy Roush, Director of Development.

Other city representatives present: Jenna Throw, City Attorney; Canneth Lee, City Council Member and PARC Chair; and Troy Warner, City Council Member.

I. Call to Order

Mark Neal called the meeting to order at 5:00 pm.

II. Minutes of the Regular Board Meeting on September 25, 2023

Motion to approve the meeting minutes of September 25, 2023, by Sam Centellas, supported by Consuella Hopkins, motion carried. Roll call vote 3-0.

III. Consent Agenda

Motion to approve the consent agenda which consisted of the August financials, by Sam Centellas, supported by Consuella Hopkins, motion carried. Roll call vote 3-0.

IV. Outstanding Partner – Cultivate Food Rescue

Jordan Gathers started by stating that Cultivate Food Rescue’s mission is to have “no neighbor hungry, no food wasted”. It is a partnership that has been forged over many years. They were also an organization that allowed Venues Parks & Arts staff to volunteer their time during the pandemic.

Mark Neal acknowledged that they are valued in the community, and Sam Centellas mentioned that when they arrived at the meeting they could share their thoughts and a photo can be taken.

Jim Conklin came in toward the end of the meeting and mentioned how beneficial it has been to the community to work with VPA.

V. Interviewing of Interested Residents

Mark Neal opened the floor for interested residents to speak on a topic not on the agenda.

Joe Kalanowski stepped up to the podium and asked about the progress on Seitz Park. Jordan Gathers responded stating that Facility & Grounds will be giving a report later in the meeting and will be able to share information.

Mark Neal reiterated that Brad Ennis would be item nine on the agenda and will speak more on Seitz Park.

VI. Reports: – NIPSCO Temporary Dam – Bowman Creek

In attendance for NIPSCO Sean Carroll, Jennifer Williams, and Steve Taylor. Sean Carroll presented the information and PowerPoint. There is a blockage in a culvert in the Pennsylvania Avenue and Indiana Avenue area this hinders fish migration. NIPSCO has been working with the Indiana Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) to help correct this issue. The temporary installation will be for a six to eight week duration and they plan to work daily. It is a portable dam (aqua dam) and can be removed from the creek in four hours or less. IDNR has approved their permit to temporarily block the flow of Bowman Creek. They plan to restore the streambank and the restoration should be completed in Spring of 2024.

Mark Neal deferred to legal for action required. Jenna Throw stated this is a report and the action will be in the future. Consuella Hopkins asked for pictures or renderings of the dam. Sean Carroll stated that there is a link to a video in the PowerPoint. Amy Roush confirmed and reminded the board that it is in their SharePoint file. Sam Centellas asked if snow will be an issue. If there is potential large snowfall or rain will they remove? Sean went over the procedure and decision making process for removal. Mark Neal asked if there is a plan to prevent future blockage? Sean Carroll stated that there are ongoing talks with the City of South Bend Engineering Department.

VII. Old Business

1. 2024 Fee Structure Approval

Macey Hanna presented a recap and highlighted that the fee for the youth basketball program had a reduction because there must have been a request for an increase, and it was never put into place. Mark Neal asked about cost recovery for tennis and basketball and Macey Hanna reiterated that with the partnership with South Bend Community School Corporation the purpose is to cover referees and umpires. Sam Centellas asked about youth scholarship opportunities and Macey shared that we, as a team, are trying to streamline and better define the process. Skate it Forward was mentioned as a positive program that allows more of the community to access the Howard Park Ice Trail.

Motion to confirm the 2024 Fee Structure, by Sam Centellas, supported by Consuella Hopkins, motion carried. Roll call vote 3-0.

VIII. New Business

1. Navarre Cabin Relocation

Brian Harding, Executive Director for the History Museum presented information relating to their application to move the Navarre Cabin from its current location in Leeper Park East to the Studebaker Museum Campus. Three years ago, they put forward this same request and it was denied. They feel it will broaden the campus experience. The three day “Cabin Days” event hasn’t been held since COVID and they feel it would be a better experience if they could hold that event at their campus with the cabin included. This would also allow a space for inclement weather and restrooms, which aren’t currently available where the cabin is located. They would also like to have a marker in Leeper sharing information on the cabin and it’s historical significance. This will be up for consideration on November

20th at the Historic Preservation Committee(HPC) meeting. He's seeking a signature and letter from Venues Parks & Arts supporting the cabin's move.

Mark Neal asked Jenna Throw what action the board needed to take at this time, and she stated that this is informational. Sam Centellas asked for more information relating to what type of marker Brian Harding was thinking of replacing the cabin in Leeper Park. Mark Neal also shared that since the cabin isn't in its original location. It has been moved four times. Council Member Canneth Lee asked for any information on why it was refused when the application was put forward three years ago? Brian Harding shared that the HPC felt that the cabin would lose its historic status by being moved. There was the question of whether the cabin had its status due to its location or to its structure. He said that they would reapply for that status within thirty days and that they don't want any potential funding to be a hindrance to the move. He feels that they have the funds to maintain the cabin.

2. Ecological Advocacy Committee Applications Open

Jordan presented that the EAC applications opened last month and will be open until the end of this month. Garry Harrington and Hannah Teshka will remove the applications and put forth their suggestions. Jordan wanted to thank Steve Sass for his past leadership for the EAC and for Andy Schnabel choosing to be the Chair for the EAC going forward.

3. 2024 Board of Park Commissioners Meeting Schedule

Mark asked if the board would like to consider moving the meeting time to 4:00 p.m. and Consuella Hopkins prefers the 5:00 p.m. start time.

Motion to confirm the 2024 Board of Park Commissioners Meeting Schedule, by Sam Centellas, supported by Consuella Hopkins, motion carried. Roll call vote 3-0.

IX. Report by Facility & Grounds Manager – Albert (Brad) Ennis

Brad started with an update on Seitz Park. He and several others on the VPA team were able to walk through the park recently. It has a potential completion date of Spring of 2024. Mark Neal reiterated that as with all construction, there can be challenges that were unknown until the project is underway and the City has had quite a few of those with Seitz Park, but everyone is looking forward to the completed project. Brad went on to mention the very popular updates that are being utilized in Boehm Park, due to the pickleball conversion of the courts. He is working with the team on the placement of the Ray Comer memorial bench. He acknowledged that James Hopkins has done a great job finding and working with a local vendor for the Rask fountain in Howard Park. There will be upgrades in the Rum Village Nature Center in early 2024 and there are upgrades going into Byers Softball Complex. He also shared the multiple things that need to convert Howard Park to an Ice Trail (dasher boards, lights in trees, and refrigeration for ice trail to name a few). Brad finished by mentioning that he is working with the marketing team to come up with a fun educational piece for STEM education relating to the Ice Trail.

X. Business by Interim Executive Director Jordan Gathers

Jordan Gathers started his portion by reiterating the positive aspects of partnering with Cultivate Food Rescue. He then shared that the budget was passed by the council last week. He shared that the process started last August and included eleven public meetings. Jordan shared that he, Macey Hanna, Rachael Zeiger, Rachael Coates, Hannah Francis, Maurice Scott Sr., and Maurice Scott Jr attended the National Parks and Recreation Association conference in Dallas the previous week. He invited everyone to the

Winter Open on Friday November 24th in Howard Park. It will be a twelve-hour day full of fun free activities. He referenced the website for more details. He acknowledged the marketing team on their great job putting together the Fall/Winter Activity guide and especially Bailey Murphy for her great job. Mark Neal questioned the early start and Macey Hanna mentioned that there will be yoga on ice at 8:00 a.m. and there will be reindeer on site that day.

Mark Neal also mentioned the approval of capital funds which will positively impact multiple locations in the VPA system.

XI. Adjournment

No other questions or comments from the Park Commissioners, meeting adjourned at 6:02 pm by President Mark Neal.

The next regular meeting will be held Monday, November 20, 2023, at 5:00 p.m. at Howard Park Event Center and virtually.

Respectfully Submitted,
Amy Roush