



# OFFICE OF THE CITY CLERK

## BIANCA L. TIRADO, CITY CLERK

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### PERSONNEL & FINANCE

AUGUST 28, 2024 5:30 P.M.

Committee Members Present:

Sheila Niezgodski, Canneth Lee\*, Rachel Tomas Morgan\*, Angela Smith, Ross Deal, Karen White

Committee Members Absent:

Troy Warner

Councilmembers Present:

Ophelia Gooden Rodgers, Sherry Bolden-Simpson

Councilmembers Absent:

Sharon McBride, Dr. Oliver Davis

Others Present:

Bianca Tirado, Elivet Quijada-Navarro, Matthew Neal, Samuel Turck, Talia Thorton, Bob Palmer

Agenda:

Venues, Parks, and Arts Budget Presentation

Members marked with an asterisk (\*) are in virtual attendance.

Please note the attached link for the meeting recording:

<https://docs.southbendin.gov/WebLink/0/edoc/385348/Venues%20Parks%20%20Arts%20Budget%20Hearing%2008-28-2024.mp4>

Please note the attached link for the meeting presentation:

[https://docs.southbendin.gov/WebLink/0/edoc/385345/2025%20VPA%20Budget%20Summary%20\(Filed\).pdf](https://docs.southbendin.gov/WebLink/0/edoc/385345/2025%20VPA%20Budget%20Summary%20(Filed).pdf)

Committee Chair Sheila Niezgodski called to order the Personnel & Finance Committee meeting at 5:30 p.m.

Committee Chair Sheila Niezgodski provided information regarding the 2025 Budget Overview process. City Residents can access the City Budget Survey to provide their input using the following link: <https://southbendin.gov/budget/>. Additional questions pertaining to this meeting or the budget hearing can be emailed to the Personnel and Finance Committee Chair, Sheila

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*Elivet Quijada-Navarro*  
CHIEF DEPUTY CITY CLERK

*Matthew Neal*  
DEPUTY / DIRECTOR OF POLICY

*Samuel Turck*  
DIRECTOR OF SPECIAL OF PROJECTS

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Niezgodski, at [sneizgodski@southbendin.gov](mailto:sneizgodski@southbendin.gov) and they will be directed to the appropriate department. The Final Budget Hearing is scheduled for October 14, 2024.

### **2025 Venues, Parks, and Arts Department Budget Presentation**

Jordan Gathers, Interim Director of Venues, Parks, and Arts (VPA) with offices at 301 South St. Louis Blvd, South Bend IN 46601 presented the VPA's 2025 Budget. VPA's mission is to be inclusive to all of the City's citizens, to improve upon the great things happening in the City through excellence, accountability, innovation, inclusion, and empowerment. VPA's impact drivers are social equality, neighborhood and economic impact, health and wellness, and ecological stewardship. VPA has six (6) programming facilities Rum Village, Charles Black, Howard Park, Martin Luther King Dream Center, Pinhook, and O'Brien which is partnered with the YMCA to provide a public location for health and fitness. Six (6) recreational attractions including Boomin' Mobile Vehicle which is a massive mobile sound system that travels to different events around the City. The Howard Park Ice Trail has been very successful this past winter. There are over one hundred and twenty (120) programs including the Forever Learning Institute for continuing education for seniors. Fifty-six (56) parks covering one thousand three hundred (1,300) acres featuring twelve point nine five (12.95) miles of trails are maintained by VPA.

Jordan Gathers stated that the Jon Harrison Leadership Training completion has been very important to the department. The Tree City USA & Growth Award which is now a recurring award for VPA that highlights the efforts towards planting one hundred thousand (100,000) trees by 2050. Fusion Fest saw thirty-five thousand (35,000) attendees last year and VPA is expecting more in the upcoming year. Over three thousand (3,000) children participated in the Kids Play Free Program in partnership with Indiana Golf and First Tee at the Studebaker Golf Course which is increasing the diversity in the game of golf by introducing children to it, and giving them entry level lessons. The Howard Park Ice Trail saw forty thousand (40,000) visitors last year.

Coal Line Trail Phase 2 has been completed, connecting different trails from Riverside Drive across the St. Joseph River to the east to Angela Blvd and connection to the East Bank Trail. Jordan Gathers stated it is very important that we continue to connect our City not only downtown but in all of our neighborhoods. The South Bend River Lights is a public art piece on the St. Joseph River. The relocation effort ensures that different communities and neighborhoods in the City get to experience it.

VPA has a projected revenue in 2025 of thirty-three million, one hundred and forty-one thousand, two hundred and twenty-seven dollars (\$33,141,227) a decrease from 2024 of thirty-four million, fifty thousand, four hundred and eighty dollars (\$34,050,480).

Jordan Gathers gave an overview of the budget summary. Community Initiatives has a slight increase which is due to the American Rescue Plan (ARP) dollars spent on engagement and outreach influencer teams. Park Administration will see a decrease to five hundred and fifty-one thousand, two hundred and eighty dollars (\$551,280). The decrease is due to the Deputy Director Position is being removed. The golf courses are seeing an increase to three million, seventy-four thousand, three hundred and forty-seven dollars (\$3,074,347) to keep up with the increase of traffic on the golf courses. Recreation is decreasing due to salary changes. The Potawatomi Zoo's budget for





2025 is four hundred and fifty thousand dollars (\$450,000). Three hundred and fifty thousand dollars (\$350,000) of the budget is the operating subsidy, and the other one hundred thousand dollars (\$100,000) is for capital improvements. Community Programming's increase is due to the Martin Luther King Dream Center coming online. Visitor Experience is a new department focused on the cleanliness and safety of the parks and venues in the City. The budget for Visitor Experience is one million, four hundred and fifty-one thousand, six hundred and fifty dollars (\$1,451,650). The Century Center is seeing a decrease due to the loss of some events.

Major changes include moving positions, salary adjustments, title changes, and new full time equivalents (FTEs). Creation of a new Visitor Experience Division with consolidating staff across multiple teams. Golf has historically been budget neutral and there will be additional investment in capital equipment to keep the courses in working order. Promotions include Fusion Fest, various concerts, markets, events, while supporting partner organizations and managing marketing for the department. An increase on community programming with the Martin Luther King Dream (MLK) Center opening. The MLK Dream Center is a forty thousand (40,000) square foot building.

The Executive Director leads the VPA department. The five (5) divisions of VPA are lead by the Chief Community Officer, General Manager of Venues, Chief Development Officer, Chief of Park Operations, and the General Manager of Golf. The General Manager of Golf is currently vacant as well as the Deputy Director. The interviewing for a new General Manager of Golf will start soon. Under the Interim Chief Development Officer there are vacancies in the Director of Development and Special Events, and a Project Manager position. Jordan Gathers stated thanks for the marketing team for their work on this presentation. The VPA staff has added another parking garage bringing the total to four (4) in the City managed by VPA. The Civic Center Board of Managers oversees the General Manager of Venues Andrew Schreiber and all staff under them. The Events Coordinator position is vacant under the General Manager of Golf. Jordan Gathers praised the mechanic shop and the golf team for being flexible with the vacancies in their department. John Martinez is the Chief of Park Operations formerly known as facility and grounds. Forestry lies under this department, as well as graffiti removal. Under Maurice Scott the Chief Community Officer is the Director of Community Programming, Director of Recreational Experiences, and the Group Violence Initiative (GVI) Project Manager. Recreation manages Rum Village which is one of the largest parks in the City. Ice and aquatics, athletics, the Howard Park management team is also under Recreation. Community Programming included the management of the community centers in the City including the Charles Black Center and the MLK Dream Center. Jordan Gathers stated the Youth Employment team has done a great job. Over ninety (90) youth have been employed and worked over five thousand (5,000) hours. The Chief Development and Marketing Officer is a new position, as VPA has consolidated the entirety of marketing into one team instead of having it spread throughout all of VPA. The Chief of Visitor Experience will have all of the staff that help events run during the events, as well as the management teams for the individual parks.

VPA has over one hundred (100) non-bargaining staff which will receive a three percent (3%) raise annually. Full-time staff does not include part-time or seasonal staff. Teamsters Union staff will see a nine percent (9%) increase from 2024 to 2025. After that it will be a four percent (4%) increase annually. Removing the Chief Deputy Director and using that money for the new Chief



of Visitor Experience. The salaries for Chief of Parks Operations and Community Officers to align with the other Chiefs. VPA will add a Manager of Special Events, Horticulturalist, Executive Assistant Program Coordinator, and Admin Assistant. The Program Coordinator for the Martin Luther King Dream Center will receive fifty-five thousand dollars (\$55,000) a year. Relocating the Equity Arts Coordinator to the Development and Promotions division as historically it was under the Recreation budget line item. Forestry will receive a new Horticulturalist and Admin Assistant.

By merging all team members that have to do with visitor experience into one department VPA will have less inconsistencies and miscommunications. The MLK Dream Center will see two new FTEs: MLK Group Leader, and a Head Custodian. The proposed changes in the Block-By-Block contract would include a reallocation of six hundred and fifty-nine thousand and eight-four dollars (\$659,084) into existing downtown services and the visitor experience division. The Community Initiatives Division will be relocated to the MLK Dream Center which has a budget of one million, eight hundred thousand dollars (\$1,800,000). The MLK Dream Center will add a Program Director, two (2) FTE custodians, and part-time staff at MLK and other community centers with salaries totaling four hundred and fifty thousand dollars (\$450,000).

Jordan Gathers stated the MLK Dream Center will have a myriad of programming for all ages. The focus will be on teens and youth in the community. Jordan Gathers gave an overview of the goals and key highlights of the VPA Department. Building social capital is very important to continue growing the relationship between the community and the City. Achieving Commission for Accreditation of Park and Recreation Agencies (CAPRA) re-accreditation will be spear-headed by the Project Manager post that is currently vacant. Inclusivity and well-being is important, and VPA has a program for everyone. Increasing community hours at parks throughout the City, specifically on weekends. Since 2017 there has been over one hundred and twenty (120) capital projects in VPA. Continued development of a skilled work force. Increasing vehicles, equipment, and staff to meet the growing public space needs. Preserving natural areas by removing invasive species will protect the City's green spaces. Jordan Gathers thanked the Ecological Advocacy Committee (EAC) for their help in maintaining the City's natural spaces. VPA is entering the second (2<sup>nd</sup>) year of the five (5) year Strategic Plan. The Strategic Plan is from 2023 to 2027. Finalizing the first-ever reviews of facilities, ice, and aquatics in 2025.

The MLK Dream Center will come online in 2025 along with the Morris Raclin Murphy Encore Center, the Four Winds Field project which will put a second deck on the stadium, the Walker Field and Rum Village Connectivity and restroom building remodel which is currently in construction, and the VPA splash pads. Currently in design is the Kennedy Park Water Park, which is a fifteen million dollar (\$15,000,000) project. It will be the only pool operated by VPA. The Leeper Tennis Facility will be updated, the Rum Village Nature Center, Leeper Street Bridge, Potawatomi Park Street Renovations & Upgrades, and the Byers Softball Complex which has three million dollars (\$3,000,000) earmarked from the State government. Jordan Gathers ended the presentation and asked for questions from the Committee.

Committee Chair Niezgodski looked to the Committee for questions.





Citizen Member Ross Deal asked if the number of vacancies pertaining to upper and mid-level positions are normal.

Jordan Gathers stated that there have been some transitions, and VPA will be hiring those positions soon.

Citizen Member Angela Smith asked about energy savings and how VPA is doing that.

Jordan Gathers stated Howard Park has solar panels on the event building, and with the Morris construction project they are making updates on the HVAC system and lighting to make the space more energy efficient.

Citizen Member Angela Smith asked about the decrease in donations and what that is attributed too.

Jordan Gathers stated that it is still the middle of the year, and you will see those donations increase by the end of 2024.

Councilmember Ophelia Gooden Rodgers asked for clarification on the summary of programming for the MLK Dream Center.

Jordan Gathers stated the MLK Dream Center will add a Program Director, two (2) FTE custodians, and part-time staff at MLK and other community centers. The Community Initiative Division will be reallocated to the MLK Dream Center which is out of Fund 011 and led by the Chief Community Officer.

Councilmember Gooden Rodgers asked if there will be enough custodial staff at the MLK Dream Center.

Jordan Gathers stated yes.

Councilmember Gooden Rodgers asked when and where the custodial positions will be available for applications.

Jordan Gathers stated the first (1<sup>st</sup>) of the year depending on the budget vote.

Committee Member Rachel Tomas Morgan asked how effective has it been having GVI within VPA.

Jordan Gathers stated that GVI has been going well since the transition. Howard Park security has been successful as instances of unsupervised youth in the park has gone down. Law enforcement has been helpful in patrolling the parks.

Committee Member Tomas Morgan asked what are some major accomplishments and data highlights that GVI has seen.

Jordan Gathers stated that he did not have the statistics with him but would share them following the meeting.



Committee Member Tomas Morgan asked if that kind of information would be in the annual report and if the 2023 annual report can be resent.

Jordan Gathers stated yes.

Committee Member Karen White thanked the VPA staff for their work and asked for an overview of what GVI does for the public.

Malcolm Coates, Project Manager in VPA, 226 South Taylor St., South Bend IN 46601 stated that GVI has been successful due to the decrease of shootings in the City. The recidivism rate is currently being tracked and is not currently ready to be shared.

Committee Member Tomas Morgan stated that statistics like engagement would be helpful for the public.

Committee Member Canneth Lee thanked the VPA for their staff. Committee Member Lee stated that has been a thirty-five percent (35%) decrease in shootings in the City. Committee Member Lee asked for the breakdown of Community Initiatives, which was missing the SAVE team which works with GVI.

Councilmember Sherry Bolden-Simpson asked what services are at the O'Brien Center.

Jordan Gathers stated that the YMCA is still at the O'Brien Center, which VPA is currently still in renegotiation to keep the YMCA at that location.

Committee Chair Niezgodski asked what will staffing look like at Walker Field and Rum Village Park after the renovations.

Jordan Gathers stated that a Horticulturalist will be added specifically for Rum Village Park.

Committee Chair Niezgodski asked if there will be a Naturalist also at Rum Village Park as it is one of the largest parks in the City.

Macey Hanna, Director of Recreation in VPA, 219 South Saint Louis Street, South Bend IN 46601 stated that a part-time naturalist was just hired.

Committee Chair Niezgodski asked what do patrols done by the block by block entail.

John Martinez, Chief of Park Operations in VPA, 1020 High Street, South Bend IN 46613 stated the expense of the block by block contract which is eight hundred and twenty-four thousand dollars (\$824,000). This will be reallocated into seven (7) part-time positions, two (2) full-time teamster employees to augment the downtown program. Different divisions within VPA had staff members with the same jobs in the same locations without coordinating, with this reallocation this will stop. The patrols are presence, physical walking along the parks at all hours. Visitor Experience was created due to VPA not being built to staff events as they were happening. Maintenance is for before and after events, Visitor Experience is for during the event.

Committee Member White asked if there will be a park in the fifth (5<sup>th</sup>) Common Council District.





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Committee Chair Niezgodski opened the public hearing.

Sue Kesim, 4022 Kennedy Drive, South Bend IN 46614 asked what is being done to reduce invasive plants in the parks, and what metrics are being tracked for GVI.

With no further business, Committee Chair Niezgodski adjourned the Personnel & Finance Committee meeting at 6:57p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sheila Niezgodski".

Sheila Niezgodski, Committee Chair

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