

SOUTH BEND BOARD OF PARK COMMISSIONERS
REGULAR MEETING
December 13, 2021

The Board of Park Commissioners of the City of South Bend, Indiana met on Monday, November 15, 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
Mr. Dan Farrell

Park Board members present and attending virtually as follows:

Ms. Aimee Buccellato

Park Board members absent were as follows:

Ms. Consuella Hopkins, Vice President

VPA staff members present: Aaron Perri, Executive Director of Venues Parks & Arts; Jeff Jarnecke, Executive Director of Venues; Tony Stearns, Director of Golf Operations; Patrick Sherman, Project Manager Facility & Grounds; Matthew Moyers, Partnership, Community, and Standards Coordinator; Matt Frazier, Marketing Manager; Amy Roush, Director of Development.

Other city representatives present: Clara McDaniels, 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 on November 15, 2021

Motion to approve the meeting minutes of November 15, 2021, by Dan Farrell, supported by Aimee Buccellato, motion carried. Roll call vote 3-0.

III. Consent Agenda

Motion to approve the consent agenda which consisted of the October financials for December 13, 2021, by Dan Farrell, supported by Aimee Buccellato, motion carried. Roll call vote 3-0.

IV. Outstanding Partner – St. Joseph County Public Library

Aaron Perri chose to recognize the St. Joseph County Public Library as the Outstanding Partner due to their very notable investment that they just opened on the south end of South Michigan. Congratulations on a huge investment to a very special place. Your creative and collaborative spirit has manifested itself with VPA. Some examples are the Story Walk at Howard Park and Leeper Park; the library Boomer tour for two consecutive years, which was a weeklong programmed tour of neighborhood parks; click sites which helped bridge the digital divide for the Martin Luther King, Jr. and Charles Black Community centers; and featuring VPA in their magazine. They have a shared vision and mission for public spaces.

Jennifer Henecke from the St. Joseph County Public Library started by saying a “thank you” on behalf of their staff and volunteers. It is heartwarming to work with the Venues Parks & Arts Department. When the library looks at the areas where they can go out into the community and make an impact the parks are

a natural partner. Libraries and parks go hand in hand and VPA gave opportunities before the flagship location was able to reopen. Look forward to many opportunities in the future to work together. The St. Joseph County Public Library had in attendance Jennifer Henecke, Lisa O'Brien, Deb Buta, Trish Coleman, Rona Plummer, and Erik Simon.

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. 2022 Ecological Advocacy Committee Board Member Confirmation

Matthew Moyers shared that there will be six returning members of the Ecological Advocacy Committee (EAC) and will be adding one additional member. They are keeping one seat open currently. They are welcoming the City of South Bend Director of the Office of Sustainability Evie Bauman as counsel and a resource for the committee. She will also help connect the EAC to City of South Bend Public Works projects.

Motion to confirm the 2022 Ecological Advocacy Committee Board Members, by Dan Farrell, supported by Aimee Buccellato, motion carried. Roll call vote 3-0.

VII. Reports by Organization – Ecological Advocacy Committee

Steve Sass Chair of the Ecological Advocacy Committee shared a power point presentation highlighting all of the projects that the EAC had accomplished in the 2021 year. These included:

- a. Drafting a wildlife coexistence plan
- b. Addressing the river window concerns and working with the VPA staff
- c. Inventory of the trees along the river between Keller Park and Woodlawn.
- d. Planting of bioswale in Howard Park over 1,000 plants that were grown and nurtured at the IU South Bend greenhouse by Andy Schnabel who is a professor and EAC board member.
- e. Steve led a volunteer event for IU South Bend staff and as part of it they removed invasive species in Woodlawn Park.
- f. Ponder construction observation and assistance when there were fish trapped due to a subcontractor mistake.
- g. IU South Bend Honor students project at Woodlawn Park.
- h. Breeding bird counts.

VIII. Report by Director of Golf Operations Tony Stearns

Tony Stearns shared his report on golf operations for the 2021 year:

- a. His team's target was 66,000 rounds and they surpassed that with 66,312 rounds
- b. The goal was that the average golfer would spend \$26 per round and they surpassed that with an average of \$27.06 per golfer per round
- c. Over 2,500 kids played free rounds
- d. Elbel Park Golf Course was rated in the top 25 underrated municipal golf courses by golf.com – 1 of 3 in the Midwest and the only course in Indiana.

- e. Erskine Park Golf Course was rated “Best of the Best”
- f. Tony shared a few points relating to First Tee
 - I. In April the John and Kathy Postle First Tee Center opened in Studebaker
 - II. Coquillard has been holding four-week classes (2 – 3 times a week) as an after school program which includes transportation and a snack.
- g. Increased number of events due to the remodeled clubhouse at Erskine. This included a “drive up” window at Erskine which made it easier for golfers to get beverages or other items at the turn.

Dan mentioned that the bar wasn’t even open until mid-season. Mark asked if Tony had set targets for the 2022 season? Tony shared that he will sit down with his staff in January to set those.

IX. Report by Project Manager for Facility & Grounds Patrick Sherman

Patrick Sherman shared information on major projects with the VPA Board of Park Commissioners which included the following:

- a. O’Brien Center Renovation
 - I. Locker room and new entry desk are completed
 - II. New Lobby area is nearly complete
 - I. F & G built with an internal team for a cost savings
 - II. YMCA will provide furnishings for the area
- b. Seitz Park
 - I. Work is continuing on River Walk and portage area
 - II. Notre Dame is projected to be in the park until spring
 - III. Receiving bids for phase 2
 - I. Hopefully that will be completed prior to phase 1
- c. Morris Performing Arts Center
 - I. Receiving bids for new concrete on main floor
 - II. Working with interior designers for other items
 - III. Working with Ratio on major addition designs through 2022.
 - IV. Energy savings contract should be approved by council.
- d. Martin Luther King, Jr. Community Center (Build the Dream)
 - I. Working closely with the community, Mayor’s office, and DCI
 - II. Public meetings are scheduled for January 10th, February 10th, and March 10th.
- e. Asphalt Repairs in 2022
 - I. 12 parks – over 40 courts will be refurbished
 - II. The court styles will be a mix of tennis, pickleball, and basketball.
- f. Smaller Projects
 - I. Boat dock in Gov. Joe Kernan Park – trail is complete
 - II. Muessel Grove restroom demolition and rebuild.
 - III. Randolph Park bid soon
 - IV. Coal Line Trail is still in phase 1, getting ready to bid out phase 2.
 - V. Demolishing building at the O’Brien skate park
 - VI. Solar Power installation at the Howard Park Event Center is complete and allow us to apply for the LEED4

- VII. Additional lights on the south side of the Jefferson bridge have been installed.
- VIII. Space is being created in Pier Park with the assistance of Jonathan Geels.
- IX. Working with a consultant for the 35th Wetlands this will be a multi-phase project.

Mark wanted to acknowledge that he has heard many positive comments about Patrick and the work that he is doing for VPA. As a resident it is nice to hear these positive comments from partners and the public alike. Aaron suggested that Patrick set up a meeting with the consultant for the 35th Wetlands and the EAC.

X. Business by Chief Executive Director Aaron Perri

Aaron Perri gave the following updates:

- He started by saying a “thank you” to all three gentlemen who presented this evening (Steve, Tony, and Patrick).
- He also acknowledged and thanked Steve Sass daughter Lindsey for sharing her dad and volunteering her time.
- The VPA staff will be celebrating the holidays at the Potawatomi Zoo and the zoo will be having their party at Howard Park as a trade.
- The hotel/ motel tax bond is going before the City Council for the Potawatomi Zoo and the Morris.
- Professional Sports Development Area tax revenue is about \$250,000 a month and a portion of that money is being allocated for additional projects.
- Holiday lights have been added to both the MLK Center and the Charles Black Community Center.

XI. Adjournment

No other questions or comments from the Park Commissioners, meeting adjourned at 6:33 pm by President Mark Neal.

The next regular meeting will be held Tuesday, January 18, 2022, at 5:00 p.m. at Howard Park Event Center and virtually.

Respectfully Submitted,
Amy Roush