

**SOUTH BEND BOARD OF PARK COMMISSIONERS**  
**REGULAR MEETING**  
June 21, 2022

The Board of Park Commissioners of the City of South Bend, Indiana met on Tuesday, June 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:  
Mark Neal – President (joined at 5:54 pm)  
Consuella Hopkins – Vice President  
Aimee Buccellato  
Dan Farrell

VPA staff members present: Aaron Perri, Executive Director; Jessica Williams, Executive Assistant; Jonathan Jones, Director of Recreational Experiences; Annie Smith, Chief Development Officer; John Martinez, Director of Facilities & Grounds; Matt Frazier, Marketing Manager; Matthew Moyers, Community Standards Coordinator; Rachael Zeiger, Special Events Assistant

Other city representatives present: Clara McDaniels, Assistant City Attorney; Jordan Gathers, Deputy Chief of Staff

I. Call to Order

Consuella Hopkins called the meeting to order at 5:04 pm.

II. Minutes of the Regular Board Meeting on May 16, 2022

Motion to approve the meeting minutes of May 16, 2022, by Dan Farrell, seconded by Aimee Buccellato, motion carried. Roll call vote 3-0.

III. Consent Agenda

Motion to approve the consent agenda of June 21, 2022, by Aimee Buccellato, seconded by Dan Farrell motion carried. Roll call vote 3-0.

IV. Use of Parks – New Events

1. Family Field BBQ at Phil St. Clair Park on July 3, 2022

Rachel Zeiger spoke on behalf of Marcella Henderson. This event is a Public BBQ with a Field Day theme. The event will host a DJ and bouncy house and is scheduled to take place from 11:00am – 6:00pm. There will be no alcohol served. This event is free and open to the public.

Motion to approve the Family Field BBQ at Phil St. Clair Park on July 3, 2022, by Dan Farrell, seconded by Aimee Buccellato, motion carried. Roll call vote 3-0.

V. South Bend Chocolate Company

Mark Tarner founded the South Bend Chocolate Company in 1991. In August of 1994, the South Bend Chocolate Company incorporated with Mr. and Mrs. Tarner as majority shareholders. South Bend Chocolate Company now has 11 company-owned stores in Northern Indiana and 4 franchise locations throughout Indiana, Michigan, and Ohio. The factory is located at 3300 W. Sample Street in South Bend, Indiana and occupies 60,000 square feet. The company got its start making chocolates under a license from the University of Notre Dame. They now produce over 500 different chocolates and sweets. South

Bend Chocolate Company also runs the Howard Park Public House. Perri presented South Bend Chocolate Company with the Outstanding Partner award.

#### VI. Interviewing Interested Residents

Consuella Hopkins opened the floor for interested residents to speak on a topic not on the agenda. There were no comments from the public. Aaron Perri revisited comments from the public near the end of the meeting. Mark Turner spoke on park and public safety concerns. Please read section X. for more details on the discussion.

#### VII. Reports by Organization – Potawatomi Zoo

Josh Sisk presented updates on the Potawatomi Zoo. Zoo attendance has exceeded expectations for this time of year. Sisk stated the Giraffe exhibit is also a success and the park expansion has been completed. Sisk explained the desire to extend the Zoo's fence line towards the new parking lot for an expanded tiger habitat. Sisk presented official renderings of the Bear Concession exhibit. New train tracks will be installed for the new concession area. Potawatomi Zoo expects to open the new Bear Concession in the summer of 2023.

#### VIII. Report by Director of Recreational Experiences – Jonathan Jones

Jonathan Jones presented the Recreational Experiences monthly division report to the Board of Park Commissioners. Jones started by auditing the divisional impact on the community. The recreation division offers 5 program areas: Aquatics, Athletics, O'Brien Center, Howard Park, and Special Events. Between all areas there are 76 unique programs and 378 total programs offered. During the summer alone, 53 unique programs and 290 total programs are offered. In turn 70% of unique programming and 76% of total programming are offered during summer months. Commissioner Hopkins asked about goals set for recreation. Jones mentioned there is an overall goal to find target reach and how to expand. Programs like Stop & Pop (popsicle giveaway) and Summer Concert Series have helped efforts to expand. The July 4<sup>th</sup> summer skate is sold out. Jones spoke about the Kennedy Water Playground expansion and the need for lifeguards. There will be new signage and a pavilion extension to make the space more intentional.

#### IX. New Business

##### 1. Declaration of Intent to Pursue LWCF

Annie Smith recognized pursuit of public funds through the Land and Water Conservation Fund for \$500,000. LWCF grant is administered through Indiana Department of Natural Resources and is being requested for the MLK Center. Smith also expressed the intent to apply for a \$5,000,000 grant for Kennedy Park in August. This grant has been awarded twice before. Smith stated that this is a public announcement of pursuit, and no board action is required.

##### 2. BSA Use Exemption at Fredrickson Park

Jason Triplett was present on behalf of BSA. Clara McDaniels stated this is the final agreement and addendum to the first agreement presented to the Board of Park Commissioners the previous month. This new version gives BSA the ability to proceed with day camp activities that includes the projectiles mentioned in the May Park Board meeting presentation.

Motion to approve the BSA Use Exemption at Fredrickson Park, by Dan Farrell, seconded by Aimee Buccellato, motion carried. Roll call vote 4-0.

##### 3. Sappy Moffitt Field Foundation MOU for Field Usage at Southeast Park

Kevin Buccellato, Matthew Insley, and Mike Hepler presented on the use of Foundry Field at Southeast Park. Buccellato stated the excitement for using the full-sized baseball field with a vintage feel. The

Mission of MOU is to bring baseball to the southeast community. Buccellato explained the vision is to bring baseball back to the area and connect to history. Hepler explained there are 3 things they look to invest in: investing in the creation of a beautiful field, investing in the people, and investing in the arts. Commissioner Neal asked if there is additional funding required. There is no additional funding required as there is an endowment in the agreement. Commissioner Hopkins asked if children will be permitted to use the field. Buccellato responds that the park is to make baseball accessible to everyone including children. South Bend cubs have also expressed interest in using the field.

Motion to approve the Sappy Moffitt Field Foundation MOU for Field Usage at Southeast Park, by Dan Farrell, seconded by Aimee Buccellato, motion carried. Roll call vote 4-0.

#### 4. Vibes Music Festival Partnership MOU

Jonathan Jones presented the Park Board with the MOU for Vibes Music Festival for the third year. The event will be expanded to 2 days. Commissioner Farrell asked about the reconciliation process for tracking payment. Jones expressed the city uses their own registration systems to track and the city has control over the process. Commissioner Buccellato asked about security in place. Jones stated security is a combination of outsourced individuals and police force. Food and bar services are available. This will be a family friendly event.

Motion to approve the Vibes Music Festival Partnership MOU, by Dan Farrell, seconded by Aimee Buccellato, motion carried. Roll call vote 4-0.

#### X.Business by Executive Director Aaron Perri

- At the request of a Mark Turner who missed the opportunity to speak during the Interviewing of Interested Residents, Perri re-opened the floor for public comments. Turner discussed his concerns on park and public safety. Turner explained that there have been multiple incidents at Howard Park that have threatened the safety of the Howard Park Public House employees, city employees, and community members in the past few months. Turner asked the Board of Park Commissioners what is being done to protect employees and the community at Howard Park and that more needed to be done.
- Perri closed the public comment section and resumed the agenda. Perri discussed the approach to address public safety at Howard Park and all city parks. Perri pointed to the Ambassador program, existing and forthcoming security cameras, new signage and PA announcements, and social media posts about park rules. Perri also discussed the consistent presence of VPA managements staff to work at Howard Park in the evenings. Perri introduced the implementation of creative programming such as Pizza in the Park, Friday Night Life, and DJ Roller Skating to engage with youth. Perri informed the Board that there is a \$75,000 allocation request to the Common Council to fund a newly formed Parks Outreach & Engagement Team (POETs) along with additional pop-up programming. The POETs are made up of trained outreach personnel, such as those employed by the Group Violence Intervention strategy, and they have already been at work in a pilot capacity. John Martinez confirmed there are 3 active and 3 interviewing for the positions. Commissioner Buccellato presented documentation of police incidents from May - June 2021 and May- June 2022 for comparison. Buccellato expressed concern that the police incidents at Howard Park have increased by 96% in one year and insisted on more security, specifically a permanent, proactive police presence in the parks. Perri invited Jordan Gathers, Deputy Chief of Staff to the Mayor, to represent the Mayor's. Gathers thanked the Board for bringing up their concern and explained there have been ongoing meetings on the topic

and that the administration is committed to outreach, programming and uplifting our youth as a first strategy. Gathers expressed Mayor Mueller is open to a conversation regarding the topic of public safety and invited the Board to meet with the mayor to discuss possible solutions. Discussion ensued regarding which solutions would be the most effective with the allotted resources, with a clear understanding that more resources were needed. Commissioner Neal requested a meeting between the Board of Park Commissioners and Mayor Mueller. Commissioner Hopkins spoke about public safety being an issue at multiple parks throughout the city and is hopeful to find a solution.

- A Public Meeting to discuss the remediation work at Beck's Lake and LaSalle Park is set to take place Tuesday, June 28 at 6:00pm at Charles Black Center. This meeting will include the EPA, city officials, the contractor and project manager to discuss timeline and methods of work.
- Perri relayed that Potawatomi Pool has been on a trackable decline and that there are now foundational issues. The pool will remain closed until further notice while a more in-depth examination of the pool is performed by Frost Engineering.
- Downtown South Bend Fireworks will be July 1st on Jefferson Bridge at 10:00pm
- The Little Library Ribbon Cutting took place on June 14th at Kelly Park.
- Perri highlighted Annie Smith's announcement that she has accepted a position with the Trust for Public Land and her last day working for VPA will be August 9th. Perri reiterated that Smith has done a remarkable job in her role and will be very difficult to replace.

#### XI. Adjournment

No other questions or comments from the Park Commissioners, meeting adjourned at TIME by Vice President Consuella Hopkins.

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

Respectfully Submitted,

Jessica Williams  
*Clerk, Board of Park Commissioners*