

SOUTH BEND BOARD OF PARK COMMISSIONERS
REGULAR MEETING
September 19, 2022

The Board of Park Commissioners of the City of South Bend, Indiana met on Monday, September 19, 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

Consuella Hopkins – Vice President

Park Board members present virtually were as follows:

Sam Centellas

VPA staff members present: Aaron Perri, Executive Director; John Martinez, Director of Facilities & Grounds; Cynthia Taylor, Director of Community Programming; Emily Sims, Chief Development Officer; Tony Stearns, Director of Golf; Jessica Williams, Executive Assistant; Matthew Frazier, Marketing Manager; Amy Roush, Director of Development; Theresa Brown, Program Coordinator; Rachael Zeiger, Special Events Coordinator

Other city representatives present: Jenna Throw, Assistant City Attorney; Canneth Lee, Council Member

I. Call to Order

Mark Neal called the meeting to order at 5:03 pm.

II. Minutes of the Regular Board Meeting on August 15, 2022

Motion to approve the meeting minutes of August 15, 2022, by Consuella Hopkins, seconded by Sam Centellas, motion carried. Roll call vote 3-0.

III. Consent Agenda

Motion to approve the consent agenda of September 19, 2022, by Sam Centellas, seconded by Consuella Hopkins motion carried. Roll call vote 3-0.

IV. Outstanding Partner – South Bend Group Violence Intervention

The South Bend Group Violence Intervention (SBGVI) unites community leaders around a common goal: to stop gun violence and keep South Bend's highest risk citizens alive and out of prison. It coordinates the efforts of local, state and federal law enforcement to focus crime prevention efforts on the groups most associated with gun violence. SBGVI also draws on the expertise of social service providers to offer group members a path away from violence. SBGVI is administered by working group members, a stable core of representatives from law enforcement, the community, and social services, who meet regularly and coordinate the actions of their respective operational teams. The group includes community members and representatives of organizations including: City of South Bend, Community Foundation of St. Joseph County, Faith Apostolic Temple, Goodwill Industries of Michiana, Inc., Imani Unidad, Indiana University South Bend, Memorial Hospital, South Bend Common Council, South Bend Heritage Foundation, South Bend Police Department, St. Joseph County Circuit Court, St. Joseph County Juvenile Justice Center, St. Joseph County Prosecutor's Office, U.S. Attorney's Office, and University of Notre Dame. John Martinez introduced Councilmember Canneth Lee to speak about the success of the newly implemented Pizza in the Park initiative. Councilmember Lee explained the 10-week program offered

free pizza to park goers and has helped combat violence at Howard Park. SBGVI believes in engagement over enforcement and plans to continue to serve the local community and help solve arising problems. The Board of Park Commissioners thanked SBGVI and presented the team with an award.

V. Use of Parks – New Events

1. Maranatha M.B.C. – Maranatha M.B.C. Food Pantry on September 24 at Walker Field
Leroy Thompson asked for board approval for usage Walker Field for a food pantry. Thompson stated that the pantry is providing help and hope and the organization would like to bring the pantry to a new area of town. This event will take place from 9:00am – 12:00pm.

Motion to approve Maranatha M.B.C. – Maranatha M.B.C. Food Pantry on September 24 at Walker Field, by Consuella Hopkins, seconded by Sam Centellas, motion carried. Roll call vote 3-0.

2. Sappy Moffitt Field Foundation - Foundry Field Campaign Field Day on September 25 at Southeast Neighborhood Park

Rachael Zeiger explained the Sappy Moffitt Field Foundation will be hosting this event from 1:00pm to 4:00pm. This will be a community gathering field event for families. Food and drink vendors will be available along with baseball skills stations for kids. The goal of this event is to engage the community and spread awareness of what Sappy Moffitt Field Foundation has to offer.

Motion to approve Sappy Moffitt Field Foundation - Foundry Field Campaign Field Day on September 25 at Southeast Neighborhood Park, by Consuella Hopkins, seconded by Sam Centellas, motion carried. Roll call vote 3-0.

VI. Interviewing of Interested Residents

Commissioner Neal opened the floor for interested residents to speak on a topic not on the agenda. Jonathon Geels presented the board with a resolution signed by Delores Huerta and an Honor Award for the planning and impact of the work done in the resolution. This award is the highest award given by the Indiana American Society of Landscape Architects. The board expressed their gratitude, and a picture was taken.

VII. New Business

1. 2023 User Fees Review

Cynthia Taylor discussed the changes in user fees for the Community Programming division. Gym rental for Charles Black Center (CBC) is to increase from \$60.00 an hour to \$80.00 an hour due to the expansion after remodeling. The CBC community room kitchen usage fee is to increase by \$5.00. The CBC flex room is a newly added listing in the fee chart for \$50.00 an hour. This room can hold 30 to 50 people. Tony Stearns discussed changes in user fees for the Golf division. Stearns expressed intent to continue along with the 5-year plan's goal of maintaining fees at Studebaker and increasing most fees for Elbel and Erskine by \$1.00. The increase is meant to offset cost of supplies such as fertilizer, gas, diesel, and golf carts. Aaron Perri discussed the changes in user fees for the Recreational Experiences division. Softball has the most increases. A fee analysis done in and around the area show the proposed rates to be competitive. The smaller rental pavilions have decrease in cost to \$25 plus taxes. In aquatics, Kennedy Water Playground, Learn to Swim, and East Race have been adjusted. They Kennedy Water Playground is looking to offer private party pavilion rental. This has not been available in the past. Perri expressed scholarship programs remain in full effect and no applicant has been turned away for the inability to pay. Perri explained the board members are reviewing user fees today and voting on the fees next month. Commissioner Centellas requested rates from other organizations for comparison against the 2023 proposed user fees. Perri addressed this as a reasonable request.

2. Sorin Park Presentation

Caleb Bauer provided an informational overview and proposal of a project that the Department of Community Investment has been working on. This proposal is for the future utilization of Sorin Park. Bauer explained there is a substantial site near a self-storage facility on the corner of McKinley and Hickory. This site is currently all grass and there is a large self-storage sign at the entrance. This land has never been developed in the past. Bauer relayed the undeveloped site is owned wholly by the Youth Service Bureau (YSB), and they are proposing a few different projects to occur on the site. The bureau primarily proposed the addition of a new Youth Service Bureau Center for Youth Success. The headquarters would be a 20,000 square foot facility, doubling the size of their emergency shelter space for young people under the age of 18. This facility would also add transitional dorm style rooms for those under the age of 18 as well as transitional rooms for mothers with children who are facing homelessness. The site would have 24/7 security and supervision. Bauer relayed neighbors in the area are aware of this project and have given great feedback. Additionally, being proposed on the northern end of the site is South Bend Thrive. This is a project from South Bend Heritage Foundation which would add potentially 54 units of affordable housing. 13 units will be allotted to individuals earning less than 30% of area median income and 28 units for individuals earning between 30% - 60% of area median income. This project is being considered by the Indiana Housing and Community Development Authority for their low-income tax credits. More information on project funding will be given in November. Bauer stated those are the two projects that are definitively planned for the site. Additionally, there is a conceptual drawing that shows some potential retail commercial on the front and south end of the site. That would be decided by YSB as the property owner.

Sorin Park currently borders Sorin St with a current acreage of .55 acres. Utilities do pass beneath the park which means if there is a need for maintenance of those utilities, the park would be torn up. Bauer proposed that in order to access those utilities, the Board of Park Commissioners can dedicate a portion of the existing park as right of way to establish a Patterson St. connection to Sorin St. YSB has also agreed to transfer a portion of their parcel to provide a drainage easement between the South Bend Thrive property. Sorin Park would change its configuration and would increase in acreage from .55 acres to .62, not including the drainage easement. The park would face Patterson St to serve the neighborhood and the new neighbors coming from South Bend Thrive and Youth Service Bureau. The utility lines would lie beneath the street so the park would not be torn up in the event of utility maintenance. The next steps would be for the Youth Service Bureau and South Bend Heritage Foundation to go before the South Bend Plan Commission, which would propose this realignment. Following this step, there will be a need for official action by the Board of Park Commissioners to dedicate a portion of the existing park as right of way for the Patterson St. extension and to accept transfer of the property from Youth Service Bureau to the Board of Park Commissioner for realignment of the park.

VIII. Report by Director of Facilities & Grounds – John Martinez

John Martinez began by presenting the 2022 Goals and Strategies for Facilities and Grounds. The first category was staffing levels. Marketing strategies have been implemented to address staffing concerns. These strategies include radio advertisements, job fairs, new recruitment partners, and raising the part time starting wage to \$15. The challenge with staffing is retention and skilled trades vacancies in the division. Martinez explained there is opportunity by raising wage to a more competitive wage of \$17.50 and providing training and repurposing positions within F&G. The second category was athletic improvements. The targeted improvements include the Skate Park Project & Community Engagement Asphalt Courts. Changing community demands and staff performance have been challenges. Coaching on expectations, program re-evaluation with new partners, better cross utilization and portfolio rebalancing are all opportunities for improvement in this area. The third category discussed was maintenance of parks

and the fourth category was restroom improvements. Martinez explained park maintenance performance is reviewed weekly to track progress. Frequency of restroom cleaning has increased and staff and community expectations QR surveys have been issued. The QR survey had 13 responses w/ a 46% satisfactory level. More surveys are needed to properly address concerns. Opportunities for improvement include transitioning trades vacancy to 2nd Shift and weekend custodial position, adding new cleaning equipment, and implementing additional supervision on weekends. Martinez provided updates on projects being done by the Facilities Grounds division. A list of all updates and projects are as follows:

- Work Order Management Software for Safety and Hospitality has been implemented.
- New alarms have been installed at Kennedy Pool.
- VPA POETs program expanded in diversity and locations (LaSalle).
- The new round of camera installations has been scoped.
- F&G is participating in OSHA's "Safe and Sound" Program for the 2nd year.
- Rent.Fun Kayak install is performing to expectations. There have been 166 rentals across 106 days with an average rental cost of \$23.87.
- Best Week Ever Fabrications are complete
- Morris Fountain has been descaled and re-caulked. Pumps have been rebuilt and seal coating will be completed this fall.
- Plaza Park Completion date is 10/31
- Mussel Grove RR awarded on 9/13. The start date is TBD.
- LaSalle Park Soil Remediation, TBC 9/23, with light punch list to follow
- Quotes for River lights repairs go out this week.
- Charles Black Center AV specialist will be on site this week. New patio furniture and signage is underway.
- The Coal Line Trail expected transferred is in October.
- MLK Center demolition bids are to start in October.

IX. Report by Executive Director Aaron Perri

Perri began by announcing a small delegation consisting of Amy Roush, Jonathan Jones, Patrick Sherman, Maurice Scott Jr., Mike Bueno, and Perri are in Phoenix, Arizona for the National Recreation and Parks Association Annual Conference. Announcement of the gold medal award winners will be tomorrow morning.

- Jonathan Jones will be presenting a session on "Bringing Big Ideas to Life" at the NRPA Conference
- Today is Emily Sims' first official Board of Park Commissioners meeting as Chief Development Officer
- Century Center will host the Indiana State Historic Preservation Conference where Perri will be the keynote speaker
- Perri presented at the Council Budget Meeting on August 31st. \$6 million is requested from the General Fund for the MLK Community Center project to add to the \$11 million given from the American Rescue Fund last year. VPA is in the fifth year of the fifteen-year agreement with The Potawatomi Zoological Society. The last 10 years will see liability decrease. Additional funding for athletic courts has been requested. The first round of improvements was placed in the budget to take place this year and funding for more courts are put into the budget for next year. MLK Community Center is in the last semester before demolition is to take place in the winter months. A large community celebration will take place. All staff will relocate offices as well as relocating programs. An administration decision to merge the Department of Community Initiatives and Venues Parks & Arts was also discussed in the budget.

- Best Week Ever will be the last week of September. Morris Fest will be Friday, September 30th and Saturday, October 1st. This will be a free community festival with fireworks, 3 stages with live entertainment, a Ferris wheel, and food vendors.
- The Potawatomi Pool assessment report came in. If the Potawatomi pool is to be repaired and put back exactly as it is today, the cost is approximately \$5.8 million. Perri expressed there is an opportunity to think of design. Perri suggested to study aquatics and do a deeper dive to figure out a solution. A major investment may not be ideal for the same exact pool. A short-term solution while planning for a larger project could be possible but would require a conversation with City Council, City Controller, and the Mayor.

Commissioner Hopkins asked if there will be programming surrounding the new tennis courts. Perri explained the tennis courts will also function as dual striped pickleball courts and there is ongoing conversation with Michiana Pickleball Club about providing lessons. Commissioner Neal expressed hope that Potawatomi Pool can have a short-term solution but is also excited to study and reimagine the process to improvement.

X. Adjournment

No other questions or comments from the Park Commissioners, meeting adjourned at 6:24 by President Mark Neal.

The next regular meeting will be held November 21, 2022, at 5:00 p.m. at Howard Park Event Center and virtually.

Respectfully Submitted,

Jessica Williams
Clerk, Board of Park Commissioners