

**SOUTH BEND BOARD OF PARK COMMISSIONERS**  
**REGULAR MEETING**  
April 20, 2026

The Board of Park Commissioners of the City of South Bend, Indiana met on Monday April 20, 2026, at Howard Park Ribbon Town Room, 219 S. Saint 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  
Ms. Consuella Hopkins, Vice President  
Mr. Sam Centellas

VPA staff members present: Allie Dolz-Lane, Interim Executive Director; Anastasia Smith-Davis, Executive Assistant; Erin Thornton, Chief Experience Officer; Dezha Moore, Chief of Venues and Promotion; ; John Martinez (virtual), Chief of Park Operations; Amy Roush, Director of Experiences and Events; Macey Hanna, Director of Recreation; Olivia Sanchez, Marketing Manager; Mercedes Aguirre, Project Manager; Evelyn Mitchell, Superintendent III; and Garry Harrington, Rum Village Center-Manager.

Other city representatives present: Michael Schmidt, Assistant City Attorney; Ophelia Gooden-Rodgers, 2<sup>nd</sup> District Councilwoman; and Sharon McBride, 3<sup>rd</sup> District Councilwoman.

I. Call to Order

President, Mark Neal called the meeting to order at 5:01 pm.

Mark acknowledges all Board Members are present with the additional of Interim Executive Director, Alli Dolz-Lane.

II. Minutes of the Regular Board Meeting held on March 16, 2026, meeting.

Motion to approve the meeting minute of March 16, 2026, by Consuella Hopkins, supported by Sam Centellas, motion carried. Roll call vote 3-0.

III. Consent Agenda

Sam Centellas motions to pull out action item 3a from the Consent agenda and approve as is.

Motion to approve the consent agenda of April 20, 2026, by Sam Centellas, supported by Consuella Hopkins, motion carried. Roll call vote 3-0.

Item 3a

Macey Hanna speaks on action item 3a- U93 Duck Drop, Seitz Park, June 6, 2026. She explained the history of the hospital fundraiser and the involvement of COSB fire department. Many environmental precautions are taken such as netting placed in the river to catch any stray ducks. Macey continues by stating individuals and organizations can purchase ducks and place them in the East Race to see which one floats to the finish line first.

Motion to approve item 3a on April 20, 2026, by Consuella Hopkins, supported by Sam Centellas, motion carried. Roll call vote 3-0.

#### IV. Interviewing of Interested Residents

No residents spoke at this time.

#### V. Outstanding Partner of the Month- St. Joseph County Health Department

Board Clerk, Anastasia highlighted the close collaboration and partnership between VPA and the health department's food division. The health department's involvement in vendor inspections and compliance during Fusion Fest, and the presence of 10-12 inspectors each year to ensure food safety.

President, Mark Neal invites a member of the St. Joseph County Health Department to speak on the partnership.

Karen Teague and Carolyn Smith speak on behalf of the health department.

Karen Teague, Interim Director of Food Services, announced the recent retirement of previous Director, Carolyn Smith. Karen recognized Carolyn for her nearly 30 years of service, expressing her gratitude for Carolyn's contribution and leadership.

Carolyn reflected on the teamwork and progress achieved for the community through the partnership with VPA.

#### VI. Use of Parks- New Events

A brief presentation on four new events in various VPA parks is presented by Amy Roush.

The Commissioners questioned item 2 under new events, Steps for Safe Paws in Howard Park. Amy confirmed the team would have more details in the May meeting.

Motion to approve the Use of Park -New events, by Sam Centellas, supported by Consuela Hopkins, motion carried. Roll call vote 3-0.

#### VII. New Business

##### 1. EAC Membership Application- Garry Harrington

Garry Harrington, Rum Village manager and EAC liaison, presented the application of Diana Zebroski for the EAC (Ecological Advocacy Committee).

There were no questions from the Commissioners.

Motion to approve the EAC membership for Diana Zebroski, by Sam Centellas, supported by Consuella Hopkins, motion carried. Roll call vote 3-0.

##### 2. Howard Park Ice Skating Rate Change- Macey Hanna

Macey Hanna, Director of Recreation, proposed a \$1 increase in general admission rates for Howard Park ice skating and a 50% scholarship discount for the Learn to Skate program.

The Commissioners discussed how affordable this increase would be for the community and approved the changes.

Motion to approve the Howard Park Ice Skating Rate Change, by Sam Centellas, supported by Consuella Hopkins, carried. Roll call vote 3-0.

### 3. Resolution No. 2026-003

Michael Schmidt, City Attorney, explained the permit for O'Brien Park. He reported concerns identifying and reporting dry wells (wellheads) to the county, with two currently identified with a possibility of further pending review. He continued stating this resolution allows engineering department to sign necessary documents without requiring board approval for each item, streamlining the process during ongoing construction.

Motion to approve Resolution No. 2026-003 by Sam Centellas, supported by Consuella Hopkins, motion carried. Roll call 3-0.

### 4. Rum Village Park- Gertrude Street Minor Subdivision- JPR

John Martinez, Chief of Park Operations, brought up Angela Smith with JPR. Angela presented on the consolidation of five parcels on the west campus of Rum Village Park into a single parcel, with the board approving the plat and discussing survey findings and next steps. She continued with sharing the preliminary survey results the process of consolidating five parcels into one for the mountain bike trail area, including prior survey work and rezoning applications, with the Are Plan Commission's final approval pending due to a quorum issues.

Angela presented the physical plat for board signature, clarifying the board's approval is required before the Plan Commission can finalize the consolidation.

Motion to approve Rum Village Park- Gertrude Street Minor Subdivision, by Sam Centellas, supported by Consuella Hopkins, motion carried. Roll call vote 3-0.

## VIII. Report by Chief of Venues and Promotion Dezha Moore

Dezha Morre provided updates on the Raclin Murphy Encore Center, including the new amenities, event activation, rental rates, upcoming events, and the launch of a new VPA marketing and strategy team.

Dezha described the new features such as a sensory room for patrons with sound sensitivities, a lounge with premium bar service, a box service with mobile ordering, a programmable light feature in the new events space, and a dedicated Equity and Arts program event space. Continuing, she mentioned the Center and Theater will both be activated during show nights and private rentals. Using aggressive marketing and booking efforts are underway, and rental rates set competitively compared to other venues. Upcoming events include musical performances, speaking series, open mic nights, and art exhibits, with a focus on community access and youth engagement through Equity and Arts programming. The new marketing team has been established, with three managers assigned to different divisions, and a strategy focused on organic storytelling, internal process improvements, and targeted campaign marketing.

The Commissioners raised questions about parking challenges for events at the Morris and Raclin Murphy Encore Center and discussed coordination between the Venues boards.

Both Dezha and Michael Schmidt addressed efforts to improve patron experience and clarified responsibilities of the boards and City of South Bend.

IX. Report by Interim Executive Director Allie Dolz-Lane

Allie Dolz-Lane, acting Interim Executive Director, recognized outgoing Executive Director, Jordan Gathers, and gave a brief overview of his accomplishments during his tenure including multiple park renovations, new facilities, and success grant funding.

- Highlighting the department milestones such as Fusion Fest, completion of LaSalle Park renovations, opening the MLK Dream Center, Seitz Park, and debut of the Raclin Murphy Encore Center.
- Awards and Grants- VPA has received two Indiana Parks and Recreation Association Excellence Awards and securing significant funding for Kennedy Park and other trail improvements.

Allie concluded her updates with reporting the upcoming projects like Kennedy Park improvements, Marion Bridge construction, Riverwalk upgrades, and the West Side Greenway, with several projects coming in under budget.

This concluded the updates by Interim Executive Director, Allie Dolz-Lane.

XI. Adjournment

The next scheduled meeting will be held Monday, May 18, 2026 at 5:00 p.m. at Howard Park Event Center.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Anastasia Smith-Davis