

SOUTH BEND BOARD OF PARK COMMISSIONERS
REGULAR MEETING
February 15, 2021

The Board of Park Commissioners of the City of South Bend, Indiana met on Monday, February 15, 2021, via Microsoft Teams virtual meeting 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
Ms. Consuella Hopkins

Park Board members absent were as follows:

Ms. Aimee Buccellato

VPA staff members present: Aaron Perri, Executive Director; Eva Ennis, Operations Coordinator; Jonathan Jones, Director of Recreational Experiences; Cynthia Taylor, Director of Community Partnerships; John Martinez, Director of Facilities & Grounds; Bridget Fields, Special Event Coordinator

Other city representatives present: Clara McDaniels, Assistant City Attorney

I. Call to Order

Mark Neal called the meeting to order at 5:00 pm.

II. Minutes of the Regular Board Meeting on January 19, 2021

Motion to approve the minutes of the last regular meeting of the board held on January 19, 2021 by Dan Farrell, supported by Consuella Hopkins, motion carried. Roll call vote 3-0.

III. Consent Agenda

Motion to approve the consent agenda by Dan Farrell, supported by Consuella Hopkins, motion carried. Roll call vote 3-0.

IV. Interviewing of Interested Citizens

Mark Neal opened the floor for public comment. There were no citizen comments.

V. Reports by Organizations

a. YMCA

Macey Hanna reviewed updates happening at the O'Brien Center location including the renovation progress, program offerings and membership data. The O'Brien Center saw 158% increase in membership since the YMCA partnership started in June 2020.

b. Event Partnership: Summer Vibes Festival

Jonathan Jones explained that VPA partnered with Austin Gammage to offer experiences at Howard Park that target diverse audiences. Austin Gammage explained that he focuses on offering events that highlight culture and diverse communities. He was able to successfully complete 3 events in 2020 even with COVID restrictions in place. The Summer Vibes Music Festival hosted at Howard Park this summer

featured local music, artists and vendors. One of the goals of the event was to show the community that these spaces are inclusive. Other event included silent headphone event and museum of art event. VPA and Austin Gammage are planning for next year events including another Summer Vibes Festival.

VI. New Business

1. South Bend Scullers & Paddlers Boathouse Use Agreement

Aaron Perri explained that this is the first amendment to the lease agreement with the South Bend Scullers & Paddlers. The previous lease was in place for 5 years, and this amendment extends the lease another 10 years. He noted that while the Scullers & Paddlers are responsible for maintenance of the boat house, this agreement does not preclude the City from being able to partner on capital improvements for the boathouse.

Matt Meersman, Vice President of South Bend Scullers and Paddlers, provided an update on the usage of the boathouse and noted a growth in membership. He noted that a roof replacement is needed and wanted to ensure that it was included that major capital improvements would not be the Scullers & Paddlers sole responsibility.

Jill DeLucia, officer of South Bend Community Rowing and South Bend Scullers and Paddlers, explained that the boat house is at capacity with all spaces rented and 30 members. South Bend Community Rowing has 50 members. They have collaborated with stakeholders to get a new dock in place near the boathouse South Bend Community Rowing was not active this year through COVID because of the team nature of rowing.

Mark Neal asked what the monthly rental charge is at the boathouse. Jill DeLucia replied that South Bend Scullers and Paddlers costs \$150 per calendar year and dues for South Bend Community Rowing are \$250 annually.

Motion to approve the South Bend Scullers & Paddlers Use Agreement by Dan Farrell, supported by Consuella Hopkins, motion carried. Roll call vote 3-0.

2. Discussion of IN State Senate Bill 389

Aaron Perri explained that IN State Senate Bill 389 concerns the protection of wetlands and is an important bill for the board and anyone concerned with ecological issues to be aware of.

Steve Sass, Ecological Advocacy Committee chair, explained that the bill removes protection from isolated wetlands and explained the dangers of removing the wetland protections. The EAC unanimously passed a letter requesting the board to take opposition to the bill.

Aaron Perri noted that the bill relates to property in the private sector that will be put at risk. Amelia Weller added that the damage of nearby wetlands can impact public wetlands.

Mark Neal asked if VPA would assess what this bill is doing and the risk of impact on public lands and the environment generally.

VII. Report by Facilities and Grounds Director John Martinez

John Martinez gave the following updates:

- The forestry division is transitioning to an environmental crew not just a maintenance crew. They planted 150 trees in parks and 63 trees in downtown smart streets. The team planted more trees than it removed, increasing South Bend's tree canopy.

- Major park projects from 2020 include Leeper Park Phase II, Pinhook Park, athletic court upgrades, and Governor Kernan Park & Trail.
- 2021 Park projects: Pinhook kitchen, O'Brien renovation, Martin Luther King, Jr. Center capital improvements, asphalt athletic court repair, Riverlights improvements, Pier Park art project, Muessel Grove restroom renovation, Seitz Park, and Plaza Park art project.
- Strategic improvements for the division in 2021 include participation in the Youth Jobs Program, onboarding and training employees, staff engagement, restroom service levels agreements, data analytics and working on the business.

VIII. Report by Executive Director Aaron Perri

Aaron Perri gave the following updates:

- Friday Night Life, a late-night program for youth at the Martin Luther King Jr. Center, took place January 29 and was extremely successful. There will be another event in February.
- Midnight Mentorship Basketball program takes place at Charles Black Center from 9 pm – midnight every Friday and offers basketball and life skills coaching.
- Howard Park ice skating season wraps up mid-March.
- VPA is hosting several digital experiences next month including Chuck Fry Dance Parties and a Family Feud-style event partnering with u93.
- VPA is renewing its contract with DTSB. Given a change in the City's purchasing policy, the contract is not required to come to the board for approval, but VPA will provide update to the board. The contract will be a 1-year contract extension because DTSB is working enFocus to do an organizational evaluation and study.
- There is a IN State Senate bill regarding professional sports convention development areas and South Bend would like to reestablish a professional sports development area. The development area allows us to define an area in the community (facilities) and capture sales tax and income tax to go directly to the City for improvements to specific places like Four Winds Field.

IX. Adjournment

No other questions or comments from the Park Commissioners, meeting adjourned at 7:00 pm by President Mark Neal.

The next regular meeting will be held Monday, March 15, 2021, at 5:00 p.m. virtually.

Respectfully Submitted,
Eva Ennis