

**SOUTH BEND BOARD OF PARK COMMISSIONERS**  
**REGULAR MEETING**  
August 21, 2023

The Board of Park Commissioners of the City of South Bend, Indiana met on Monday, August 21, 2023, 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. Sam Centellas  
Ms. Georgianne Walker

Park Board members joined virtually were as follows:

Ms. Consuella Hopkins, Vice President

VPA staff members present: Jordan Gathers, Interim Executive Director; Emily Sims, Chief Development Officer; John Martinez, Chief of Park Operations; Macy Hanna, Recreation Experiences Director; Hannah Francis Special Events Manager; Jessica Williams, Administrative Assistant; Amy Roush, Director of Development,

Other city representatives present: Jenna Throw, Assistant City Attorney, Troy Warner, 4<sup>th</sup> District Councilmember.

I. Call to Order

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

II. Minutes of the Regular Board Meeting held on July 17, 2023.

Motion to approve the meeting minutes of July 17, by Sam Centellas, supported by Georgianne Walker, motion carried. Roll call vote 4-0.

III. Consent Agenda

Motion to approve the consent agenda of July 17, 2023, by Sam Centellas, supported by Georgianne Walker, motion carried. Roll call vote 3-0.

IV. Interviewing of Interested Residents

Mark Neal opened the floor for interested residents to speak on a topic not on the agenda.

- a. Debrah Durell (21677 Auten Road) wanted to follow up on the information she had shared at a previous meeting. A public meeting on August 30<sup>th</sup> with two more to follow. Shared a copy of the invitation and agenda with the Board.
- b. Joe Kalinowski (1440 East Colfax) asked the status of Seitz Park. Mark Neal deferred the question to Jordan Gathers. Jordan explained that there was a structural issue with the river wall and that the City wants to make sure that the integrity of the wall is the quality needed to assure the safety of the public.

V. New Business

### 1. Fusion Fest / Howard Park Closure

Hannah Francis presented the needed to close the grassy area of the park on September 1<sup>st</sup> to allow the team to set up the mandala tents and to close the playground on September 7<sup>th</sup> to set up the mandalas on St. Louis Blvd. and will be closed until September 12<sup>th</sup>.

Motion to accept the Howard Park closure by Georgianne Walker, supported by Sam Centellas, motion carried. Roll call vote 4-0.

### 2. 2023 – 2024 Program Fess Review

Macey Hanna presented the fee structure for the upcoming ice-skating season. Seeking an increase in the single person season pass to \$60.00 and the family season pass to \$160.00.

Sam Centellas asked if there was a comparison made to other ice-skating venues for the price increase? Macey Hanna said there was a comparison and VPA is still slightly under others in cost.

Motion to accept the price increase for season passes for ice-skating by Sam Centellas, supported by Georgianne Walker, motion carried. Roll call vote 4-0.

### 3. Howard Park Fusion Fest Lease

Jenna Throw started by sharing that this lease agreement is with Shive Hattery for Fusion Fest. Mark Neal asked why when this hadn't happened previously. Emily Sims shared that by signing this lease agreement with Shive Hattery VPA can enforce a zero-tolerance weapon policy.

Motion to accept the Fusion Fest lease agreement by Sam Centellas, supported by Georgianne Walker, motion carried. Roll call vote 4-0.

### 4. Fusion Fest Parking Lot Agreements

- a. St. Joseph High School
- b. St. Clair
- c. First Unitarian Church of South Bend
- d. Crowe
- e. South Bend Community School Corporation School Field

Jenna Throw started by stating that the St. Joseph High School parking lot agreement will be slightly different than the other four. It has been finalized and signed by the other party while the other four are not final and haven't been signed by the other party. All of these agreements are to add parking spaces for the community relating to Fusion Fest.

Motion to accept the Fusion Fest parking agreement with St. Joseph High School by Sam Centellas, supported by Georgianne Walker, motion carried. Roll call vote 4-0.

Motion to accept the other four parking agreements in a substantially similar language by Georgianne Walker, supported by Sam Centellas, motion carried. Roll call vote 4-0.

### 5. Potawatomi Conservatory and Botanical Society Memo

Jordan Gathers shared that VPA is seeking a management company to oversee the Potawatomi Conservatory. This offer has also been put forth to the Botanical Society. VPA has stated objectives in the memorandum of understanding which include generating revenues, creating a marketing plan, and increasing educational opportunities for the community to participate in. Jordan wanted to make sure that

it is acknowledged that John Martinez has been working diligently on this document and project. Mark Neal said that this is an element of the planning that is taking place relating to the entire Potawatomi Park area. Jenna Throw wanted to share that this RFP will have result focused model for the RFP to be written and it is result driven.

## 6. Property Tax Recap

Mark Neal shared that there was an informational sheet showing the property tax monies received over the last four years.

## VI. Reports by Organization – South Bend Cubs

Joe Hart president of the South Bend Cubs presented that even though the play on the field hasn't been quite as spectacular as it has been the last couple of years, the attendance has been back to pre-COVID numbers. Attendance will be over 300,000 by the end of the season. This represents the end of year twelve since Andrew Berlin purchased the team. He also wanted to specifically mention John Martinez, Paul Moreland, and Brad Ennis as being great partners to work with in VPA. Joe wanted to state that in his thirty-year baseball career he has never had as good a working relationship as he has with the City of South Bend and that the players also appreciate and enjoy being in South Bend.

Mark Neal asked if Joe Hart could give a brief overview of what expansion SB Cubs are hoping to see. Joe Hart stated that they are looking to build up to make better use of the space that is available.

## VII. Report by Chief Development Officer – Emily Sims

Emily Sims, Chief Development Officer, started her report by sharing the volunteer totals, youth scholarships awarded, and the donations and pledges received to date. She then shared information on the Volunteer Recognition Event that was held at Four Winds Field with The Ladies of Essence being the volunteer group of the year. Emily Sims shared photos in the community outreach events that the development team attended as well as a couple of photos showing both the development and recreation teams who were involved in the City of South Bend East Race Waterway rafting event. She finished by mentioning the upcoming Fusion Fest. Emily specifically mentioned both Hannah Francis and Maggie Sullivan for their parts in the planning and marketing of the event. She then shared some high points that are going to be a part of Fusion Fest which includes, highland games, dragon boats, Potawatomi Zoo, car show, Ferris Wheel, and are still actively seeking volunteers. Emily Sims ended with reminding the Board of Park Commissioners about the upcoming golf outing.

Mark Neal asked how registrations were going for the golf outing and Georgianne Walker asked for some additional information relating to the dragon boats.

Mark Neal thanked Councilmember Troy Warner for joining the board meeting this evening.

## VIII. Report by Interim Executive Director Jordan Gathers

Jordan Gathers gave the following updates:

- Jordan started by thanking Emily Sims and her team and for the entire VPA team for all of the hard work relating to Fusion Fest.
- Jordan then shared that Mayor Mueller kicked off budget meetings for 2024 and he is working closely with the Admin Finance team through this process.

- He will be presenting to Council on August 30<sup>th</sup> with the vote by council hopefully being held on October 9<sup>th</sup>.
- Jordan highlighted the Pier Park ribbon cutting which highlighted the mural completed by Alex Ann Allen. That complimented the tunnel art done previously by GIIIVENS.
- He shared that Dr. Marvin Curtis as public coordinator of Arts as part of his position as Equity Arts Coordinator for VPA and is in the process of creating a South Bend Arts Council and will be leading it for the City and VPA.
- Jordan invited the board to join the LaSalle Park groundbreaking that will be happening on August 22<sup>nd</sup> in the morning.

Mark Neal appreciated the resident who asked about Seitz Park project and understands the frustrations, but also wants to acknowledge the force and damage that water can have on structures.

#### IX. Adjournment

No other questions or comments from the Park Commissioners, meeting adjourned at 5:48 pm by President Mark Neal.

The next scheduled meeting will be held Monday, September 25<sup>th</sup>, 2023, at 5:00 p.m. at Howard Park Event Center and virtually.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Amy Roush