

**SOUTH BEND BOARD OF PARK COMMISSIONERS**  
**REGULAR MEETING**  
September 25, 2023

The Board of Park Commissioners of the City of South Bend, Indiana met on Monday, September 25, 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

VPA staff members present: Jordan Gathers, Interim Executive Director; Emily Sims, Chief Development Officer; John Martinez, Chief of Park Operations; Tony Stearns, Director of Golf Operations; Macy Hanna, Recreation Experiences Director; Kelli Notteboom, Aquatics- Ice Manager; Hannah Francis Special Events Manager; Maggie Sullivan, Marketing Manager; Dr. Marvin Curtis, Equity Arts Coordinator; Amy Roush, Director of Development,

Other city representatives present: Michael Schmidt, 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 August 21, 2023.

Motion to approve the meeting minutes of August 21, by Georgianne Walker, supported by Sam Centellas, motion carried. Roll call vote 3-0.

III. Consent Agenda

Motion to approve the consent agenda of September 25, 2023, by Sam Centellas, supported by Georgianne Walker, motion carried. Roll call vote 3-0.

IV. Outstanding Partner: South Bend Symphony Orchestra

Jordan Gathers introduced the outstanding partner South Bend Symphony Orchestra and welcomed Justus Zimmerman, Executive Director; Alastair Willis, Music Director; and Dr. Marvin Curtis, Board President to speak a few words on behalf of their organization. Jordan also acknowledged the important partnership on the upcoming Dia de los Muertos event at the Morris Performing Arts Center with the South Bend Symphony Orchestra.

Mark Neal also mentioned this is one of the oldest organizations in South Bend and is much appreciated.

A photo was taken with the South Bend Symphony team, Jordan Gathers, and the Park Board members present.

V. Use of Parks – New Events

1. Lincoln-Bendix Park Neighborhood Association Health Fair on September 23, 2023, from 11:00 a.m. – 4:30 p.m. in Kennedy Park

2. One Nation on September 24, 2023, from 2:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m. in Howard Park
3. Travel Football Tryouts on October 14 and 15, 2023, from 10:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m. in Voorde Park
4. Music Village Block Party on May 11, 2024, from 1:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m. in Howard Park

Hannah Francis presented the information to seek approval for the first three events listed above. Mark Rackow, Secretary of the Music Village board and Pete Owsianowski, President of the Music Village board presented on the Music Village Block Party which has a goal of using this event to give back to the community. They are expecting around 1,000 – 1,500 people at the block party event.

Georgianne asked how many bands Music Village is expecting and they expect 8 bands with performances in between by children. They are seeking to procure three headliners and are working with South Bend Brewwerks. Michael Schmidt reminded them to work with excise relating to the alcohol area.

Motion to approve Lincoln Bendix Park Neighborhood Association Health Fair, One Nation, Travel Football Tryouts, and Music Village Block Party by Sam Centellas, supported by Georgianne Walker, motion carried. Roll call vote 3-0.

#### VI. Interviewing of Interested Residents

Mark Neal opened the floor for interested residents to speak on a topic not on the agenda. There were no comments from residents.

#### VII. Reports: Professor Deborah Marr Soil Testing Project

Dr. Deborah Marr, Associate Professor of Biology at IU South Bend shared information on the project that her 400-level biology class of twelve students is working on in park areas. They are looking at plant roots, microbiota, mesobiota, and macrobiota in green spaces. Parks that provide a diversity of plants in their spaces have a more symbiotic space. Cement increases the production of methane and methane increases the chance of asthma in children. They are studying the processes in Howard Park, Pinhook Park, and Fredrickson Park. The study relates to soil biodiversity and decomposition rate. It is a standardized eight-week study. Michael Schmidt asked when the study was started and Professor Marr stated that Garry Harrington had given approval. Michael will seek follow up information from Professor Marr.

#### VIII. New Business

##### 1. 2024 Fee Presentation – Macey Hanna

Mark Neal shared some background with the board relating to the fee structure. Macey shared that the board had previously approved a slight increase in fees for the Howard Park Ice Trail and for the registration fee for the 2023 Kid's Triathlon. She is currently seeking a change in fees relating to some athletic programs.

This will be an item that the board will look over and reintroduce in the next meeting to determine whether a motion should be put forth to approve the fees suggested.

#### IX. Report by Director of Recreational Experiences – Macey Hanna

Macey Hanna, Director of Recreational Experiences started her report by sharing that youth basketball starts in November. Byers complex has had a very successful year under the leadership of John Walczewski with over 18,000 players. Kennedy Water Playground had 8,898 in attendance this season

with 26 pavilion rentals. There were 451 students who participated in the Learn to Swim program. The East Race Waterway will be celebrating 40 years in 2024. This season Visit South Bend Mishawaka had influencers stop by, the Colts mascot came to South Bend to film at the East Race, and ESPN filmed an ACC 3 day weekend in South Bend which included rafting the East Race Waterway. Macey thanked the Facility & Grounds team for their help completing the season successfully. She also shared that 125 season passes have been sold to date for the ice-skating season with the Winter Open planned to be held on Friday November 24<sup>th</sup>. There will be a full-time custodian starting at Howard Park October 2<sup>nd</sup>.

Sam Centellas asked for some additional information relating to the attendance at Kennedy Water Playground in comparison to before 2019.

#### VIII. New Business

##### 2. Heartwood Tree Care Arborist License – New Arborist

John Martinez shared that the arborist had passed all license tests but deferred to Michael Schmidt to share additional information relating to Heartwood Tree Care. Michael stated that the board could pass the motion to approve Heartwood with the condition of this business resolving issues that are outstanding with the City of South Bend Controllers Office.

Motion to approve Heartwood Tree Care Arborist License with the condition of resolution with the City of South Bend Controllers Office, by Georgianne Walker, supported by Sam Centellas, motion carried. Roll call vote 3-0.

#### X. Business by Interim Executive Director Jordan Gathers

Jordan Gathers gave the following updates:

- Jordan started by mentioning Fusion Fest and how well the team worked together.
- Mandalas helped with shade and set the feeling.
- He then mentioned the Directors' Youth Scholarship Golf Outing being a success and wanted to thank the corporate sponsors.
- The 2024 budget is still in Chambers and will have an October 9<sup>th</sup> vote for approval.
- Jordan acknowledged how helpful Laura Althoff, Director of VPA Admin/Finance, has been through the budget process.
- He shared that there are going to be some organizational shifts in VPA for 2024. Jordan will share the new organizational chart after this meeting and the board can seek additional information from him at the October meeting.

Mark Neal asked if Jordan could share details relating to the budget at the October meeting. Sam Centellas wanted to reiterate how awesome Fusion Fest was.

#### XI. Adjournment

No other questions or comments from the Park Commissioners, meeting adjourned at 6:00 pm by President Mark Neal.

The next scheduled meeting will be held Monday, October 16, 2023, at 5:00 p.m. at Howard Park Event Center and virtually.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Amy Roush