

MINUTES

BELLE ISLE PARK ADVISORY COMMITTEE

May 22, 2014

Belle Isle Nature Zoo
176 Lakeside Drive, Belle Isle, Detroit, MI 48207

Present for Belle Isle Park Advisory Committee (BIPAC)

Michele Hodges, chair
Rev. Lonnie Peek, Jr., vice chair
Michael Curis
Bryan Barnhill
Alicia Minter
Bud Denker
Sommer Woods

Present for Department of Natural Resources (DNR) staff

Ron Olson, chief, Parks & Recreation Division
Scott Pratt, chief, Parks & Recreation Division, Southern Michigan Field Operations
Mike Terrell, Parks & Recreation Division, Metro Detroit District Supervisor
Murdock Jemerson, Parks & Recreation Division
Lt. McQueen III, Michigan State Police
Sgt. A. Green III, DNR Conservation Officer
Other department staff

Committee chairperson **Michele Hodges** called the meeting to order at 9:25 a.m.

Approval of March 27, 2014, Minutes

Committee member **Alicia Minter** made a motion that minutes of the January 30, 2014, meeting be approved as submitted. Committee member **Bud Denker** seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.

Note was made of the submitted April 24, 2014, meeting summary.

Review of May 6, 2014, Work Session

DNR Parks and Recreation Division Chief **Ron Olson** submitted a brief summary of the BIPAC work session held May 6, 2014, which listed the topics discussed as park hours, speed limits on park roads, alcohol policy, and a beach management plan. The report included an overview of each topic, the recommendation made, and the action taken by the committee.

Presentation to Council of Baptist Pastors

Committee member **Peek** reported that the first community presentation by the BIPAC was made to the Council of Baptist Pastors of Detroit at the El Bethel Baptist Church May 13. **Rev. Peek** said he was pleased with the meeting and the update on Belle Isle that was given to the 30 pastors who were in attendance. He noted that the pastors believe the work on Belle Isle Park is a positive step forward and are looking forward to a partnership with the committee and the Department of Natural Resources.

Law Enforcement Update

DNR Conservation Officer **Sgt. Green** and Michigan State Police **Lt. McQueen** gave the following law enforcement update:

- Park hours have changed from 6 a.m.-10 p.m. to 5 a.m.-10 p.m.
- The speed limit has changed from 20 mph to 25 mph on park roads; the Michigan Department of Transportation will install new signs.
- Park rules have not changed from city of Detroit management.
- DNR conservation officers reported that 1,386 individuals were stopped, 121 verbal warnings given, 39 tickets written, 193 multiple warrants issued along with 3 felony warrants, 45 physical arrests made, and 52 complaints received.
- Committee member **Peek** requested that a written report be provided to the BIPAC members by the MSP and DNR officers, which includes the number of stops as well as tickets written.
- Committee member **Barnhill** said he would like to see a citizen review board similar to the Detroit Board of Police Commission to review complaints.
- A request was made asking if signs can be posted, listing contact numbers for the Michigan State Police and DNR law enforcement where complaints can be taken. Law enforcement on Belle Isle Park would like to make it clear that they are not just stopping people. The MSP reported 422 traffic stops, 49 situations, 372 verbal warnings for speed, 47 arrests, 77 misdemeanor arrests during February, March and April.

General Updates – Ron Olson

Ron Olson, DNR Parks and Recreation Division chief, gave the following general updates:

- The committee was informed that digital display signs will be placed around the park.
- An educational campaign on rules and policies for the park is planned.
- The alcohol policy for the Belle Isle Park is the same as in many of the major cities, including Denver, Los Angeles, and Boston. An alcohol use permit is available only with the rental of a shelter. Major events, such as the Grand Prix, will secure their own liquor permits.
- Signs will be posted on the beach in the next week by DNR Belle Isle Park staff. Messages will include: “No Beach Guard on Duty,” “No Glass Bottles,” “No Pets,” “No Grilling,” and “No Alcohol.”
- Beach water testing will be done by DNR/DEQ.
- The DNR is working on providing free life jackets for the beach; park staff will be constructing a floating area for children; an emergency call-box to 911 will be installed on the beach; and the DNR is working with the local YMCA to provide free swimming lessons.

Overview of Summer Youth Employment Program

Murdock Jemerson, DNR Parks & Recreation Division, and **Dr. Renee Dudley**, president and CEO of The Youth Connection, reported on the summer youth employment program, in conjunction with Healthy Kidz, Inc. of Detroit, being funded by the DNR in several Michigan communities, including Saginaw, Pontiac, Flint and Detroit.

Jemerson presented two videos from the Youth Connection in Flint, which showed that 127 youth participated in the Pure Michigan experience last summer. The videos also noted that the youth left with work skills, a new career path, a new love for nature, team-building, and new friends. It was reported that the youth earned an average of \$2,300 for the summer.

Jemerson also pointed out that new funding is needed. He said 120 youth will participate in the program this summer, and 60 youth from the community will return and partner with the Detroit Recreation Department to have the urban experience. It was also noted that Daney Tree Service will be expanding the workforce to include training for job career experience.

The program has been very successful in engaging with the urban community. **Ron Olson** plans a trip to Washington D.C. to secure more funding for the youth program.

Major Events, Reservations and General Updates

Park Staffing – **Ron Olson** reported that the DNR is in the process of hiring 23 park rangers for the summer for Belle Isle Park and Milliken State Park. He said the positions of park manager and outreach coordinator are in the interview process.

Grand Prix – **Charles Burns**, general manager of the Grand Prix, reported that 1,000 free Recreation Passports were distributed to the public Saturday, May 10, paid for by the Detroit Grand Prix. **Bud Denker** noted that \$400,000 in improvements have been made to the park, including the installation of a Shinola clock at the Casino. He indicated that Scott Fountain will be operational and running the weekend of the Grand Prix and every weekend thereafter until winter. **Denker** also announced that ABC, NBC Sports, and the Fox Sports Network will provide world coverage of the Grand Prix and Belle Isle Park. **Denker** noted the economic benefit of the Grand Prix race to be \$46 million.

Michigan Cares for Tourism – Over 350 volunteers descended on Belle Isle Park May 9, 2014, to make \$50,000 in improvements to the island. **Governor Rick Snyder** led a group in painting Shelter 9, and Granger donated rakes, shovels and other tools needed to make the day a success.

Metro Detroit Youth Day – **Ed Deeb**, chairman, coordinator and co-founder of Detroit Metro Youth Day, announced that this year's event will take place Wednesday, July 9, on Belle Isle. He noted that over 33,000 youth are expected, with 1,600 community volunteers helping to supervise sports clinics, games, contests and other activities and events, including entertainment and a free, nutritious lunch provided by Michigan's food industry. **Deeb** said Metro Detroit Youth Day is supported by more than 320 organizations and 240 businesses and civic groups. He mentioned that 60 college scholarships will be given to area graduating high school seniors from metro Detroit, as well as other recognition and awards. **Governor Snyder** and **Mayor Duggan** will attend the official opening at 10 a.m.

Other Updates

General Services of the city of Detroit will be planting flowers at the entrance to Belle Isle and around the clock.

There will be no fee for park entry.

Fireworks on the island are scheduled for Monday, June 23, and further discussion with officials will be held as to what time access to the park will be available.

Public Comment

Ron Scott, president of Detroit Coalition Against Police Brutality said public hearings are needed and more outreach provided regarding law enforcement on Belle Isle.

Joe Luellison, Ann Arbor senior resident, said clearer information should be provided to partner with community groups.

Kathleen Krasity, Indian Village resident, thinks it's taking too much time to set up for the Grand Prix.

Bruce Ross, Detroit resident, spoke in support of the park and the Grand Prix.

Patty Fedewa, Detroit resident, offered thanks for the improvements to Belle Isle.

Tawanna Simpson, Detroit resident, spoke of her memories of Belle Isle as a child and learning how to drive on the island. She would like to see some discussion on rules for bikers on the island, including printed materials.

Betty Robertson, Indian Village resident, said Belle Isle Park is world-class, and she's excited for the changes.

Donald Green, Detroit resident, offered his thanks for improvements to Belle Isle.

Committee Member Comments and Announcements

Ron Olson commented that **Erica Hill** has been hired to work with volunteers, the Belle Isle Conservancy and the DNR.

Olson said the DNR will work on billboards, PR campaign and flyers.

Rev. Peek gave an update on the summer choir proposal, reporting the concept is still in discussion.

Chair **Hodges** said she will meet with Ron Scott, president of the Detroit Coalition Against Police Brutality, to discuss concerns.

Chair **Hodges** will send out summer Saturday schedule of activities.

Ron Olson suggested an extra working hour be added to the June 26 meeting.

Scott Pratt, DNR Parks & Recreation Division, will report on signs, information booth, and island bike rules at the June 26 meeting.

Announcements

Hodges thanked the Belle Isle Nature Zoo for hosting the May BIPAC meeting and announced that the next advisory committee meeting is scheduled for Thursday, June 26, 2014, at the Flynn Pavilion on Belle Isle.

Adjournment

A motion to adjourn was made by committee member **Rev. Lonnie Peek, Jr.**, seconded by committee member **Michael Curis**, and passed unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 11:33 a.m.

APPROVED: Date _____

Michele Hodges
BIPAC Chairperson

Ron Olson
DNR Parks and Recreation Division Chief