

MINUTES

BELLE ISLE PARK ADVISORY COMMITTEE

August 19, 2014

Flynn Pavilion

Near intersection of Picnic Way and Loiter way on the shores of Lake Tacoma
Belle Isle, Detroit, MI 48207

Present for Belle Isle Park Advisory Committee (BIPAC)

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

Present for Department of Natural Resources (DNR) staff

Scott Pratt, chief, Parks & Recreation Division, Southern Michigan Field Operations
Mike Terrell, Parks & Recreation Division, Metro Detroit District Supervisor
Lt. Nathan McQueen III, Michigan State Police
F/Lt. David Malloch, DNR Conservation Officer
Joe Hall, park operations
Karis Floyd, acting park manager
Terri Conner, accounting assistant
Darlisa Rickman, event outreach coordinator
Erica Hill, volunteer coordinator
Other department staff

Committee chairperson **Michele Hodges** called the meeting to order at 9:01 a.m. She welcomed those in attendance and gave a brief summary of the origin of the Flynn Pavilion.

Approval of June 26, 2014, Minutes

Committee member **Denker** made a motion that minutes of the June 26, 2014, meeting be approved as submitted. Committee member **Curis** seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.

"Praise on the Isle" Update

An update was given on the upcoming "Praise on the Isle" event scheduled for Sunday, August 24, from 3-5 p.m. It was noted that three choirs from Detroit-area churches will perform. Committee member **PEEK** asked that someone contact the choirs to make sure all the details have come together. **PEEK** also asked about media coverage announcing

the event as well as coverage during event, itself, August 24. DNR staff member **Jolene Priest** indicated that a news release will be distributed Wednesday, August 20, and that she would make follow-up phone calls to the media Wednesday evening.

Law Enforcement Update

DNR Conservation Officer **F/Lt. David Malloch** and Michigan State Police **Lt. Nathan McQueen** gave law enforcement updates, both reporting there were no major incidents on the island during the past month. Both officers also noted feedback received from visitors to the island, most observing what a clean, nice environment the park is for families to enjoy. Both officers also talked about the open house held Saturday, with a highlight being that over 150 children were fingerprinted and photographed and the information provided to parents. Each officer also mentioned that the giant slide is operational, and there was a great turnout of over 100 participants.

Open House and Anniversary Celebration Updates

Darlisa Rickman, event outreach coordinator, gave a brief report on the open house held Saturday, August 16, at the Flynn Pavilion, noting that 176 families registered during the open house, and over 400 people took part in activities, which included the opportunity to meet DNR Belle Isle Park staff, DNR conservation officers and MSP officers as well as other staff members and representatives from partner organizations, including the U.S. Coast Guard. Visitors also had a chance to explore law enforcement equipment, including boats and patrol cars, dunk a DNR staff member in a tank, and enjoy interactive games, face painting, a bounce house, music and gift giveaways.

It was also noted that the Belle Isle Conservancy and the Department of Natural Resources also will be celebrating on the island from 1-5 p.m. August 16 the Belle Isle Aquarium and Anna Scripps Whitcomb Conservatory's 110th anniversary.

Public Comment

Public comment was opened at 9:18 a.m.

Donald Green, Detroit resident, stated that the minutes of the May 22 BIPAC meeting are wrong and asked that they be corrected. He said the May minutes indicate he offered his thanks for improvements to Belle Isle but advised that he did not. He went on to say he thinks Belle Isle needs to be protected from the Grand Prix and is against running the race on the island. **Green** also spoke against removing green space on the island to put in sidewalks and also is against allowing the RoboCop statue to be placed on the island.

Helen Gentry, Detroit resident and member of Women Creating Caring Communities, talked about her attempt to obtain an injunction to stop the Grand Prix on Belle Isle. She also noted that the "bridge going nowhere" and the wireless towers put up for the Grand Prix are still present, even though the race is long over. **Gentry** would like to see them removed. (Later in the meeting, it was explained that the items were left standing for use at the next event coming up September 7-11, the ITS World Congress. It was further

explained that the items would be removed after that event.) **Gentry** also objected to tearing up 2.5 miles to put in new concrete for car testing at the ITS World Congress event.

Six Month Report – Scott Pratt

Scott Pratt, chief of the DNR Parks and Recreation Division's Southern Michigan Field Operations, gave an overview of the restoration efforts on Belle Isle during the past six months.

Denker said he is amazed that it's been only six months. He applauded the efforts of the DNR to make the island the beautiful, safe, clean environment it is and thinks it's more than what people expected.

Vendors on the Island

DNR Parks and Recreation Division staff member **Jason Fleming** answered questions regarding vendors on the island and talked about vendor operating permits and contracts for 2015. Committee member **Woods** stated that she feels the vendors are very diverse now and should stay diverse if the number is reduced.

Grant Funding Overview

Dan Lord, DNR Parks and Recreation Division development program manager, provided a brief overview of grant funding for Belle Isle, including conservation funds from the National Park Service. **Lord** explained a proposed grant application for a \$1 million sports complex that would include tennis courts, sports fields, facilities, etc.

Peek made a motion for a resolution of support from the Belle Isle Park Advisory Committee for the proposed grant application as articulated by **Lord**. **Denker** seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Lord explained that, regardless of whether the \$500,000 National Park Service grant is awarded, the project will continue with other funding and grants.

Lord highlighted another pending \$340,000 grant for use on the island's water/sanitary system and also advised that MDOT projects on roads are evolving.

Community Outreach Report

Committee Chair **Hodges** commented that more than just news releases are needed for community outreach, and the committee will continue to reach out to community leaders and park users. **Hodges** said community outreach is a top priority of the Belle Isle Park Conservancy as well. **Erica Hill** will provide a list of meetings with community groups.

Current Park Bookings and Traffic Count

Fleming gave an update on current facility bookings and traffic count on the island. **Peek** asked if it was possible to track diversity and demographics of people visiting the island, and **Barnhill** asked for information on numbers prior to the state taking over management of the island.

Major Events, Reservations and General Updates

ITS World Congress – **Scott Pratt** gave an update on the ITS World Congress event to be held September 7-11 on Belle Isle and said that the main event is at Cobo Hall. He indicated that the cell towers, bridge and bleachers that were left on the island from the Grand Prix for use during the ITS World Congress would be removed immediately following the event. **Pratt** noted that the ITS event will be an \$8 million benefit to Detroit and will promote Michigan. He also noted that Penske will be making \$10,000 worth of improvements to the island after the event.

Strategic Planning

Hodges noted plans to organize a 4-5 hour strategic planning retreat to be held later in the fall in order to generate discussion and develop a list of priority projects and initiatives to be addressed in the next three, six and 12 months...through the next summer season. More information and a detailed plan will be drafted and available at the September 25 BIPAC meeting.

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Announcements

Hodges announced that the next advisory committee meeting is scheduled for Thursday, September 25, 2014, at the Flynn Pavilion on Belle Isle.

Adjournment

A motion to adjourn was made by **Denker**, seconded by **Curis**, and passed unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 10:45 a.m.

APPROVED: Date _____

Michele Hodges
BIPAC Chairperson

Ron Olson
DNR Parks and Recreation Division Chief