

MINUTES

Belle Isle Park Advisory Committee Meeting

Thursday May 17, 2018

Location: Belle Isle Nature Center

Meeting called to order at 9:05 a.m.
Roll Call and Excused Absences

EXCUSED ABSENCES

Sommer Woods

PRESENT FOR BIPAC

Chair Michele Hodges
Michael Curis
Bud Denker
Bryan Barnhill
Bradley Dick
Rev. Lonnie Peek

DNR STAFF PRESENT

Ron Olson
Scott Pratt
Michael Terrell
Karis Floyd
Jacob Brown
Amanda Hertl

APPROVAL FOR EXCUSED ABSENCES

Motion to approve excused absences, moved by **Michael Curis** and Seconded by **Bud Denker**

REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- On page 4 third paragraph down there was a redundancy from the previous minutes that should have been edited out regarding the regarding the strategic planning process.
- Merrill Cain's name was spelled wrong (it was spelled incorrectly as Cane)
- Merrill Cain also mentioned that though the load out was reduced by a month it was also stated that the barricades would not be put up until race week and that was incorrect.

Motion: **Chair Hodges** requested approval of the minutes with the above noted corrections from the April 19, 2018 meeting. **Curis** moved to approve the minutes, with **Dick** seconding the motion. Unanimous vote of approval

GENERAL UPDATE

Belle Isle Strategic Management Plan

Chief Olson introduced Debbie Jensen to give an update on where we are at with the BI Management Plan. Debbie Jensen reported that last month a very robust public input happened, and nothing has changed—she opened the floor for BIPAC members to ask questions.

Committee member, Curis: What are the next steps in the process?

Ron Olson: The process is that the Belle Isle Park Advisory Committee would provide their perspective on the resolution and if you choose to, approve it. Once approved by BIPAC the plan will be reviewed by the Michigan State Parks Advisory Committee then approved by the DNR.

Chair Hodges: I'm sorry did you say the Natural Resources Trust Fund Board?

Ron Olson: No. There is a Statewide Park Advisory Committee that will be briefed on the Strategic Plan.

Committee member, Curis: What is the obligation to the City of Detroit is it simply to provide them the plan for review as well?

Ron Olson: Yes, the plan will be forwarded to the City Parks and Recreation Department Director, Bradley Dick.

Committee member, Dick: I'd like to have our staff look over the design and plans to make sure it's consistent with the master park plans and see what is best. There is no approval required. A copy will be sent.

Committee member, Curis: We must approve the Strategic Management Plan.

Chair Hodges: Yes, and for the benefit of the public it was included in the packet.

Motion: **Chair Hodges** requested approval of the resolution to recommend approval of the Strategic Management Plan. **Denker** moved to approve, with **Rev. Peek** seconding the motion. Unanimous vote for approval.

PRESENTATION:

Genevieve Nowak, Volunteer Coordinator, shared the following Belle Isle spring clean-up report.

The volunteer program has about 194 active volunteers that provide support for the Aquarium and the Conservatory. In addition to that there is about 2,000 other volunteers that provide valuable assistance to Belle Isle Park. Last year we hosted 35 groups for a day of service on Belle Isle to support “Keep Belle Isle Beautiful” and other park projects.

The annual Belle Isle spring cleanup was held in April, has been taking place since the 1970’s. This year we had 1,200 volunteers come from the community to support our efforts. The volunteers included 360 families and individuals, 16 professional arborists, 45 kayakers, 770 individuals that registered.

The 1,200 volunteers at modest minimum wage of \$9.25 an hour total’s \$44,000 dollars’ worth of labor. Some of the group attendees were the Downtown Boxing Gym Youth program we also had Built On, Detroit Public High School students, Cranbrook Middle School, Cranbrook Drama Theatre, Grosse Pointe Conservation Club and National Honor Society, Marriot Hotel and Wolfgang Puck plus various corporations and businesses contributed.

We partnered with Riverside Kayak Connection who is our recreation vendor on the island they supplied us with all the kayaks we needed to get into the canals. A big thank you to the independent kayakers that came out with their own gear and helped with the effort to clean the canals. We piloted our trash measurement project which we’ve been working on all year to start tracking data on how much trash we collect. This waste prevents our water from flowing through the canal and connecting to the other waterways. Kayakers pulled 415 pounds of trash from the canal alone. This measurement process is something we are going to continue to do throughout our cleaning process.

Park projects involved raking and litter picking also the groups-built picnic tables. The Belle Isle Conservancy Committee Island Observation repaired the picnic tables located in the shelters. A foot bridge that was repaired, and several painting projects done; while brush was cleared from the old zoo.

The DNR and BIC work closely to determine the needs of the park and address them accordingly. There was also a public engagement segment which was held last year as well. We ask the public to bring back their “treasure trash” ... that is very interesting or colorful and we made a fish mosaic. Which is on exhibition representing the anti-littering campaign at the Aquarium. This year we wanted to continue the effort because it’s a great educational opportunity that the kids are always excited about. This year was a trash flower created by our very own park ranger Jacinda. The staff and volunteers brought back some pretty pieces and created the flower. The flower will be on exhibition at the Conservatory.

Following the cleanup volunteers were treated to the traditional hotdog roast. Thanks Lori Ferret who secured donations for the food. We served 1,000 hotdogs. The volunteer celebration included a DJ and it was just a good opportunity for people to celebrate the volunteer efforts.

The program included the anti-littering campaign “Keep Belle Isle Beautiful”. There was a ribbon cutting and representatives including the BIC, DNR, City of Detroit Office of Sustainability, Riverside Kayak, REI and hundreds of people from the community. The Downtown Boxing Gym Youth did the actual ribbon cutting. We also did a pledge and gave people a pin. The pledge is to support the park by not littering and if you see litter you’ll pick it up.

The goal is to reduce the litter on Belle Isle and then generate a ripple effect throughout the Great Lakes region. In addition, the launch of the “Keep Belle Isle Beautiful One Paddle at a Time”, a partnership between parks, BIC, the DNR and Riverside Kayak. This Saturday we have our first National Rivers Day Clean up where experienced kayakers will be getting in the Detroit River to clean up litter. But every 3rd Saturday we are going to have a kayak clean-up where people can procure a kayak and come out to collect litter with us. This will be from 9:30am-12pm every 3rd Saturday through September. Many groups support us through “Keep Belle Isle Beautiful” so bi-weekly we schedule groups whether it’s community groups, corporate groups or local businesses to come out and clean up the canal and lakes with us.

Committee member Curis: Inquired as to information collected regarding if the increase of Belle Isle’s attendance, are we seeing more litter because the park is cleaner or because the park is cleaner seeing less litter because people are walking over and throwing trash into the receptacles?

Genevieve Nowak: I don’t have a baseline of what is being collected or what was there from before this program started.

Committee member Curis: The data what is in the receptacles or what’s on the ground? Receptacles are a great thing but what’s on the ground is the problem.

Genevieve Nowak: Right now, we are piloting it with what we are removing from the water and once we get that information and wrap our heads around that then we are going to try to move it to the park trash.

Committee member Dick: We might still have the records of when we collected the trash on Belle Isle.

Ron Olson: With the added receptacles on the island since 2014 we have seen a huge increase in amount thrown away. Once we get the recycling system up and running that will be another component.

Committee member Curis: The only problem with that is those receptacles with the garbage in them if it’s a 20-ton container that doesn’t mean that there is 20 tons of trash in there that’s what they charge you for, so you never really know.

Committee member Peek: What was comparison of the number of volunteers from last year to this year?

Genevieve Nowak: In 2016 we increased our groups by about 5 or 6 group, we probably increased by a couple of hundred. I think it was around 2,000-2,099 in 2016 and then 2250 in 2017.

Chair Hodges: The representative from the Belle Isle Boat Club was unable to attend the meeting.

GENERAL UPDATES

DNR Law Enforcement Update

Lt. Joe Molnar, DNR Law Enforcement Division, updated the committee stating that with the weather warm up there has been more traffic. Most of the violations have been due to the speeding traffic coming onto the island across the bridge. There were some cars that were going as fast as 50 miles per hour.

There were a few people with suspended licenses or warrants for their arrest. We are trying to give a little extra safety and security to the folks working on the bridge.

Committee member Curis: What is the level of law enforcement on the park as far as MSP and the Conservation in terms of units?

Lt. Molnar: Generally, between our partnerships we staff 2 officers per shift for Conservation Officers, both MSP we all have an afternoon shift and to target the most active time periods like early afternoon.

Committee member Peek: When you started your arrests were higher are they lower now?

Lt. Molnar: I've been looking over the data from our reports and we will have the figures when we meet with the Detroit City Council next week. Arrests are down for the serious crimes and higher profile stuff. Our tickets have dropped dramatically.

Committee member Curis: I think when you look at it proportionally that there are 4.2 million visitors with roughly 2 to 4 officers on average per day. If you compare that to the city of 700,000 people and the officers needed, I think you guys are doing a great job.

Lt. Molnar: And I attribute our success not only to the officers but the community.

Grand Prix Update – Road Closures

Ron Olson, Chief, DNR, noted there is a memo in the packet and we asked Michael Montri, President, Detroit Grand Prix, to come today and give an update on the Grand Prix. The set-up and the circumstances surrounding all the things anticipated, what was expected and what's going on now.

Michael Montri: I think most folks know we started our build on April 16, 2018 this year, that was a week later than when we started last year.

We changed our build a bit this year and we were able to construct barriers and fence on the inside of the island to keep Sunset Point open if we could.

That provided an extra approximately 3 weeks compared to 2017 for folks to come out and enjoy Sunset Point without barriers and fence.

There are still holes in the fence, we put the barriers in place starting Sunday evening but there is still access through the regular holes that we've always had. On May 21, 2018 when we close the venue for final build, we have in the past also changed the traffic pattern on Riverbank to 2-way traffic. What we've done this year is we have also changed things based on public feedback. We have changed our traffic plan to start on May 21, 2018 and run through the Memorial Day weekend. So regular ingress off the bridge onto Central Avenue will stay in place, helping ingress and egress through Memorial Day weekend. We pushed back our traffic pattern shift until the night of May 28, 2018.

We are going to finish in 68 days this year, 6 days shorter than last year and we anticipate being complete by June 23, 2018. That's what our goal is, hopefully we can get done before that, but it is a little bit weather dependent.

Committee member Peek: When the Grand Prix started where were we at date wise?

Michael Montri: Well compared to 2015 we are going to be 27 days shorter now in 2018.

Committee member Curis: Everyone sees the new police and fireman vehicles around the city and I know that Roger Penske was a big part of that how many vehicles has he donated?

Michael Montri: 100 police and 23 EMS units were donated.

Chair Hodges: What's the count for race day?

Michael Montri: 15 days

Park Operations Update

Karis Floyd outlined that the park is in

- Bathrooms are open.
- Park staff is keeping the park clean and maintained.
- The park has been very busy.
- Even with all the rain there have been no busted pipes or leaks.
- Commended the BIC on doing a great job.

Committee member Peek: Karis what is going on over in that back area by the Lighthouse?

Karis Floyd: That is the Lake Okonoka Project so what's going to happen is a lot of that material will be returned to the Lake Okonoka area, and then the remaining area will be leveled out and seeded.

Committee member Peek: So, will that little hill come back or go away?

Karis Floyd: It will come back.

Chair Hodges: Karis there has been a question about the recycling program, when will that be online?

Karis Floyd: We finally got the contract in place with Waste Management. We will start seeing their containers coming out slowly and then they will start managing the recycling program on the island.

Infrastructure Updates

Amanda Treadwell, PRD Field Planner, provided a written update regarding the infrastructure projects; the full updated was included in committee members' packets. Some of those projects are listed below:

- Internal Affairs/Radio Building: Public Service Center
- Casino: Roof and Structural
- Athletic Complex: Renovations Underway
- Feasibility Study: Boating Access
- Capital Campaign Feasibility Study
- Comprehensive Planning

Belle Isle Aquarium and Anna Scripps Whitcomb Conservatory (ASWC) are undergoing a comprehensive planning process. Structural truss replacement is needed in some areas of the ASWC; contractors have submitted 90% construction drawings for these repairs. The project schedule begins on May 21, 2018 with contractor bidding, with August 1, 2018 being the anticipated contractor start date. Completion is expected to take approximately 6 months.

Montgomery Smith Inc. will provide greenhouse consultant services; producing a schematic budget of comparative costs for the restoration of the glasshouse structures that make up the ASWC. Both the 1904 and 1953 restoration time periods will be taken into consideration with the restoration. The BIC will contract with Montgomery Smith for these services.

Partner Coordinated Projects:

- Lake Okonoka Habitat Restoration
- McArthur Bridge Maintenance

Summer Stage: Two lanes of traffic in each direction will be maintained on the McArthur Bridge every weekend beginning June 2, 2018 at 12:00 p.m. and continuing through August 28, 2018 at 6:00 a.m.

MDOT Holiday/Special Event Work Schedule: No new closures. The following dates/times indicate when 4 lanes of traffic will be open. There will be no construction during these times:

- Memorial Weekend May 25, 2018, 5:00 p.m. through May 29, 2018, 6:00 a.m.
- 6P Run 5000 May 27, 2018
- Slow Role May 30, 2018
- Detroit Grand Prix May 31, 2018, 5:00 p.m. through June 4, 2018, 6:00 a.m.
- Freedom Festival and Fireworks July 2, 2018, 3:00 p.m. through July 5, 2018 6:00 a.m.
- Labor Day Weekend August 31, 2018, 3:00 p.m. through September 4, 2018, 6:00 a.m.

MDOT will also be improving the Belle Isle Boat House parking lot; this agreement was put in place to assist with construction staging. MDOT will also be raising the grade in the parking lot due to high-water table as well as inspect and repair as needed, any drainage structures in the lot.

Outreach and Upcoming Events

No updates to announce at this present time.

Belle Isle Conservancy Update

Chair Michele Hodges

- Hosted the Urban Land Institute which was the largest meeting of Real Estate professionals.
- City Parks Alliance will be held in October 2018.
- Koi Festival was a great success.
- Grand Premier begins June 1, 2018
- Assumed fiscal responsibility for the Oudolf Garden and are moving forward with the fundraising aspect
- In response to the rumor of the proposed Riverfront Aquarium the Conservancy is always supportive of any well-conceived cultural institution
- Encourage you to come and enjoy your park.

Chief Olson noted that the friends of the Zoo were concerned about the remnants of the Zoo. Within the strategic plan this area is briefly addressed, there may be some potential reuse for some of the buildings.

MDOT Bridge Project

Carrie Warren, MDOT, briefed the committee on the current bridge project. Originally the work on the bridge was expected to last through October or November but after some suggestions from the contractor the work will be finished by the July 4, 2018 holiday. Part of that project involves improvements to the Boat Club parking lot which is attributable to Jacob Brown. Because of environmental regulations, if you use a facility then you need to restore it. There will be more bridgework in the next couple years to improve the substructure on the bridge.

Committee Member Curis: The notes indicate the waterslide will be removed in June. Is that correct? Another thing I noticed was about a tank removal behind the Aquarium? Is that known?

Amanda Treadwell: We think there is a tank behind the Aquarium because there is a vent port and a vent but there is nothing on record. DEQ will perform a study to determine if there is something there or not. It is not on record, so they will be investigating that. They will also be removing the tank that is no longer used behind the LED garage, which are diesel tanks.

Committee member Curis thanked the volunteers that donated their time.

PUBLIC COMMENTS (3 minutes each)

Michael Betzold: Heavily dislikes the limited access that the Grand Prix causes on the Island. Asserts that the Grand Prix is being less than honest about their claims. Feels that the Grand Prix violates the DNR and Conservancy mission statements.

Keith Beasley: Expressed extreme concern over his contract with the park. Wants a full explanation of the situation.

Chair Hodges: This is an important issue that we need to delve deeper into, our vendors are certainly important partners in enhancing the park users experience. Is there someone he can follow up with Ron?

Ron Olson: Yes, I believe that Scott talked to you (Mr. Beasley) earlier. Mr. Beasley has been a preferred vendor and that an error was made, and we will work with Mr. Beasley to make it right with him.

Chair Hodges: We can gather after the meeting because the Conservancy would like to be a part of the conversation and make sure this all gets resolved.

Committee member Peek: You said that someone said this involved a conflict of interest can you clarify who told you that?

Keith Beasley: It came from the DNR I don't know what they are talking about or who it came from.

Ron Olson: The pieces need to be sorted out and we will get things back on track, staff will be meeting with Mr. Beasley.

Committee member Peek: But you have lost business?

Keith Beasley: Over the month and a half, yes.

Chair Hodges: Sorry Mr. Beasley. Our Detroit businesses are very important. We will figure out what happened.

Mary Ellen Howard: Would like to know the status of negotiations for the Grand Prix contract. Against the Grand Prix and curious to find out how much damage the Grand Prix and its vibrations have done to the dome.

Donald Green: Vehemently against another boat launch on Belle Isle.

Carol Rhoades: Feels there is a strong need for an Environmental Impact Study. Feels that the Grand Prix has a negative impact on the island and witnessed drag racing on Sunset Point.

Regina Kuper: Against the Grand Prix, there are other state parks that are more conscious of their natural landscape why can't that be the case on Belle Isle.

Betty Roberts: Pro the Grand Prix feels that it is great public relations for the City of Detroit.

Lisa Vel: Submitted comment card, was not present for meeting. Loves the island and the Grand Prix does not feel that the two must be mutually exclusive.

COMMITTEE MEMBER ITEMS

Michael Curis Just looking at these projects that are going on for millions of dollars. Thankful for the stewardship on this island that makes it possible for these projects to be accomplished. Would also like to have the contact information from Wilson to personally thank them for their tremendous support.

Rev. Lonnie Peek Belle Isle still belongs to the City of Detroit, but the State of Michigan manages the park. Wanted to reassert that the Grand Prix has shaved 27 days off the process since 2015, which is an improvement.

Bud Denker I would just like to recognize the distinction between the Belle Isle Park Advisory Committee and the Belle Isle Conservancy.

Chair Hodges

The Belle Isle Park Advisory Committee was enabled as part of the lease agreement per the Governors wishes. And the Conservancy is a private 501C3 supporting the island.

Motion to adjourn by **Curis** and seconded by **Denker**

Meeting Concluded 10:30 a.m.

NEXT REGULAR MEETING:

June 21, 2018

Belle Isle Nature Center

Belle Isle Park

Detroit, MI 48207

9:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.

Approved: _____

Michele Hodges, President
Belle Isle Park Advisory Committee`

Ronald A. Olson, Chief
Parks and Recreation, DNR

Date: _____