

MINUTES

Belle Isle Park Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes

Thursday, August 17, 2017

Location: Belle Isle Flynn Pavilion

Quorum established at 6:39 p.m.
Meeting called to order at 6:15 p.m.
Roll Call and Excused Absences

EXCUSED ABSENCES

PRESENT FOR BIPAC

Chair Michele Hodges
Rev. Lonnie Woods Arrived at 7:05 p.m.
Bud Denker
Brad Dick Arrived at 6:22 p.m.
Michael Curis
Sommer Woods Arrived at 6:18 p.m.

DNR STAFF PRESENT

Ron Olson
Scott Pratt
Karis Floyd
Amanda Hertl
Darlisa Rickman

APPROVAL FOR EXCUSED ABSENCES

There was no motion to approve excused absences

REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Motion: **Chair Hodges** motioned for approval of the minutes from the May 18, 2017 meeting. **Denker** moved to approve the May minutes, with **Curis** seconding the motion. Motion was approved.

Scott Pratt, Southern Michigan Field Operations Chief, presented the **Sigma Gamma Foundation** with the community service award for their tireless work and dedication to Parks and Recreation programs and services in their community.

The playground adjacent to the Nature Center on Belle Isle was created and designed by the foundation and is ADA accessible offering accessibility to children of all abilities. The Sigma Gamma Foundation also generously donated the funding for this project.

PRESENTATION - GARDEN CLUB OF MICHIGAN

Maura Campbell, Garden Club of Michigan, gave a sweeping presentation introducing the concept of developing a Piet Oudolf Garden on Belle Isle. Piet Oudolf is a world celebrated, renowned garden artist and architect. Maura outlined the cost of the design, installation and maintenance of the proposed project. Numerous questions were asked; below is a sampling of questions and responses:

Q: Would the installation price include irrigation?

Maura replied yes the installation price would include irrigation

Q: Would the Belle Isle Greenhouses be used for the plants?

Maura replied that it would be nice, but not necessary, the goal is to not add additional work to DNR staff.

Q: How many years will it be before the garden can be enjoyed?

Maura replied that the goal is by 2019.

Questions from committee members were also answered:

Q: **Michael Curis**: This Project actually entails making a change to the Island and we've never been asked to approve a project like that. Is there a list to outline what can and cannot be changed about Belle Isle?

Chair Hodges replied that there is a manager process underway and I think Scott Pratt could outline that.

Scott Pratt: Right now the committee is an advisory board so we cannot actually approve the project itself. The project will be added to our management plan; the DNR will then sit down and determine what direction we would like to take. If there is anything built beyond the lease the state has with the City of Detroit then approval from the City of Detroit is required.

Committee member Michael Curis stated he is largely in favor of the garden and feels that it's right in line with what Belle Isle represents. **Committee member Bud Denker** indicated he is in agreement with Curis.

There was a motion to support the Piet Oudolf Garden plan. The motion was moved by **Committee member Michael Curis** and seconded by **Committee member Bud Denker**.

GENERAL UPDATES

DNR Law Enforcement Update

Lieutenant Joe Molnar, Michigan State Police (MSP) was present to give a brief update from the Law Enforcement Division; Molnar indicated that the season has been very busy with an increase in traffic reflecting that. There have been a few incidents and some traffic traveling the wrong way on the island.

Committee member Sommer Woods asked if there would be some clarity or a resolution for the signage that is causing people to drive the wrong way on the island. Further stating that she feels that it's wrong for people to be penalized for something that is unclear.

Scott Pratt responded that we are looking to collaborate with MDOT, which should enable us to get some bigger signs in place. We are close to having this resolved with MDOT's assistance.

Committee member Sommer Woods further stated that she understand that it will take some time but feels it is unfair and there needs to be a balance.

Lieutenant Joe Molnar stated that our desire is more to educate, we review the situation with the knowledge that the signage is a concern.

Committee member Sommer Woods continued, stating that I know the DNR is working with MDOT but they should advocate on behalf of your constituents for better signage especially by Shelter 12 and next to the Nature Center.

Park Operations Update

Karis Floyd, Belle Isle Park Manager, noted that the park has been very busy this summer. That the vendors have been doing pretty well. There are a lot of bikes around the park and kayaks on the river. Karis further noted that all of the underground leaks have been repaired and the staff has been very busy.

Karis further introduced two new staff members. Starr Guy has been hired as the Belle Isle Janitor and Allison Bryan as a new Belle Isle Park Ranger. There will also be another janitor and Ranger hired within the next week for Belle Isle Park as well as another Ranger hired for Milliken.

Committee member Sommer Woods questioned why there are still backups and congestion when getting onto Belle Isle now that the Grand Prix is over?

Karis Floyd responded that the park gets over 2 million visitors so realistically there may be some backups. Some people have quite a few questions that need to be addressed and that can hold the line up. We are looking to put 1 or 2 employees in the paddock area and have those customers directed that way when they have questions to help alleviate that issue. We are also working in conjunction with MDOT to find ways to bring in better signage and markings on the roadways to direct traffic properly.

Chair Michelle Hodges indicated that she often hears talk about trash management. Would you like to talk about the situation with the dumpsters and just how trash is managed on the island just so folks can understand the process?

Karis Floyd responded that recently we have run into a problem with our vendor when they stopped coming to the island to pick up the trash. We have held several meetings with that vendor and we have added additional trash containers. Beginning next year there will be more pickups and the trash container have been repaired so there will be recycling of trash. Karis also stated that you will not see any additional containers on the island as those will be located behind the shop. Karis further stated that 4 million guests on the island brings a lot of trash so those are the provisions we set in place to handle the additional refuse.

Committee member Sommer Woods questions who the vendor is?

Karis Floyd responded that the Farrow Group is the current vendor

Infrastructure Updates

Amanda Hertl, Urban Field Planner, provided a written update on the infrastructure projects; the update was included in committee member's packets. Hertl noted some of the highlights as follows:

- **Internal Affairs/Radio Building**
This project is complete. This building has a new roof, as well as new decking in the office and garage sections of the building. Structural repairs around the door and window lentils are complete.

WTA Architects has been selected as the consultant for the rehabilitation of the Internal Affairs building; to be used for the park customer service center and offices.

WTA has completed conceptual plans for the offices and a final office layout will be submitted for review in two weeks. Improvements will bring the building up to the current standard requirements for office space. New improvements will include; new electric service within the building, accessible bathrooms, reorganizing space and garage work space improvements. Construction is expected to begin spring 2018.

- **Police Station HQ**

Contract work to replace the roof has been completed. Additional work has been authorized to complete the repointing of stonework around the exterior of the building. This work was not included in the original scope of work; the balance of funds will be utilized for these repairs.

- **Casino**
Roof and structural repairs, part of the original contract work is complete. FH Martin is finishing additional repairs to the roof; replacing additional cracked tiles that were discovered during construction to assist with weatherproofing the building. The new fire suppression and alarm systems are complete and operational.
- **Flynn Pavilion and White House**
Contractor is currently completing punch list items.
- **Athletic Complex Renovation**
WCI has started mobilizing on the project site and is currently providing the submittals for the athletic fields. Work is expected to begin on the ballfields the week of August 14, 2017. The scheduled project completion date is October 20, 2017. Items to be addressed are; top dressing outfields, providing new infield surface, fencing for two fields on the north side and repairs to the handball building.
- **Shelter 9 Shoreline Fishing Improvement**
This project has a delayed completion date due to availability of materials from the railing manufacturer. The rails are expected to be delivered to the site around August 20, 2017, pushing the completion date back approximately 2 months. Genoa Contracting has completed concrete replacement along the shoreline. The following outstanding work items were noted: completing sidewalk concrete work for ADA access to the shoreline from the parking areas, replacing HMA for ADA parking spaces in the Dossin parking lot, railing and bench installation
- **Belle Isle Aquarium and Anna Scripps Whitcomb Conservatory**
A draft of the structural (both BIA and ASWC) and ventilation (ASWC) report has been submitted for review. The PRD staff and consultants are in the process of reviewing the ventilation report. A finalized report and construction documents for improvements will follow.
- **Picnic Shelter Restoration of Shelter 2, 5 and 6**
The floors in shelters 5 and 6 have been replaced. This fall the following items are expected to be completed for shelters 5 and 6; ADA parking, ADA access, new grills, new shingles and paint. Shelter 2 will also receive a new sidewalk, roof and fresh paint.

Upcoming Infrastructure Items

- **Iron Belle Trailhead Development**
A consultant walk through is scheduled for August 25, 2017, with construction to begin in 2018.
- **Boat Access Site (BAS) Feasibility Study**
A consultant walk-through took place on August 10, 2017

- **Wet-Mesic Flatwoods Habitat Restoration Plan**
The consultant was selected on August 7, 2017 and will be announced soon. Project completion for the grant requirement is September 2018.
- **Island Wide Stormwater Utility Assessment and Maintenance**
Initial project program meeting to be scheduled for May 30, 2018.

Outreach and Upcoming Events

Darlisa Rickman, Outreach and Events Coordinator, shared that we are just about halfway through the season but we still have a long way to go. We have had many exciting events this season including the highly successful kite festival, the art fair and countless other company hosted events such as 5k runs, walk-a-thons, youth connection events, moonlight paddle boarding and many other activities. A listing of the upcoming events can be found on the website. Please also note that some events are free to the public while others require a fee for admission.

Darlisa introduced **Brittany Sanders**, Community Coordinator Belle Isle Conservancy. Brittany and I work very closely together. Brittany assists us with marketing our events and sharing the details with the community about what happens at the park.

Brittany Sanders shared that they produce a newsletter every month called the Belle Isle Beat. We distribute these cards throughout the City of Detroit and we send them out digitally. If you are interested in joining our email list please submit your information to me today and I will add you to our list. The Belle Isle Beat is a one page newsletter sharing the public programming and events that happen on the island every month. Every month I email the Nature Center, the Yacht Club, the Riverside Kayak Connection, the Dossin Great Lakes Museum etc. to inquire from all of the islands tenants what they have going on for the month. This enables me to engage the community and offer options for new activities to explore on the island. The newsletter is a very useful tool for the community as many people are not aware of the variety of activities hosted here at Belle Isle. Some upcoming events are listed below:

- This Saturday, August 19, from 10 a.m. – 2 p.m. the 11th Annual Bee fest will be held at the Nature Center.
- The Boat Club has the Havana Nights fundraiser coming up on Saturday evening, August 19 from 7 p.m. – 12 a.m. The cost is \$75.00 per ticket.
- The Boat Club is hosting the Hydroplane event the weekend of 8/25-8/27. The cost is \$20.00 for adults and \$5.00 for children 12 or younger.

The last event to be held the month of August will be the 2nd Annual Belle Isle Soup. This event is a partnership between the DNR, the Belle Isle Conservancy and Detroit Soup. A \$5.00 donation is suggested but no one is turned away. This is an opportunity for people to pitch an idea that they would like to bring to the park.

The ideas are then put to a vote and whoever receives the most votes is deemed the winner. They are then awarded the money that was raised. The winner of last year's event came away with almost \$1000.00 dollars. The event will be held on August 31, 2017 from 5:30 p.m. to 8 p.m. at the cricket field; located next to the Casino. All the proposals for this year have been accepted and the local Church of the Messiah will be performing at our family friendly event as well.

We have partnered with the Detroit Historical Society to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the uprising of 1967, Belle Isle played an unfortunate role in this event at the point as it was used as a temporary jailhouse. We are looking for designers to come in and do a temporary installation for us at the Carillon Tower. We would like to have a long table and corresponding chairs made out of wood with 67 wind chimes. We received an online comment that we are commemorating Belle Isle as a jailhouse; I would like to emphasize that we are not. We are partnering with the Detroit Historical Society to commemorate this tumultuous time. We want to take a sobering look at the role that Belle Isle played, but also make way for peace, healing and reconciliation. The purpose of the table is to encourage communication between people of all different walks of life and to continue to break down those barriers.

Belle Isle Conservancy Update

Chair Hodges offered congratulations to Brittany Sanders on her upcoming nuptials. Chair Hodges also welcomed new team member Dana Frost; Dana will be working on marketing and communications, project management and retail operations.

Chair Hodges also spoke about The Greater and Greener conference held in the Twin Cities. There were two conservancy members and two DNR representatives who traveled together to this conference where they learned a lot about park management.

The "Sunset at the Scott" was another very successful event; the purpose of the event is to restore the Pewabic tile at the Scott Fountain. Michelle offered thanks to the DNR team for their help in facilitating that event.

We also have the anti-littering campaign that's underway under the leadership of Genevieve Nowak and employee that the conservancy shares with the DNR. Special cans are located around the park reflecting the campaign. Many thanks to our corporate supporters, REI being one of our primary supporters.

Other items of note are:

- The Aquariums birthday is this Saturday August 19, 2017. There will be a day long series of events
- On September 12, 2017 "The Garden Party" will be held which is one of the most beautiful nights of the year. We hope you will join us.
- On October 12, 2017 the "Polish the Jewel" luncheon will be held.

PUBLIC COMMENTS (3 minutes each)

Belinda Aberle	A Detroit resident who is not in favor of the Grand Prix and would like to see it moved to a venue that can support it and would like to see an environmental impact study conducted.
Kevin Hennessey	Strongly dislikes the concrete paddock, feels it is an eyesore and is vehemently against the Grand Prix being hosted on the island.
Alberta Rayford	Expressed issues and concerns about shelter reservations for a family reunion.
Stephanie Donaldson	Gave an overview of Senior Power Days Events and thanked the Yacht Club for hosting one of the events.
Michael Betzold	Asserted that he vehemently opposes the Grand Prix. Questions the benefits of the Grand Prix and feels there is no documentation to support the claim of \$47 million. Would like an environmental impact study conducted.
Thomas Allenson	Interested in the re-investment in park infrastructure, supporting natural habitat restoration, recreation facilities and environmental education. Mr. Allenson has been a volunteer at the Belle Isle Nature Center for a little over a year
Carol Rhodes	Feels the one way streets can be improved upon and that the curb cut outs are a nuisance. Feels the Grand Prix infrastructure is scarring the landscape of the park. Also would like to bring attention to charcoal being dumped near trees and the Grand Prix moving off the island.
Mary Ellen Howard	Concerned with the negative impact of the Grand Prix on the ecosystem of Belle Isle. Would like the DNR to do an environmental impact study. Would also like to see more picnic tables out on the island.
Patty Fedewa	Would like to see the Grand Prix moved off the island
Mac Farr	After reviewing the contract wants the Grand Prix to cut their time to 1 week for set up and 1 week for take down.
Diane Cheklich Detroit Audubon	Feels that the Grand Prix is in direct conflict with nature would like an environmental study to be conducted.

Regina Kupar Stated she opposed the Grand Prix on Belle Isle, feels DNR should require an Environmental Impact Study for the race if pursuing contract negotiations for continuation of the race. Feels there is still a need to improve fishing piers.

Sandra Novacek Feels voice amplification is needed for both the committee and attendees who wish to speak. Belle Isle is a premier park not a racetrack. Feels the Grand Prix is in direct conflict with the mission of the DNR and Belle Isle Conservancy as well as the concrete paddock, commercialization and long term takeover of public green space. Opposes the race being held on Belle Isle not the race itself.

COMMITTEE MEMBER ITEMS

Reverend Lonnie Peek Is curious about the high grass around the lighthouse and why it was not regularly cut. Also would like to know the status of the picnic tables.

Karis Floyd responded that the grass is on a cutting schedule and certain areas can only be maintained at certain times as this is a breeding area for birds.

Michael Curis Commended the Reverend Lonnie Peek on being an activist and great leader and example in the community.

Bud Denker Commented on the great turnout for this session of BIPAC.

Sommer Woods Thanked the Yacht Club for their support of the seniors and their events. Stated she feels that Darlisa, Belle Isle Events Coordinator needs additional manpower in her office. Stating she feels it is unfair for Darlisa to have to have to respond to correspondence even on her vacations. Stated she still has concerns about the traffic and one way signs on Belle Isle. Would also like for others to be more aware of wording when describing their personal vision for Belle Isle and Detroit. Really enjoyed the kite festival.

Scott Pratt responded that we are currently working to implement a computer program to help ease the burden of the event planning department and increase the communication aspect.

Michelle Hodges Next meeting to be held on September 21, 2017 at the Flynn Pavilion

Meeting Concluded: 8:15 p.m.

NEXT REGULAR MEETING:

September 21, 2017

Flynn Pavilion

Belle Isle Park

Detroit, MI 48207

9:00 a.m. – 11:00 am.

Approved: _____
Michele Hodges

Ronald A. Olson, Chief

Date: _____

*Approved at November 17, 2017 meeting. See minutes