

MINUTES

BELLE ISLE PARK ADVISORY COMMITTEE

June 26, 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 (arrived at 9:30 a.m.)
Michael Curis
Bud Denker
Sommer Woods

Belle Isle Park Advisory Committee Members Absent

Bryan Barnhill
Alicia Minter

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
Lt. Nathan McQueen III, Michigan State Police
Lt. David Malloch, DNR Conservation Officer
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 May 22, 2014, Minutes

Committee member **Denker** made a motion that minutes of the May 22, 2014, meeting be approved as submitted. Committee member **Curis** seconded the motion, and it passed on a vote of 4-0 by the committee members present.

Law Enforcement Update

DNR Conservation Officer **Lt. David Malloch** reported that there were no incidents to report during the two major events on the island, i.e., the Grand Prix and fireworks. **Malloch** reported further that during May, DNR law enforcement had a total of 2,800 contacts with the public, which included taking 45 complaints, making 37 arrests, writing 36 tickets, and giving 341 warnings. **Malloch** added that to date during June, there have been 3,000 contacts, 34 complaints, 20 arrests, 22 tickets, and 198 warnings.

Committee member **Denker** asked what “contact” means. **Malloch** explained that contacts include any interaction with the public, including just walking around talking with park visitors, checking on anglers, talking with individuals who approach law enforcement with questions, etc.

MSP Lt. Nathan McQueen noted that there was nothing significant to report for the two arrests during the fireworks event. **McQueen** reported that since February to present time, the MSP has made 845 traffic stops, resulting in 85 citations, and 777 verbal warnings. He added that 16 felons and 67 fugitives (misdemeanor warrants) have been arrested, and there have been seven firearms complaints. **McQueen** also noted that the MSP has received numerous compliments about the increased safety on the island and have been praised for their great public relations, especially with children.

Olson complimented the MSP for their interactions with citizens. **McQueen** said law enforcement’s job is community policing on the island, and they want citizens to have a positive reaction/interaction with police.

Committee member **Woods** asked if the MSP presence on Belle Isle is permanent and if the MSP are in all Michigan’s state parks or just Belle Isle.

Olson answered that law enforcement on Belle Isle is a joint effort between the Michigan State Police and DNR conservation officers. He went on to say that through this continuing teamwork, city of Detroit police officers are freed up for city business. **Olson** also indicated that MSP troopers assist in all Michigan state parks when needed.

Committee member **Denker** applauded the policing of Belle Isle and commended law enforcement for raising the safety aspect of the island. He also noted that the cleanliness of Belle Isle has increased dramatically and feels park personnel are doing a terrific job.

Public Comment

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

Donald Green, Detroit resident, said he thinks Belle Isle is a mess because of the Grand Prix and talked about the lawsuit that was filed to stop the Grand Prix from running on Belle Isle. **Green** feels the Grand Prix should not be issued a special permit.

Helen Gentry, Detroit resident, said she appeared before **Judge Daphne Curtis** to obtain an injunction to stop the Grand Prix on Belle Isle. She distributed a document that had been filed with the court, alleging that the Grand Prix and the Intelligent Transport Systems 21st World Congress (scheduled for the island September 7-11, 2014) are not special events and, therefore, should not be issued special event permits by the DNR. **Gentry** feels the events have damaged Belle Isle and should not be allowed. **Gentry** said the case was dismissed, with prejudice, by **Judge Curtis**.

Linda Bain, Detroit resident, said she is concerned that the public isn't being kept informed of things happening on Belle Isle. She feels slighted and thinks there should be better communication with citizens, including nonprofits and other organizations. **Bain** said she did not want to see the state take over management of the park and does not want the urban feel of the park changed. **Bain** also thinks that both Belle Isle Park and Milliken State Park are dirty.

General Updates – Ron Olson

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

- **Olson** and **Scott Pratt** road bicycles from downtown Detroit to the west end of Belle Isle with **Ron Scott** and a group of approximately 300 cyclists.
- **Olson** introduced **Todd Scott**, Detroit Greenways Coalition coordinator for the Michigan Trails and Greenways Alliance, who promotes cycling in the city and on Belle Isle.
- A waste management plan is in place, road improvements continue to be made, and DTE continues to work on the lighting system.
- Pipes are being repaired for a water slide, and vendors for food, canoes and kayaks rentals, bicycle rentals, etc. are being worked out.

Committee members **Peek** and **Woods** asked for an overview of vendors, including how many are minority owned and what are the hours and locations. **Olson** said a list will be compiled and furnished to committee members.

Robocop Statue

Jerry Paffendorf, founder and CEO of Loveland Technologies, and teammate **Brandon Hughes** explained a proposal to install on Belle Isle a 10-foot tall bronze Robocop statue being developed by sculptor Giorgio Gikas, founder and president of Detroit-based Venus Bronze Works. **Paffendorf** explained that a location is being sought and the official application process to place the statue on the island is being commenced. Committee member **Peek** expressed his concern about who would maintain the statue and the cost for the maintenance. **Olson** clarified that no decision has been made, yet, whether the statue belongs on the island and said logistics need to be taken into consideration. Chairman **Hodges** said a decision-making process needs to be established to review the plan and commit to the next step.

Community Outreach Report

Committee Chair **Hodges** began her community outreach report by commenting that she understands the need for more meetings with law enforcement and a greater effort made to reach out to the public for better community education. She reported that committee members and DNR staff members are continuing to meet with community leaders and stakeholders and are working to refine tactics to engage the community. **Erica Hill**,

volunteer coordinator for the Belle Isle Conservancy and the DNR, added that Belle Isle Park representatives will be reaching out by going to community groups for discussion.

Introduction of Urban Parks Specialists

Olson introduced **Daniel Biederman**, president and co-founder of the Biederman Redevelopment Ventures Corporation (BRV). BRV specializes in creating and revitalizing urban parks and plazas and is credited with the successful turnaround of Bryant Park in New York City as well as working with Central Park, which is similar in size to Belle Isle. **Olson** said the success of the Bryant Park project is a great redevelopment model in the effort to restore Belle Isle.

Introduction of Belle Isle Team Members

Mike Tyrell, DNR metro-district supervisor, introduced DNR team members for Belle Isle, including **Joe Hall**, responsible for day-to-day park operations; **Karis Floyd**, acting manager of Belle Isle; **Terri Conner**; **Jacob Brown**, lead worker; **Darlisa Rickman**, event outreach coordinator; and **Eric Hill**, volunteer coordinator shared by the DNR and the Belle Isle Conservancy.

Chair **Hodges** also introduced Belle Isle Conservancy employee **Katy Wyerman**.

Major Events, Reservations and General Updates

Grand Prix – **Ron Olson** introduced **Charles Burns**, general manager of the Grand Prix, who reported that the Grand Prix was a great event that brought 110,000 people to the island and had excellent world media coverage to showcase Belle Isle Park and the city of Detroit. **Burns** said the Grand Prix organization continues to work to improve and preserve Belle Isle, including cleaning up the mud by putting down wood chips and planting grass seed as well as fixing drainage issues. The Grand Prix's economic benefit to the area of \$46 million was noted.

Denker reported that every drain in the 80-year-old system on the island has been videotaped, and problems such as clogged and collapsed drains have been found. He said to dig out old and put in new tiles will take tens of thousands of dollars. **Burns** added that it will take a while, because they want to do it right.

Metro Detroit Youth Day – **Olson** said that over 30,000 youth will be on Belle Isle July 9 for Metro Youth Day.

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Committee Member Comments, Reports and Announcements

Rev. Peek gave an update on the summer "choir fest" proposal, stating that the concept is moving forward, however, the first concert is being moved back to July. He indicated two choirs have committed but one more is needed, and he is working on public relations for the events.

Denker called awareness to the grants **Ron Olson** and the DNR have obtained for the island, which is in the millions of dollars, all new money for Belle Isle. **Denker** offered his thanks for the great effort.

Chair **Hodges** said she had a very solid meeting with **Ron Scott**, president of the Detroit Coalition Against Police Brutality, to discuss concerns as well as opportunities for Belle Isle. **Scott** mentioned including possible concerts, a cycling program, and continuing the youth voice on the island. He said a good motto is “Search for unity; search for honesty.”

Announcements

Hodges announced that the next advisory committee meeting is scheduled for Thursday, July 24, 2014, at the Flynn Pavilion on Belle Isle.

Adjournment

A motion to adjourn was made by **Curis**, seconded by **Peek**, and passed unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 10:40 a.m.

APPROVED: Date _____

Michele Hodges
BIPAC Chairperson

Ron Olson
DNR Parks and Recreation Division Chief