

**Meeting Reference Notes and Summary**  
**BELLE ISLE PARK ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

April 24, 2014

Dossin Great Lakes Museum  
100 Strand 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

**Absent members of Belle Park Advisory Committee**

Bryan Barnhill  
Bud Denker  
Alicia Minter  
Sommer Woods

**Present for Department of Natural Resources (DNR) staff**

Ron Olson  
Scott Pratt  
Mike Terrell  
DNR Law Enforcement Division F/Lt. David Malloch  
Michigan State Police Lt. Bob Hendrix  
Other department staff

Committee Chair **Michele Hodges** announced that since there was not a quorum of committee members present by 9:15 a.m., a business meeting would not be called to order. Therefore, following is a summary of updates and discussions.

**Approval of March 27, 2014, Minutes**

Due to lack of a quorum, approval of minutes from the March 27, 2014, BIPAC meeting was postponed until the May 22, 2014, meeting.

**General Updates by Chair Hodges**

Chair **Hodges** presented updates on several issues, including the replanting of trees on the island and the planting of over 80,000 daffodil bulbs to date. She said she is impressed by the DNR leadership team. She thanked Doug Dossin and the Detroit Historical Society for hosting the "Spring Into Belle Isle" fundraising event held at the Dossin Great Lakes Museum May 3.

### **Volunteer Coordinator**

Chair **Hodges** introduced **Erica Hill** as the new volunteer coordinator for the Belle Isle Park Advisory Committee. **Hodges** noted that **Hill** has worked for three Detroit mayors and is the current executive assistant to the chief of staff. She is a graduate of Wayne State University and was chosen from approximately 300 resumes.

### **ITS World Congress Transportation Event**

**Ron Olson**, chief of the DNR Parks and Recreation Division, and **Bill Shreck**, acting communications director with the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT), talked about the 21st World Congress on Intelligent Transport Systems (ITS) event being held in Detroit September 7-11, 2014, bringing together more than 10,000 of the world's leading transportation policy makers, technology, and business professionals. They explained that the event is held every three years in North America. **Olson** explained that because of some bad communications, it had been reported the park would be closed to the public during the event. However, that is not the case; the park will not be closed and that accessibility to key areas of the island park will remain open. He said there would be some minimal, intermittent disruption of traffic on roads on the western end of the island, but the park is there first for the public. He continued that the information on what to expect during the September event will be communicated to the public.

Committee member **Curis** thanked **Olson** for his explanation, however, noted that the committee needs to have early notice of when other events will be happening on the island. He asked that the committee be given prior notice in the future. **Olson** said he didn't know of any future events of this magnitude but would definitely check and advise the committee of smaller events as well, including fundraising runs, etc.

### **Law Enforcement Update**

F/Lt. **David Malloch** of the DNR Law Enforcement Division and Michigan State Police Lt. **Bob Hendrix** provided a brief update, stating that debriefing and planning meetings are being held on Belle Isle once a week. **Malloch** said that drivers not obeying the 25 mph speed limit is a big concern. He stated that they are working with the Michigan Department of Transportation to get better speed limit signage placed on the roadways, as well as better signage to deal with parking issues. **Hendricks** reported that during the period from February 1 to April 20, 2014, 226 traffic stops were made, but only 23 tickets were written; 203 verbal warnings were given; 34 misdemeanors noted; 4 felons and 25 fugitives arrested; and 1 gun confiscated.

It was also noted that patrols will continue 24-hours-a-day, 7-days-a-week to make a safer environment on the island.

### **General Updates**

**Olson** thanked the DNR technology staff for their assistance and noted that all BIPAC documents are posted on the website at [www.belleislepark.org](http://www.belleislepark.org).

**Olson** announced that Michigan Cares for Tourism, a volunteer organization, has organized a cleanup project, which will be held on the Island May 9, calling together hundreds of tourism professional from across the state to help restore different areas of Belle Isle.

**Olson** also reported that several restrooms, including the one in the casino, have been completed, which included restoring the heating system. Also in the casino, the elevator is operational and certified, the fire alarms are up to code, and asbestos tiles are being removed and replaced.

Further, exterior lighting on the island is being replaced with LED bulbs, and the DNR has been working with DTE on a transitional upgraded and improved public safety/security lighting system, and remaining tree stumps are being ground by the “up north” DNR crew, and wood debris on the island will be removed.

**Olson** continued with his report stating that the “white house” will be restored and become the public safety building for law enforcement. Administrative staff will move to the welcome center at the park entrance, where Recreation Passports will be available for purchase.

He went on to say that recruiting is underway for an outreach event coordinator to coordinate events on the island, and interviews for a park manager will begin soon. Also, 18 individuals will be hired for short-term work on the island this summer. Outreach will be continued, including working with the YMCA to offer free swimming lessons this summer and working on a cohesive plan for operating the beach.

**Olson** reported that a bid for refuse service has been awarded, and bids for grass-mowing and staff to operate concessions for the slides are out. He said tree planting will commence soon, and geese management is working with DNR Wildlife to roundup and relocate the overpopulation of geese on the island.

**Olson** said the golf course is open now, and screen fencing will be erected to hide the old zoo buildings until it is decided what to do with them.

**Scott Pratt** with the DNR Parks and Recreation Division said the fountain will be operational every weekend after the Grand Prix, and the department is working on contracting with a group to operate the fountain.

**Olson** reported that sales of the Recreation Passport are up 16.5 percent in the city of Detroit, and it’s the largest participation of any jurisdiction in the state. People are responding.

Vice Chair **Peek** asked about emergency phones on the riverfront. **Olson** said call boxes and cameras will be placed.

**Peek** also asked **Olson** to provide a written report of his updates. **Olson** said he will provide a written report with bullet points either at or prior to all future BIPAC meetings. **Olson** said calendar of events also will be provided in the future.

\* \* \*

### **Public Comment**

**Bruce Ross**, former DNR field coordinator, thanked law enforcement for the good job they're doing on the island.

**Donald Preen** (?) commented on an April 20, 2014, Detroit Free Press article by John Gallagher titled, "Reimagining Detroit: Belle Isle should be a development-free zone."

**Mary Bohling**, sea grant educator, MI Sea Grant, Southgate, commented on habitat improvements to the south fishing pier on the Blue Heron Lagoon on the island. She said it's been great working with **Terri Conner** and the DNR.

**Barb Martin**, president of the Crane Street Block Club Women's Committee, Detroit, asked if the restrooms would be "manned" and if beach hours would be posted. **Olson** responded that there wouldn't be someone on site at all times, but the restrooms would be cleaned daily. He also said that beach hours will be posted.

Mr. **Wagner** (?) spoke on the No Child Left Inside Program. He mentioned that there was a tremendous amount of interest from Detroit Public Schools to get to Belle Isle. He said he is making it his mission to get more kids outside.

### **Committee Reports**

Vice Chair **Peek** discussed a proposal for a summer choir fest on the island, sponsored by the BIPAC. He suggested that on one Sunday per month during the months of June, July and August, two choirs from Detroit and two choirs from the suburbs be invited to perform at the Scott Fountain, and that each choir be given 15 minutes for their performance. Both **Hodges** and **Olson** think it's a fabulous idea, with **Olson** saying it is an excellent opportunity for a symbol of the rise-up of Belle Isle and what it represents. A group representing Belle Isle, including **Michelle Hodges**, **Rev. Peek**, **Michael Curis** and **Ron Olson**) will present the proposal at a May 13 meeting of the Council of Baptist Pastors of Detroit. The council meeting will include approximately 100 congregation pastors from throughout the city.

### **Announcements**

**Hodges** announced that the next advisory committee meeting is scheduled for Thursday, May 22, 2014, with a location to be determined.