

**MINUTES**  
**Belle Isle Park Advisory Committee Meeting**

Thursday, May 19, 2022  
Location: Teleconference

**Meeting began at 9:00 a.m.**  
Quorum established at 9:14 a.m.

**PRESENT FOR BIPAC**

Attending remotely:

Michele Hodges; Grosse Pointe Park, Michigan  
Michael Curis; Detroit, Michigan  
Bud Denker; Bloomfield Hills, Michigan  
Lonnie Peek; Detroit, Michigan  
Sommer Woods; Atlanta, Georgia

**EXECUSED**

Brad Dick; Detroit, Michigan

**DNR STAFF PRESENT**

Ron Olson, Chief  
Scott Pratt  
Karis Floyd  
Mike Terrell  
Joel Thomas  
Amanda Treadwell  
Lt. Todd Szyska  
Sgt. Damon Owens  
Tom Bissett  
Lakisha Dansby  
Barbara Graves

**OTHERS PRESENT**

Meredith Simpson, Oudolf Garden Detroit  
Lance Couturier, MSP  
Ayo Thomas, Belle Isle Conservancy  
Aly Melnik, Belle Isle Conservancy  
Amy Greene, Nature Center Director, Detroit Zoological Society

**REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

**Approval of Minutes for April 28, 2022**

Moved by: **Michael Curis**  
Seconded by: **Lonnie Peek**

## **PRESENTATION**

Meredith Simpson, Oudolf Garden Detroit, gave a presentation about Detroit's newest public garden, The Oudolf Garden. Oudolf Garden Detroit is an all-volunteer group collaborating with friends of the Oudolf Garden. They are a 501 (c) (3) organization conceived by the Garden Club of Michigan. Oudolf Garden Detroit differs from other public Oudolf gardens in that it is run by an all-volunteer Grounds Crew.

Dutch designer Piet Oudolf designed this naturalistic, three-acre, public garden that sits in front of the Nancy Brown Peace Carillon on Belle Isle. There is a maintenance endowment with the Community Foundation that is currently at about 2.5 million and growing to ensure that the garden is maintained to the high standards in Piet's vision. There is always a need for volunteers.

### **Parks and Recreation – Ron Olson, PRD**

The Oudolf partnership is a great partnership that has exceeded what was expected.

Federal ARPA funds are in place; accounts have been populated and projects on Belle Isle are moving forward with final designs, including the Conservatory and trail work. The challenge is with the boat house; the rowing club is scrambling to arrange a temporary facility to operate from, and conversations are taking place about its future.

The April 26 ribbon cutting ceremony on Belle Isle for the Ralph Wilson Gateway and Trail and the launch of construction for the new Eugene and Elaine C. Driker Trail was successful. The Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation invested in this project and a federal grant was obtained.

### **Park Update - Scott Pratt, Joel Thomas; PRD**

Karis Floyd was welcomed back. The 2021 Belle Isle Annual Report that was presented to the Detroit City Council was summarized, including highlights such staffing, public safety breakdown, traffic and circulation plan and plans in 2022 for shuttle service on the island, and vendors. Capital improvement costs at Belle Isle Park were \$88 million for park improvements, infrastructure investments, and operating expenditures. An employment engagement coordinator will be hired soon to create a pipeline to the surrounding area for recruitment.

The Grand Prix is setting up for their event and park employees are busy with preparations. The public can still get in the park and view sunset point through the weekend. With the nice weather, there is an increase in activity. Lawn maintenance and trash cleanup are at the forefront. They are still looking to hire seasonal staff. People can apply online at <https://www.governmentjobs.com/careers/michigan>, or applications can be obtained from the central office at 99 Pleasure Drive.

**Michael Curis** and **Bud Denker** noted that staff did an amazing job presenting the annual report to the Detroit City Council. The Council seemed very receptive and positive. **Lonnie Peek** asked for the percentage of minorities and Detroiters who are vendors on the island. Scott Pratt

provided that 80% are Detroiters and 11% are from Wayne County. **Chair Hodges** added that they have a Community Engagement committee which includes representatives from the Detroit Economic Growth Corporation and that they plan to utilize the committee as well to make sure that opportunities are available and accessible to everyone. She is also looking for suggestions. **Sommer Woods** believes that a demographic breakdown should be offered to go beyond geographics to know who is not being represented and that it is important to be intentional and have it broken down by minority. Scott asked the committee to provide connectivity to more vendors who would be interested. He will stay connected with Ms. Woods and Rev. Peek to discuss.

**Chair Hodges** gave light to an article about Rev. Peek who returned to Wayne State as an advisor for the same Black student organization he founded nearly 55 years ago. The article can be seen at <https://today.wayne.edu/news/2022/02/24/at-80-the-outspoken-rev-v-lonnie-peek-jr-has-returned-to-wayne-state-as-an-advisor-for-the-very-same-black-student-organization-he-founded-nearly-55-years-ago-46964>.

**Bud Denker** mentioned the announcement that will take place today of the official groundbreaking of the new Lennox Center in 2023 that will be in the A.B. Ford Park in the Jefferson Chalmers neighborhood. Penske Corp. has contributed \$5M to the Jefferson Chalmers community, including providing funding for the new community center.

He also stated that the Scott Fountain was turned on for the first time and that it was important for it to be running for the Grand Prix. Although bittersweet that it will be the last race on the island, they look forward to moving it back to downtown. He gave praise to Letty Azar, the new vice president, community and government affairs for Penske, who has been a ‘blessing to the organization’.

**Rev. Peek** stated that **Bud Denker** and Penske did a ‘heck of a job’ with the Grand Prix and that it has lifted Belle Isle; he knows Bud and Penske have put a lot of work into it. He congratulated them for what they have done and their foresight and futuristic position in going back to downtown.

#### **Law Enforcement Update – Lt. Todd Szyska, Sgt. Damon Owens, DNR Law Division and Lance Courtier, MSP**

Summer shifting has started, and they need more people. They are targeting the metropolitan area for recruitment. They had two new recruits in 2021. The Academy training target date is July 10, 2022.

There has been an issue with people trying to use the Iron Belle Trail as a motor vehicle path, but it is strictly intended for walking, biking, and running.

**Sommer Woods** asked what the department is doing for signing and communication for the Iron Belle Trail. **Amanda Treadwell** said they worked with a MDOT trails coordinator to put together a regulatory signage package for vehicles and trail users and those signs will go at the interfaces and these are the last pieces to finish out the project.

## **Infrastructure Update - Amanda Treadwell, Urban Field Planner (attached)**

### **Belle Isle Conservancy Updates - Michele Hodges, Ayo Thomas**

- The Dossin Great Lakes Maritime exhibit will end on May 31.
- July 24<sup>th</sup> is the Ride of the Century.
- The Nature Center will be closed June 3 – 5 along with the parking lot for the Grand Prix; early closure on June 11 and June 18. Memorial Day, 4<sup>th</sup> of July, and Labor Day will be free admission days. Although closed for renovations, you can go to the website for more information on outdoor programming.
- Aquarium – in partnership with DPSCD Cultural Passport program, has allowed over one hundred field trips for 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> graders, allowing them to visit the various cultural facilities around the island.
- The aquarium is turning 118 years-old and celebrating its 10<sup>th</sup> year of re-opening to the public.
- Spring cleanups are the third Saturday of each month.
- The Conservancy is celebrating its 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary. They are requesting feedback from visitors on what visitor interest or experiences they would like to see around the island.

### **PUBLIC COMMENT**

Karen Ferguson has heard a lot of good things in the meeting. She asked if a shuttle or trolley system is in place and if people will still have the option to drive and park. Scott Pratt replied that people can still take vehicles; the trolleys will be used to transport people around the island. She asked if she could get involved with the boat club and a link was provided to their website at <https://www.dyc.com/membership>.

Gerald Hasspacher said this is a good meeting and interesting. He would like more information on the biking event. Ayo Thomas referred him to the website for the Ride of The Century that will be hosted by this Jason Hall (<https://ridetroit.com/jasonhall>).

Michael Betzold says the park is full of cement and not nature, that nothing has changed in the last two years since he attended a meeting, and that everyone on the committee should resign.

Seana wants more information on the timeline of the boathouse renovations. Scott Pratt said they are waiting for engineering studies to come back. More updates will come at future meetings.

Chris asked about the availability of the boathouse, and as a point of comparison, how long did the athletic shelter take to renovate, and where are the funds coming from to fix it. Scott Pratt said it was about four years for the athletic shelter, and that the two facilities are very different. Hard to place a timeline on it until they get feedback from the engineer.

Patrick Livingston echoes Mr. Betzold's concerns with the park being full of cement. He would like to see the paddock as a welcome center, planted with trees and display historical information. Wants the emergency responders to move their practice activities elsewhere.

Debbie asked if they have considered off-site parking or any charging stations. Also asked if there are considerations of porous concrete and said the boathouse has been deteriorating a long time ago. Chair Hodges said the mobility study will hold a public input session and encouraged her to participate and to connect with Ayo Thomas. Scott Pratt said the mobility study will guide them about charging stations.

### **COMMITTEE COMMENTS**

With no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 11:05 a.m.

### **NEXT REGULAR MEETING:**

**June 16, 2022**

**9:00 a.m.**



# Belle Isle Park Infrastructure Update

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May 19, 2022 Detroit, MI





## Belle Isle Boathouse Assessment

- 4/29/2022 Phase 1 assessment submittal.
  - No Access Recommendation
- Phase 2 to determine critical work scope of required to permit building use.
- Hazardous Material Testing Report.



*Boathouse Ceiling failure location*

**Belle Isle Park Infrastructure Update, May 2022**





# Belle Isle Boathouse Assessment



Photo No. 1 – Roof slab above Lounge 319. Rusted reinforcing and spalled concrete. Note newer red steel.



Photo No. 10 – Terrace roof slab with rusted rebar, spalled concrete.



Photo No. 3 – Bottom chord wood truss over Conference reinforcement. Note knife in rotted wood.

*Interior and exterior roof deterioration*

**Belle Isle Park Infrastructure Update, May 2022**



# Belle Isle Boathouse Assessment



Photo No. 8 – Failed terrace slab viewed from topside.

*Building envelope deterioration*



Photo No. 13 – North terrace, east end, exterior wall



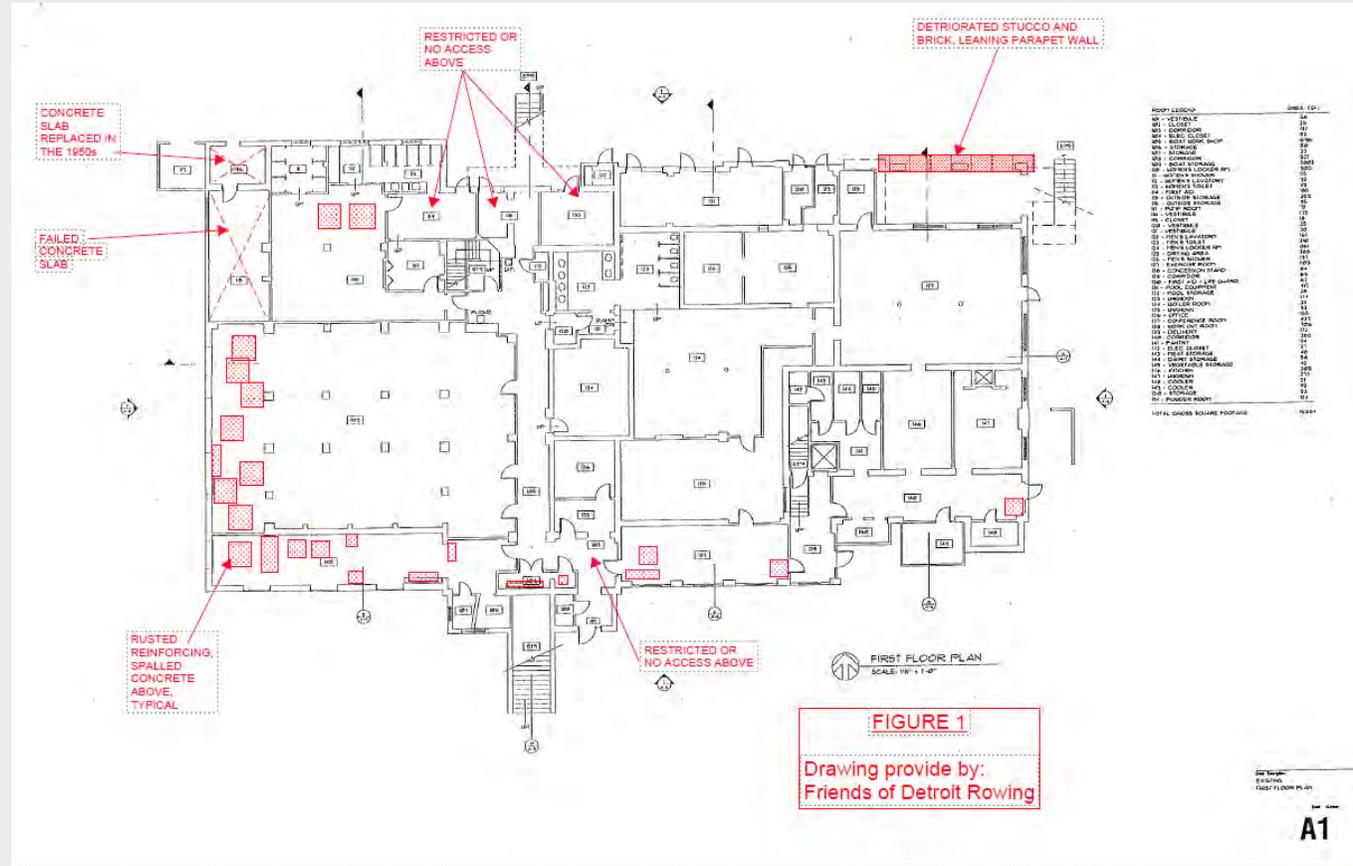
Photo No. 15 – Hole in first floor slab under the north terrace, east end.

**Belle Isle Park Infrastructure Update, May 2022**



# Belle Isle Boathouse Assessment, Phase 2 Assessment

- Cost to stabilize the structure, not allow for access.
- Cost to stabilize the building and have restricted occupancy within the building.
- Complete restoration of the Building (No site restoration).
- Replace or modify one of the existing bridges to allow construction equipment access to the island.



Areas of deterioration in concrete slabs throughout the building



# Belle Isle Athletic Shelter



*Veranda Railing is the final task for current Athletic Shelter Contract*

**Belle Isle Park Infrastructure Update, May 2022**



# Belle Isle Athletic Shelter



*Two new finials installed on building cupolas, original finial on center cupola*



**Belle Isle Park Infrastructure Update, May 2022**