



Belle Isle Park Advisory Committee

Meeting Minutes

Date: March 16, 2023

Time: 9:00 a.m.

Location: Virtual

Meeting began at 9:00 a.m.

No quorum established

Roll Call

Present for BIPAC

Attending remotely:

Michele Hodges; Boston, Massachusetts

Sommer Woods; Detroit, Michigan

Michael Curis; Detroit, Michigan

Rev. Lonnie Peak; Detroit, Michigan

Bud Denker

Unexcused

Brad Dick

DNR Staff Present

Ron Olson, Chief

Tom Bissett

Karis Floyd

Amanda Treadwell

Todd Szyska

Deb Jensen

Scott Pratt

Griselda Trevino

Marie Kaphengst

Barbrea Young

Erika Compton

Barbara Graves

Others Present

Ayo Thomas, Belle Isle Conservancy

Chair Hodges started with a mission moment, focusing on the burgeoning of the daffodils on Belle Isle and Daffodil Day, April 19, which will be celebrated with the yearly luncheon. She thanked Robin Heller for everything she has done on the island with the daffodils.

Chair Hodges said in the future, in order to shorten the length of these meetings, they will be providing both written and verbal updates for the General Updates.

General Updates

Parks and Recreation Update – Ron Olson, Chief, PRD

Chief Olson gave an overview of the needs on the island with the Belle Isle Park Capital Infrastructure report (attached) that covers the priority projects, totaling \$43M in needs. This is the general fund request that was put forth to the legislature for decision this summer. This is different from the \$10M ARPA funds allocated to Belle Isle.

Chair Hodges said the Conservancy is also working on an organized effort to support this general fund request, working closely with the legislators so they fully understand the impact these dollars would have.

PRD Strategic Plan

Deb Jensen, Park Plan Administrator, gave an update on the Parks and Recreation's Strategic Plan which is in final draft form. After staff and stakeholder input was incorporated, the plan was approved by the Chiefs with a few minor changes and will now be presented to the director for signature. The nucleus of the plan consisted of six issues: resource conservation and recreation; environmental sustainability; diversity, equity, inclusion and justice; funding; management and administration; and staffing. It will be used to guide the department in the next five years. The final plan will be added to the DNR website after it is approved and signed.

Park Update – Tom Bissett, Karis Floyd; PRD

Tom and Karis provided key park updates, which included hiring two seasonal rangers, two seasonal general office assistants, 1 seasonal janitor, and 2 seasonal janitors at Milliken. The Fountain continues to receive updates and the plan is to have it back in operation this summer.

Law Update – Lt. Todd Szyska, DNR-LED

The island has been busy. They are still monitoring speed, and he again reminds the public that the speed limit posting is 25 mph.

Infrastructure Updates; Amanda Treadwell, Urban Area Field Planner, DNR

A summary was provided (attached). Amanda added that the Conservatory glass is being removed and the paint is being removed from the steel. A consultant will be out to inspect the steel and has been diligent in repairing the wrap with the weather damage.

Chair Hodges suggested a high-level infrastructure update at future meetings would be beneficial because a lot of people look forward to these updates.

Rev. Peek said he looks forward to Amanda's updates. Michael Curis asked Amanda how she is doing handling projects with the new influx of funds that came in. Amanda said that having the funds to address needed projects in a comprehensive way has made it a lot easier.

Belle Isle Conservancy Updates, Ayo Thomas

- Belle Isle Nature Center is looking to engage with members of the public with focus groups. If you are interested in partnering with the Center to communicate these opportunities with your database, please email Nia Heaston at nia@woodswattseffect.com.
- Tonight from 5 – 7 p.m. is Nature at Night. For more information visit belleislenaturecenter.detroitzoo.org.
- Dossin Great Lakes Museum has postponed Women of the Watch, Keepers of the Light matinee theater performance. Continue to check website for a new date.
- April 22 at 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. is Earth Day Celebration.
- The Belle Isle Conservancy 10-year Impact Report can be found on the website at belleisleconservancy.org/impact.
- Belle Spring Clean Up will be April 22 from 9:30 – 12:30.
- May 6 – 7 will be Koi Festival on the aquarium lawn.

(report attached).

Public Comment

Tales Riedel – Asked about the Strategic Plan that Deb Jensen presented, specifically the safety and feeling welcome aspects and if there will be more

segregation between cars and the people. He feels unsafe and that there is no way for pedestrians to share the roads with the cars.

Amanda Treadwell said a plan is being worked on now to address this issue. Public meetings will take place early this summer for the public. More information can be found at <https://www.michigan.gov/dnr/managing-resources/prd/bip-study>. You can also reach out to Amanda Treadwell, Urban Field Planner, at treadwella@michigan.gov.

Gerald Hasspacher – April 29 will be the next stargazing education venture, as part of the statewide astronomy night. Belle Isle will be featuring telescopes from Wayne State University in the back of the Nature Center and the Michigan Science Center will have a temporary planetarium inside the auditorium where people will be able to walk in and see the stars. They also have many reasons to want to make Belle Isle a Dark Sky Park as they stated three months ago in their presentation to the BIPAC. They hope to move forward with it.

Bill Cheek – He thinks that, overall, the DNR is doing a good job; trash is picked up, grass is getting mowed, things are getting fixed. In terms of the paddock, spending dollars on a welcome center is not necessary right now with so much other needed infrastructure repairs. The fee collection booth and the gridlock it causes is not worth the amount of revenue generated and consideration should be made for an honor system with a dedicated lane or card swipe function. Wayfinding signage and road striping - he is shocked there has been nothing done to address good wayfinding and maps. In front of the Casino needs addition signage and striping. Canal water management – would like consideration for stoplogs in the canal system to allow it to flush. Need to get the boathouse structure figured out before it is a lost cause.

Chair Hodges provided her contact information, hodgesm@belleisleconservancy.com, for anyone who has questions.

With no further business the meeting adjourned at 10:03 a.m.

Next regular meeting:
April 27, 2023
9:00 a.m.
Belle Isle Nature Center



Belle Isle Park Infrastructure Updates

March 16, 2023



Capital Improvements Budget Summary

Total funding for projects underway
\$34,472,658

Total ARPA funded projects
\$15,192,000

- \$12,692,000 ARPA Funds
- \$ 2,500,000 Private Donation (BIC)

Belle Isle Capital Outlay FY 2023 Budget
\$1,250,000

- \$650,000 - Casino Elevator Modernization
- \$110,000 - Motorized & Non- Motorized wayfinding and signage
- \$175,000 - Flynn Window Repairs
- \$315,000 - Casino Loggia Surfacing Repairs

Project Status



■ Engineering ■ Construction ■ On Hold

Project Status by Qty.

- 37% Engineering
- 37% Construction
- 26% On Hold

Anna Scripps Whitcomb Conservatory (ARPA) \$10,000,000

Progress Status:

- Scaffolding, temporary 'floor', and wrap complete
- Dome glass all removed
- Steel abatement for next two weeks
- Contractor has secured adjacent greenhouses that lost glass due to heavy snow from top of dome enclosure.



Interior of dome wrapping, glass removal underway

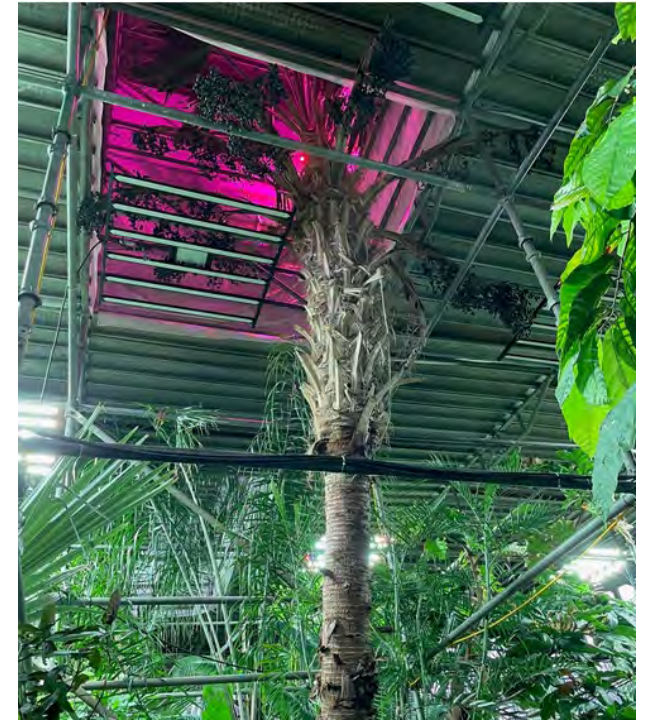
Anna Scripps Whitcomb Conservatory (ARPA)



Ventilation hoses to bag house for hazardous material containment



Sub contractor has had to make several repairs to wrapping due to high winds and snow loads

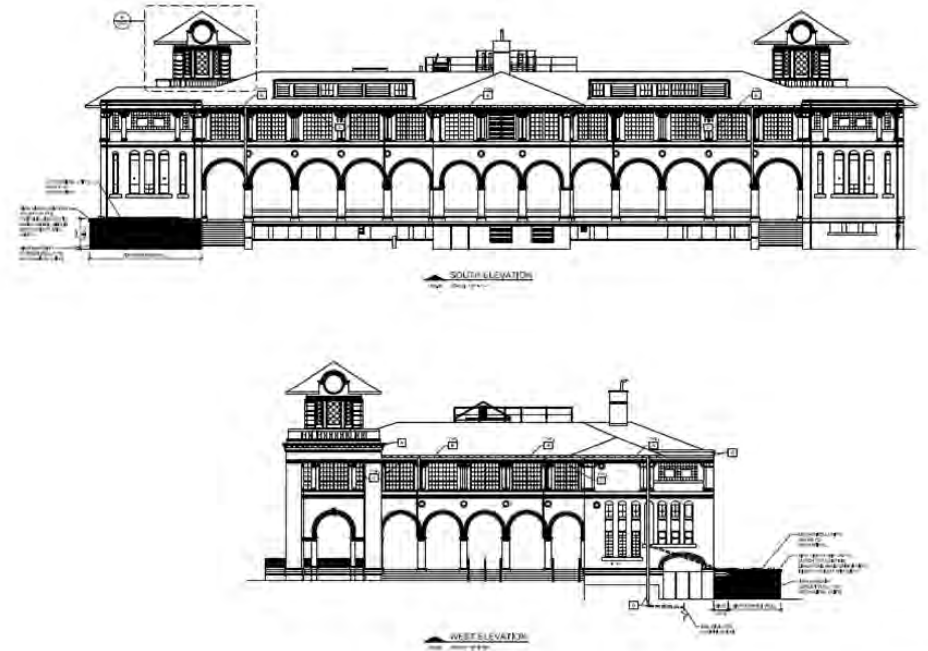


Lighting is on during day for plants in dome.

Belle Isle Casino Roof Replacement (ARPA) \$5,192,000

Progress Status:

- One bid received for project
- Additional ARPA funding approved to award contract
- DTMB Design & Construction working to process work order change and contract documents

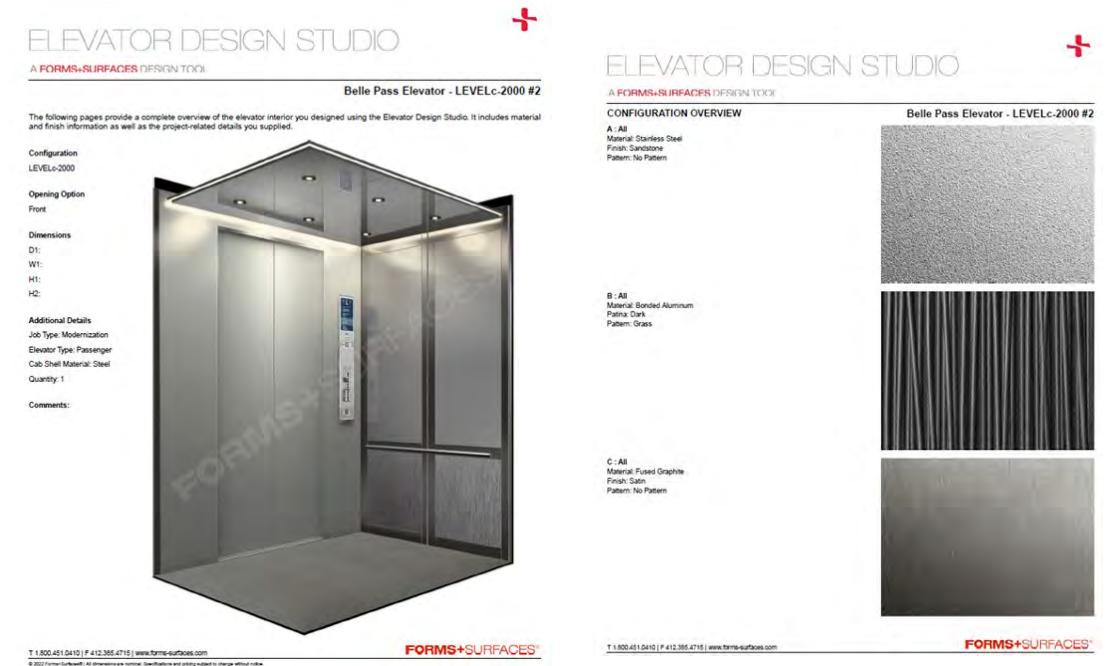


Roof replacement will be ongoing through spring 2024

Belle Isle Casino Elevator Modernization - \$755,000

Progress Status:

- Lowest bid contractor approved for project by architect
- Project schedule to align with Casino roof replacement
- Schedule completion date is spring 2024



Proposed finishes for elevator improvements

Park Hazardous Material Testing & Abatement- \$500,000

Progress Status:

- Consultant team awarded contract
- Project kick-off meeting schedule 3/23/2023
- 22 structures will be assessed for critical structural concerns and hazardous materials
- Schedule completion date fall 2023



A comprehensive report to be submitted and abatement needs in park prioritized for health, safety and welfare of staff and public.

Belle Isle Multimodal Mobility Study

\$960,000

Progress Status:

- Stakeholder Meetings (17) and public survey complete (3,000 participants)
- Analysis summary Appendix of data collection from 2022 submitted.
- Wayfinding & signage consultant on board March 2023
- Project team will begin reviewing strategies recommendations for round#2 of public/stakeholder engagement (early summer 2023)

KEY THEMES COMING OUT OF STAKEHOLDER MEETINGS

#1 Thing We Heard – People LOVE Belle Isle!

Other things we heard:

- **Tollbooths** are a key frustration – take too long, not sure when/if to stop, what do lights mean, what lane should I be in, etc.
- Clear **wayfinding** signage is desired
- **One-way roads** are frustrating, confusing, and inefficient
- **Closures** (or even potential of closures) are impacting vendors, weddings, ability to hold events, not being able to get back on island to pick children up from camps/events, etc.
- There is excitement and support for additional **modes of arrival** – ferry, off-island shuttle, etc.
- Not as much excitement about an **on-island shuttle** (too much stuff, etc)
- Difficult finding **parking at the Beach and near Aquarium/Conservatory**
- Frustrations about the **Passport** – how to get one, should Detroit residents need one, why don't people check for them, etc.
- Traffic safety for **pedestrians crossing** near Beach and Kids Row

Summary of stakeholder and public survey

Belle Isle Boathouse Assessments

\$90,000

Progress Status:

- Structural assessment identified deteriorated and susceptible features of compromised structure – structure & perimeter around building deemed unsafe for occupancy
- Water infiltration over the years has compromised roof/concrete structure and exterior walls
- Hazardous material assessment completed, ACM and LCP identified throughout building



North side of the building compromised by water filtration over the years

Belle Isle Boathouse Site

Progress Status:

- Friends of Detroit Rowing Club has been directed to find alternative programming space to ensure safety of all participants
- Request to build a storage structure on site approved by DNR.
- FODR has reviewed design & permitting process with DNR staff.

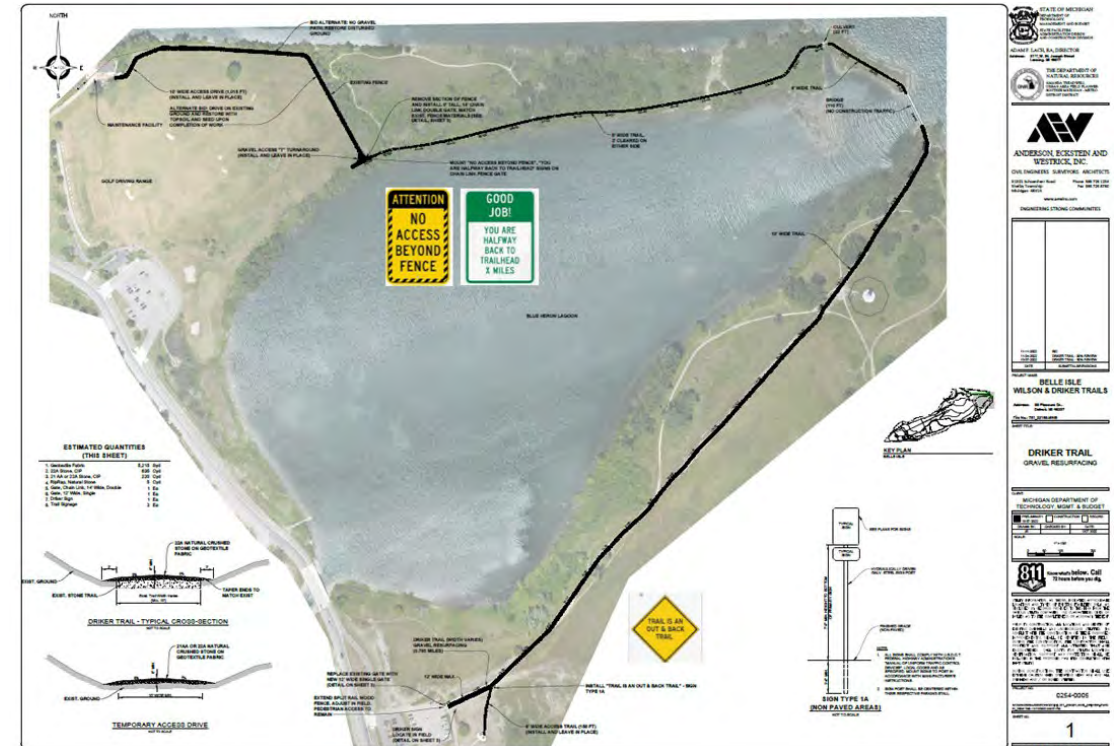


FODR exploring alternative storage options for rowing equipment

Eugene and Elaine C. Driker Trail - \$300,000

Progress Status:

- Project scope will provide for resurfacing crushed limestone trail
- Access drive to North side of Blue Heron Lagoon will be left in place for golf course maintenance.
- New fence and gate to be installed between golf driving range and end of trail



Construction will begin in March/April 2023

Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Trail- \$3,000,000

Progress Status:

- Engineering revisions underway to complete existing Wilson Trail
- Construction to begin in summer 2023
- Once complete the 5.8 mile multi-use trail will circle park perimeter
- Trail design will coordinate with findings of multimodal mobility study to align findings related to pedestrian safety with cross walks, traffic calming recommendations, etc.



Walking/Biking one of the most popular park activities reported in multimodal mobility public survey



March Update



Island Stakeholders & Belle Isle Conservancy Community Engagement

March 16, 2023

BELLE ISLE PARK ADVISORY COMMITTEE
BIC STAKEHOLDER & ENGAGEMENT UPDATE



Island Stakeholder Updates

Oudolf Garden Detroit is a Four Season Garden!

3 Acre Garden inspired by the energy of Detroit after receiving a “love letter from Detroit” from The Garden Club of Michigan (GCM), Piet Oudolf designed this naturalistic public garden on Belle Isle filled with perennials, grasses, shrubs, and trees for their hardiness, durability, and ever-changing textures and colors for enjoyment in all four seasons. Visit anytime the park is open (year-round from 5 a.m.-10 p.m.) (with the exception of special events).

Guided Tours are available by appointment, Monday through Thursday, for groups of 25 or more individuals. (Suggested \$5 donation)

Visit oudolfgardendetroit.org for more info.



Island Stakeholder Updates

The Belle Isle Nature Center wants to hear from you!
Open 10:00 AM - 5:00 PM Daily

- Earn a \$100 VISA gift card when you volunteer to participate in our focus groups. Please note you must complete two (2) meetings, no more than 60 minutes each — one virtual AND one in person — to receive the card.
- Include and distribute our survey via your email or newsletter database.
- Invite us to your community/group meeting for a brief presentation, where we will provide additional information on what's happening at the Nature Center.

If you are interested in partnering with the Center to communicate these opportunities with your database, please email Nia Heaston at nia@woodswattseffect.com.

Tonight! 5:00 - 7:00 PM Nature At Night

March 26 11: 00 AM - 3:00 PM Mudpuppypalooza

April 22 11:00 AM - 3:00 PM Green Day

Visit belleislenaturecenter.detroitzoo.org for more info.



Island Stakeholder Updates

Dossin Great Lakes Museum (Detroit Historical Society)

Open Friday-Sunday 10:00 am - 5:00 pm

Admission: Free Under 6, \$5 for adults and Children

\$20 for a single household (up to 6 parents and children)

For more information, visit detroithistorical.org.

POSTPONED: Postponed - Women of the Watch, Keepers of the Light:
Matinee Theater Performance originally scheduled for March 18 2023 | 2:00pm
to 4:00pm... Please continue to check the website for a new date.

April 22 10:00 AM -5:00 PM Earth Day Celebration in partnership with the
MSU Science Festival

Belle Isle Conservancy Updates



✓ MDNR TEXT SERVICE REMINDER

Text GEM to 80888 for real-time updates about Belle Isle, island closures, and more!

✓ Reminders

Ten Year Impact Report Now Available

Belle Isle Aquarium Hours
10:00 AM-4:00 PM Friday -Sunday

Call for Artists and Designers | March 31st Deadline

New Volunteer Orientation March 25
Save The Date

- April 22, 2023
 - 9:30- 12:30 Belle Isle Spring Clean Up
 - Education Dock Programming
- May 5-7, Koi Festival - Belle Isle Aquarium Lawn

Visit www.belleisleconservancy.org for more information.

