



# Belle Isle Park Advisory Committee

## Meeting Minutes

Date: May 18, 2023

Time: 9:00 a.m.

Location: Virtual

**Meeting began at 9:00 a.m.  
No quorum was established**

### Roll Call

Present for BIPAC

Attending remotely:

Michele Hodges; Grosse Pointe Park, Michigan

Michael Curis; Detroit, Michigan

Rev. Lonnie Peek; Detroit, Michigan

Excused

Bud Denker

Sommer Woods

DNR Staff Present

Ron Olson, Chief

Tom Bissett

Karis Floyd

Amanda Treadwell

Sgt. Jason Becker

Griselda Trevino

Barbrea Young

Erika Compton

Barbara Graves

Others Present

Lance Couturier, MSP

Lori Pawlik, PE, PTOE, Senior Project Manager; Wade Trim

Courtney Piotrowski, Landscape Architect; Living Lab

Ayo Thomas, Belle Isle Conservancy

Chair Hodges started the meeting excusing members Woods and Denker but continued with the meeting to provide the members and the community a chance to connect. The first agenda item is the proposed future meeting schedule and format.

Tom Bissett, Urban District Supervisor, discussed the committee bylaws that currently state the committee will operate consistent with the Open Meetings Act (OMA) as well as the requirement to meet six times per year. Now that COVID restrictions have been lifted, in order to continue virtual and or hybrid (in-person and virtual) formats, if desired by the committee, bylaws will have to be amended. He also submitted a proposed schedule (attached) that includes a hybrid format.

Chair Hodges said it has been a challenge to establish a quorum, and that they have received positive feedback from the public with utilizing virtual meetings, yet in-person meetings are ideal. The goal today was to determine what to do for future meetings, but a decision will not happen today due to having no quorum, as well as having two vacancies. She asked the members present for their input.

Michael Curis said he will do whatever the members want to do, but he thinks in person meetings and offering a hybrid option is important. He proposed all in-person with a hybrid option.

Rev. Peek said in-person is the best, but it is difficult sometimes with schedules. He wants to be able to meet in person with the option to meet virtual.

Tom Bissett said they will continue to contact members for availability to meet in-person. At some point they will have to meet in person to be able to vote on the bylaw changes.

Chief Olson added that the OMA is referenced in other committee bylaws as well. It is still the intent to conduct the business of this committee in openness and transparency as well as publish the minutes of the meetings. The bylaw change would be for a technicality change only.

Chief Olson said they have been in contact with the governor's office about the vacancy left by former member Barnhill, as well as the mayoral appointed position left vacant by former member Dick. They are hoping these will be filled soon, which will help in the greater probability of establishing a quorum.

## **General Updates**

## Parks and Recreation Update – Ron Olson, Chief, PRD

Chief Olson gave an update on the legislative budget which is now in the conference committee phase and slated to be completed in June. This is the time to put forth any advocacy.

Chair Hodges stated that they did have a successful tour of the island with legislators, including House Speaker Tate, in addition to a day in Lansing where they met with legislators. Speaker Tate is a strong advocate working hard on behalf of Belle Isle and they are fortunate to have him collaborating with the community.

## Park Update – Karis Floyd, Park Manager

- They are pleased to have Caitlin Brooks on board who was hired as a seasonal ranger.
- The annual report to the City of Detroit went well. Additional information that was requested from the council was provided to them last week.
- All restrooms are open except for the one at the athletic complex which is receiving repairs.
- The booths are open and fully staffed. A hit and run to one of the booths caused damage and they are working on the repairs. Accepting cash only until credit machines are back up and operational.
- Metro Youth Day – They have had four meetings to date with the executive board and are working on a big push to make this the largest one yet.
- Unit Supervisor interviews were held, and references are being checked.
- Twenty-seven new hires are going through training.
- They will participate in the swim program in partnership with the Metro Park system. Press release will go out on how to sign up; it will take place at the beach area.
- Vendor training took place on April 24. Highlighted minority businesses, gave people the chance to learn how to sign up and learn about the opportunities.
- Acknowledged the work that Ali is doing at the athletic complex. Every phase that he offers was packed and active; summer baseball, volleyball, pickle ball, etc. He has never seen it that busy before.
- They will again participate with the Summer Youth Program and have several groups who would like to do projects on the island.
- Events are doing well, considering the building closures. People are getting creative with their weddings. Shelters are reserved every weekend until Labor Day and new events are coming in.

## Law Update, Lt. Couturier and Sgt. Becker

They are at summer staff levels and more officers will be on site during weekends. Sgt. Becker thanked Parks and Recreation Division for putting up the speed signs that have helped with speed, but it is still an issue and will continue to be enforced.

### Scott Fountain Update

Tom Bissett shared an update on the Scott Fountain and the improvements done. He gave acknowledgement to Robert Carpenter, "The Fountain Expert," who was a significant help in getting the improvements completed and the fountain running again. Funding was received from the Grand Prix and state capital outlay to help with plumbing, engineering, electrical work and other updates.

Mobility Study - Lori Pawlik, PE, PTOE, Senior Project Manager, Wade Trim and Courtney Piotrowski, Landscape Architect, Living Lab

Ms. Pawlik and Ms. Piotrowski gave an overview of the Mobility Study process and the reason for the study. Key highlights were the project goals, data collection, factors of traffic issues, stakeholder input, and public survey results. Information can be found at [www.michigan.gov/dnr/managing-resources/prd/bip-study](http://www.michigan.gov/dnr/managing-resources/prd/bip-study).

Belle Isle Conservancy Updates - Ayo Thomas, Belle Isle Conservancy

- The Learn to Row registration is open and the deadline is June 20. More information can be found at [www.detroitboatclubcrew.com](http://www.detroitboatclubcrew.com).
- The Nature Center will hold Nature at Night, an education program, tonight at 5 p.m. Information can be found at [belleislenaturecenter.detroitzoo.org](http://belleislenaturecenter.detroitzoo.org).
- Dossin Great Lake Museum, Camp Out Camp Detroit will be held June 26 – 30 for youth ages 8 – 12.
- Polish the Jewel benefit will take place tonight, May 18.
- Keep Belle Isle Beautiful cleanup takes place the third Saturday of every month for the aquarium and second Friday for the beach.
- World Ocean Day Exhibition at the aquarium is June 9 – 18.
- Text "GEM" to 80888 for real-time updates about Belle Isle, island closures and more.

### Public Comment

Gerald Hasspacher – Co-chair of Sierra Club of Southeast Michigan gave a recap of the fourth astronomy event that was held May 6. It is a great boost for the Dark Sky initiative and they hope to continue this event.

Patrick Livingston – Is encouraged by the great presentation on the transportation mobility study. There was reference made to repurpose the paddock area and he wanted to reiterate his desire to make the area a more natural, recreational area and a point of reference for the island.

David Kasbow – Cheered for the two-way traffic plan. Asked about the Nancy Brown Peace Carillon Tower and if there were plans to fix it. Staff replied that they are ordering new software for the chime and the electrical issues are being addressed. The clock is now working, and further updates will be provided.

With no further business the meeting adjourned at 10:51 a.m.

Next regular meeting:  
June 15, 2023  
9:00 a.m.