



Belle Isle Park Advisory Committee

Meeting Minutes

Date: May 16, 2024
Virtual

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

Roll Call

Present for BIPAC

Michele Hodges, Chair; Pontiac, Michigan
Michael Curis; Detroit, Michigan
Meagan Elliott; Grosse Pointe, Michigan
Angela Lugo-Thomas; Highland Park, Michigan

Absent

Rev. Lonnie Peek
Sommer Woods

DNR Staff Present

Ron Olson
Tom Bissett
Gail Fitch
Amanda Treadwell
Cpt. David Malloch
Lt. Todd Szyska
Sgt. Damon Owens
Scott Pratt
Nicole Hill
Marie Kaphengst
Robb McKay
Darlisa Terrell
Cyntha Boggerty-Craft
Erika Compton
Barbara Graves

Others Present

Lake Butler, Detroit Historical Society
Lance Couturier, MSP
Maud Lyon, Belle Isle Conservancy
Nancy Vella, Belle Isle Conservancy Board

Robin Heller, Belle Isle Conservancy Board

Chair Hodges called the meeting to order at 9:00 and roll was taken.

Chair Hodges then asked for a motion to approve the April 18, 2024, meeting minutes. The motion to approve the minutes was made by Member Curis, supported by Member Elliott, and passed unanimously.

The next item on the agenda was the Dossin Great Lakes Museum Summer Programming. Lake Butler of the Detroit Historical Society provided updates which included the museum's business hours, the upcoming summer events, including Challenging the Waters, the Travel Association press conference, June Drinks x Design event with Design Core (www.designcore.org), and Camp Detroit.

General Updates

Tom Bissett, Urban District Supervisor, provided a recap of the annual presentation to the Detroit City Council that took place yesterday. The presentation highlighted the accomplishments and the future of Belle Isle. Many of the Council's concerns that were brought forward seemed to be addressed. He thanked the BIPAC members who joined the meeting in support. One focus from the members and media was the giant slide. Tom said is their intent to open the slide this summer after new landing tiles are delivered and installed, and the staff will be engaged in training to monitor the proper use and safety of the slide.

Tom continued with an update on the boathouse proposals. Public comments received were overwhelmingly in favor of rehabilitating the site. The department has been working with the three groups chosen that successfully submitted their letters of intent. They groups have done multiple visits with their experts. This will continue until the end of July when the formal proposals are due. The department will then review the formal proposals and share them with the members.

MDOT has been engaged with the project on Inselruhe, replacing several sections of the sidewalk; crosswalks being a major emphasis. They ask that visitors proceed slowly through those areas. The project will end with micro surface work. Improvements from the Strand to the beach will take place throughout the summer.

The Ford fireworks are scheduled to be held Monday, June 24 and the park will be closed until 2 p.m. that day. At 2 p.m., park and law enforcement staff will admit vehicles. Vehicles who want the best view will be directed to the

paddock area. Only vehicles with ADA placards will be allowed to view from Sunset. Once they reach capacity the park will be shut down. Reminders for those walking to the park that no one will be allowed to stand on the bridge.

Ron Olson, Chief of Parks and Recreation, began his update by saying the department responded to some media inquiries about the giant slide after yesterday's Detroit City Council meeting. He continued with a recap of the Recreation Passport opt-out model that is currently working its way through the legislative process in the governor's proposed budget. The idea behind the proposal is to sustain the park, trail and waterway systems as they are important legacies of the state. They currently received only 3% General Fund dollars from the budget, of which most goes towards Belle Isle.

Member Elliott added that not only does the Recreation Passport provide annual access to all state park and recreation areas, but it is also critical to the citywide park system in Detroit. Every year the City of Detroit applies for grants from the Recreation Passport fund that go into parks all over the city. She thought it was important to share this information in this forum as not everyone is aware of it.

Member Curis wanted to highlight two important notes from the presentation to the Council, one being the jump in island visitation numbers to over 5 million visitors, and the \$140 million investment since 2014. He asked if there was a way to have a slow lane on the slide and asked if the department has reached out to see if Medicaid or Medicare would provide members with a Passport as part of their healthy programs.

Chief Olson said they have collaborated with Blue Cross/Blue Shield on the Big Green Gym concept and they have invested in various programs, one including a birding program at the Outdoor Adventure Center. They will look into these avenues for opportunities.

The next item on the agenda was the law updates. Lt. Todd Szyska reported Mother's Day weekend was extremely busy. They have been actively searching for the lost NYC member. He thanked the DBD Harbor master, U.S. Coast Guard and MSP's dive team. They continue to try and slow traffic down at the pinch points. A highlight during their City Council presentation was speeding on the island. He wants to reiterate that people need to follow the 25 mph speed limit, as speeding is still a factor. Lt. Couturier repeated the need to control speed and said that they are looking forward to the fireworks this year.

Amanda Treadwell presented the infrastructure investments and project highlights that were also shared with the City Council. Those included

improvements to the historical structures, planning and community engagement, and ecological restoration. (Presentation attached).

After a question was asked about the fishing pier, Amanda responded that as part of the MNRTF grant awarded, the south fishing pier is being upgraded with ADA improvements as part of the Ralph Wilson project. This is the first phase and more funding will be sought in the future for this site.

Member Lugo-Thomas asked what is being done about the lights that are out on the island, what is being done for multilingual signage, what the final plans are for the old zoo buildings, and where someone can go if they want to do art installation on the island. Staff answered that the lighting is being replaced in phases, hopefully to be done in three years; they will be focusing on multilingual icons to be incorporated on signage; options are being sought for the old zoo; and to vet any art installation requests through Amanda.

Maud Lyon, Interim President of the Belle Isle Conservancy, provided the Conservancy update. Highlights of the update, that was also presented to City Council, were the designation of the aquarium as the most beautiful aquarium in the United States, visitation numbers, operation hours, the new kiosk and gift shop, Keep Belle Isle Beautiful events, and the Bebot robot. Tonight is the Polish the Jewel event, their annual fundraising event.

Chair Hodges pointed out that the Conservancy is fortunate to have Dr. Meagan Elliott as its next President and CEO beginning July 1. She also thanked Maud Lyon for leading the Conservancy during the transition.

Public Comment

Lake Butler – Asked about parking and the Recreation Passport for guests when booths are not open. Tom Bissett said office hours are Monday through Friday 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. and the booths are open 90% of the time. If for some reason the booth is closed, there is also a kiosk at the Bus Stop shelter. He encouraged people to get the Passport when renewing your vehicle registration at the Secretary of State. Chair Hodges suggested that she connect with the Conservancy and attend stakeholder meetings as well.

Lisa DiChiera – Deputy Director, Detroit Historic Designation Advisory Board, thanked DNR staff for the ongoing communication on the boathouse and the onsite visits. She asked that they please continue to think of their office as a resource on all things historic on the island.

Member Comments

Michael Curis – Announced the Shepherd cultural arts center will have its grand opening on Saturday, May 18 between 5 p.m. and 8 p.m.. He invited everybody to come enjoy it. He thanked Sommer for chairing the meeting last month.

Angela Lugo-Thomas – Congratulated Michael on the Shephard event. Mentioned vacancies on BIPAC and encouraged having indigenous and native American presence on the committee as there needs to be more of a presence on Belle Isle for their history. She will be giving names for recommendations.

With no further business the meeting adjourned at 10:17 a.m.

Next regular meeting: Thursday, June 20, 2024.



Belle Isle Park Advisory Committee Infrastructure Updates

May 16, 2024



FY 2014 – FY 2023 Investments

\$140,533,536



Conservatory dome glass replacement complete and scaffolding removal underway.

The DNR and the Belle Isle Conservancy partner to leverage funding with many nonprofits and other government grant partners

- Infrastructure Investment
- PRD Park Improvement Operating Expenditures
- PRD - Other Operating Expenditures
- DNR - Other Division Operating Expenditures
- In-Kind Volunteer Services

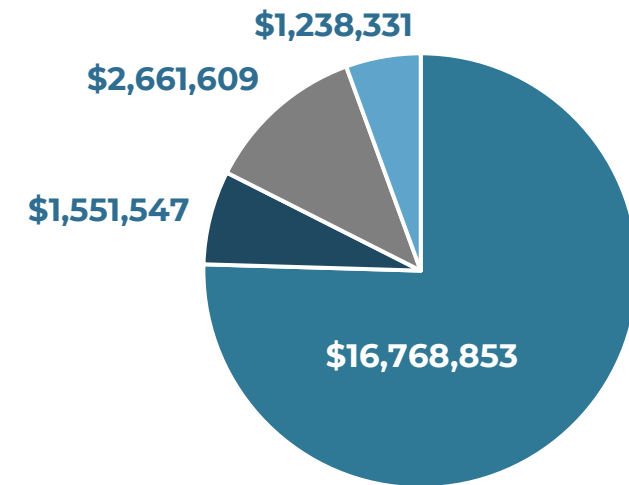
FY 2023 Investments

\$22,220,340



Flynn Pavilion window restoration underway.

FY 2023 Investments



- Capital Investment
- Park Improvement Fund
- Primarily General Fund
- Various

FY 2023 Improvement Highlights

Historic Structures

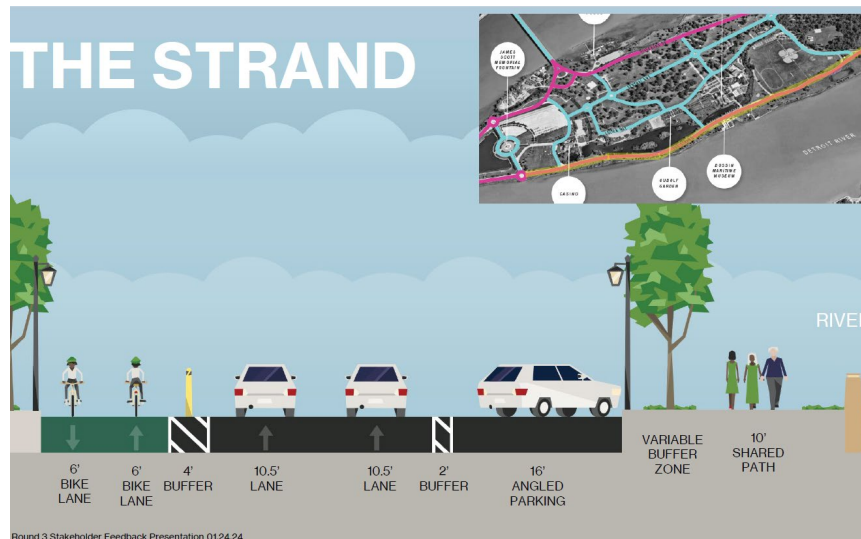
Casino Improvements



The \$5 million Casino renovation funded by ARPA is underway.

Planning & Community Engagement

Park Circulation



Community engagement was key to final recommendations for multimodal mobility study.

Ecological Restoration

Shoreline Engineering along Phase 2 Wilson Trail



Sections of trail aligned closely to shoreline will incorporate native vegetation to stabilize shoreline..

American Rescue Plan Act Funding

State legislature provided \$23 million to support Belle Isle Infrastructure needs in addition to the State Park allotment of \$12 million for the Anna Scripps Whitcomb Conservatory dome and Casino roof



Scott Fountain will benefit from structural stabilization and water sealing repairs

Project	Budget
Scott Fountain structural stabilization	\$6,000,000.00
Belle Isle Aquarium and Conservatory Facility Development plan and ADA access improvements	\$1,075,000.00
Belle Isle Aquarium HVAC Construction	\$10,000,000.00
Parkwide hazardous material abatement, structural repairs at multiple sites and removals	\$5,000,000.00
Park Strategic Development Plan	\$525,000.00
Park wayfinding signage	\$400,000.00
TOTAL	\$23,000,000.00

Management zones defined in Strategic Management Plan

Upcoming Improvements in 2024

Shelter, restroom facilities, and ADA access improvements for historic facilities

- 20 Shelters & restrooms to be improved
* \$2,015,000
- ADA Access improvements at Aquarium & Conservatory Gardens and Casino
* \$2,700,000

**Budgets include DNR capital outlay and ARPA funding*



Many repairs will be common as those planned for shelter #2, hazardous material remediation, structural repairs and energy efficiency improvements.

Anna Scripps Whitcomb Conservatory

Project Status

- Final interior work underway to remove interior scaffolding.
- Team reviewing additional scope, including; glass in lower houses, vestibule roof replacement and ADA accessible improvements in Show Room.
- Further investigation required for limestone replacement around exterior of dome.

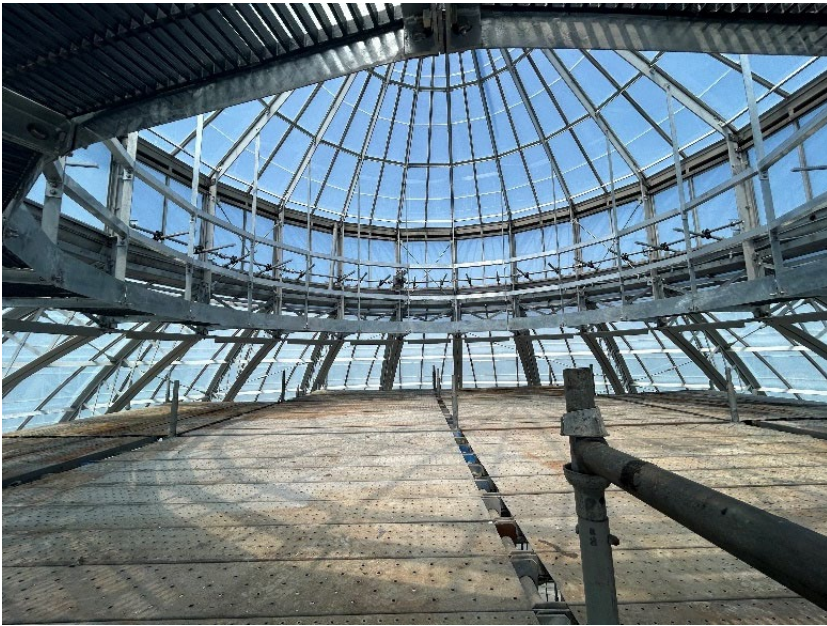


Temporary cover over low house where glass was broken. Ideal preparing to install scaffolding over low houses..

Anna Scripps Whitcomb Conservatory



Anna Scripps Whitcomb Conservatory



Design of plates between floor grating is being reviewed to complete upper catwalk.



Anna Scripps Whitcomb Conservatory



Water vapor from humid conservatory moving through wall condenses when hit cooler limestone cap. Condensation has deteriorated back of limestone and steel supporting vestibule..

Belle Isle Casino

Project Status

- Clay tile replacement underway.
- New AC equipment is being tested.
- Paint samples approved for gutters, downspouts and wood.



Comparing paint sample drawdowns with existing..



Belle Isle Casino



Construction crew working on top of the Towers..



Belle Isle Casino



Construction crew working on top of the Towers

Belle Isle Casino

An aerial photograph showing a large-scale roof renovation project on a historic building. The building features a prominent tower on the left with arched windows. The roof is divided into sections: some are covered in red tiles, others in dark grey asphalt, and a large central section is under construction, showing wooden decking and exposed rafters. Several construction workers in high-visibility vests and hard hats are visible on the roof. A large white HVAC unit is positioned on the right side of the roof. The surrounding area includes a paved walkway and some greenery.

Construction crew working on top of the Towers..

Flynn Pavilion



Flynn Pavilion



Belle Isle Sawmill





Belle Isle Sawmill

Dante Alighieri

- Dante Alighieri Society of Michigan has donated new pedestal and maintenance for Dante Bust at Central Ave. and Vista Ave.



Dante bust installed on new marble pedestal .

Dante Alighieri



Dante bust installed on new marble pedestal that replaced deteriorated pedestal.



A Community-Driven Organization

Nonprofit Partner to the
Michigan Department of Natural Resources

The background image shows the interior of the Belle Isle Aquarium. It features a large, arched ceiling with a green, textured, mosaic-like pattern. The floor is dark, and the walls are lined with glass display cases. People are seen walking through a central arched doorway, which is brightly lit. The overall atmosphere is that of a historic, well-maintained museum or aquarium.

A new study ranked the top 10 most beautiful
aquariums nationwide based on visitor reviews,
and Belle Isle Aquarium is #1!

Open Friday to Sunday
Year Round
Free Admission

Transforming Space, Enhancing Experience: Our New Retail Hub

In collaboration with Carhartt, we've transformed a donated shipping container into a vibrant gift shop and information center. This innovative use of space serves as the central hub for both visitors and locals, offering a unique shopping experience right at the heart of the island



Visitor Convenience: Centrally located for easy access, offering refreshments, souvenirs, and essential visitor information.

Local Collaboration: Partnerships with local creators promote Detroit's artistic community, directly benefiting local artists and authors.

- Currently, we have 7 different local vendors featured in the shop

Unique Offerings: Locally produced items provide visitors with unique keepsakes that carry the essence and artistic expression of Detroit, making their visit even more memorable



KEEP *Belle Isle* BEAUTIFUL

BELLE ISLE PARK - DETROIT, MI

2nd Friday @ Belle Isle Beach

3rd Saturday @ Belle Isle Aquarium

May – October



Elevating KBIB Cleanups in 2024

BeBot Robot

Innovative technology
in litter removal

Partners

- City of Detroit Office of Mobility Innovation
- Council for Great Lakes Region
- MDNR
- Belle Isle Conservancy



Outdoor Classroom installed; Mural painted by Tony Whlgn

