



Belle Isle Park Advisory Committee

Meeting Minutes

Date: September 19, 2024

Location: 99 Pleasure Dr., Detroit, MI 48207

Meeting began at 9:00 a.m.

Roll Call

Present for BIPAC

Michele Hodges, Chair
Angela Lugo-Thomas
Dr. Meagan Elliott
Michael Curis
Dr. Brian Banks

Absent

Dr. Lonnie Peak
Sommer Woods

DNR Staff Present

Tom Bissett
Gail Fitch
Raelyn Maroney
Erika Compton
Lt. Todd Szyska
Darlisa Terrell
Marie Kaphengst
Tim Novak
Scott Pratt
Griselda Trevino

Others Present

Lt. Lance Couturier, MSP
Dee Dee Martin, BIC
Maud Lyon, BIC
Nancy Vella, BIC
Aly Melnik, BIC

Chair Hodges opened the meeting at 9:00 a.m. and opened the floor for colleagues to introduce themselves, including a special introduction of Dr. Brian Banks as a new member of the committee.

Chair Hodges then asked for a motion to approve the August 15, 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 Parks and Recreation update. Tom Bissett, Urban District Supervisor, gave a presentation on park operation updates that included park attendance, park staffing updates, facilities updates, and construction updates, including the Anna Scripps Whitcomb Conservatory, Garden reopening, shelters, Iron Belle Trail, and Casino. The presentation also highlighted park staff's work on playgrounds, and a tree removal project in collaboration with the Forest Resources Division and Parks Construction Crews where dead trees were removed and the lumber will be made available to the public via a Personal Use Fuelwood Permit. Mr. Bissett also gave updates on the status of the Belle Isle boathouse proposals that will be presented to a DNR internal review team and subsequently presented at the October BIPAC meeting. (Presentation attached)

Member Curis asked if presentation materials could be provided ahead of time and how the bidder proposals are structured for the boathouse. Tom Bissett clarified the structure of the boathouse proposals and agreed to give out presentation material as he receives them.

Chair Hodges clarified that the Belle Isle Park Advisory Committee is advisory; they do not have decision-making authority but does appreciate the partnership and the ability to influence the process. She inquired about the role of the State Historic Preservation Office in the boathouse management team. Tom Bissett responded stating the Historic Preservation office is the bridge of communication between the proposal holders and the DNR.

Chair Hodges inquired if the City of Detroit is involved before or after the boathouse proposals are accepted. Tom Bissett explained they are not formally involved before proposals are accepted; however, they are in communication still.

Member Lugo-Thomas asked where the trees are located that are being removed, and how the access to the firewood is being communicated to the public. Tom Bissett confirmed trees are being removed from fall risk areas around paths, roadways, and structures where they could possibly pose a safety risk and that more information will be posted on the Facebook page. Chair Hodges inquired how the BIPAC team could be of assistance to the DNR. Tom said their assistance in sharing the information about the tree project and the public pick up process would be helpful.

Member Elliott asked about how the playground installation process works. Tom replied that replacement parts are available and are replaced when needed. There is staff who are certified playground safety inspectors who can monitor the equipment.

Lt. Todd Szyska, DNR Law, gave a law update on fall operations, park coverage, and activity levels in the park and an update about a cross-training collaboration with LED, MSP, and the Detroit Police Department on bridge crisis negotiation.

Lt. Lance Couturier, MSP, gave a presentation comparing enforcement activity compared to last year as well as the 2024 mission, which includes a public relations focus and making all visitors feel welcome and safe during their visit. (Presentation attached)

Tom Bissett mentioned that the Emergency Manager for the DNR partnered with Homeland Security to do a crime assessment of Belle Isle and the results of that project led to funding for public safety improvements such as the blue emergency lights.

Tom Bissett then gave a presentation on infrastructure updates about the conservatory, casino, shelters, and the Ralph C. Wilson, Jr Trail. Chair Hodges inquired about the timeline for the reopening of the Conservatory. Bissett responded that he would like for it to be open by Christmas. Chair Hodges encouraged a public welcome event after the reopening. (Presentation attached)

Dee Dee Martin, Volunteer Coordinator of the Belle Isle Conservancy, gave a presentation on the Conservancy volunteer stewardship program and with a goal of trying to build a bigger volunteer base for the Conservatory opening. (Presentation attached)

Public Comment

Amy Hubbard – voiced concerns about the boathouse timeline and possible demolition. Urged that the boathouse be saved as it is a historic and underutilized part of Belle Isle.

Robbin Heller – wanted to publicly acknowledge and thank the DNR and the BIC staff for the success of the Garden Party on September 10.

Lisa Dichiera – wants clarity of the timeline for the boathouse negotiations and the communication with the City of Detroit in that timeline.

Member Comment

Member Banks thanked the meeting attendees for a warm welcome and for the information they shared. He talked about his connection to the park and is excited about being a part of the BIPAC. He would like to see the steps that have been done since the state took the island over and what has been done to make the island more welcoming to everyone.

Member Curis asked about winter events on Belle Isle and how we can bring in visitors during the winter “down” season. Tom Bissett responded by mentioning how the Belle Isle Event team works with the public and organizations to sponsor events in the park during the winter.

Megean Elliott added that the Belle Isle Conservancy is taking an audit of gaps in park visitation in the winter and how those gaps can be filled. Angela Lugo Thomas added that she enjoys the park during the winter and that winter activities do not necessarily have to involve programming. Megean Elliott mentioned the use of the Flynn Pavilion for winter events.

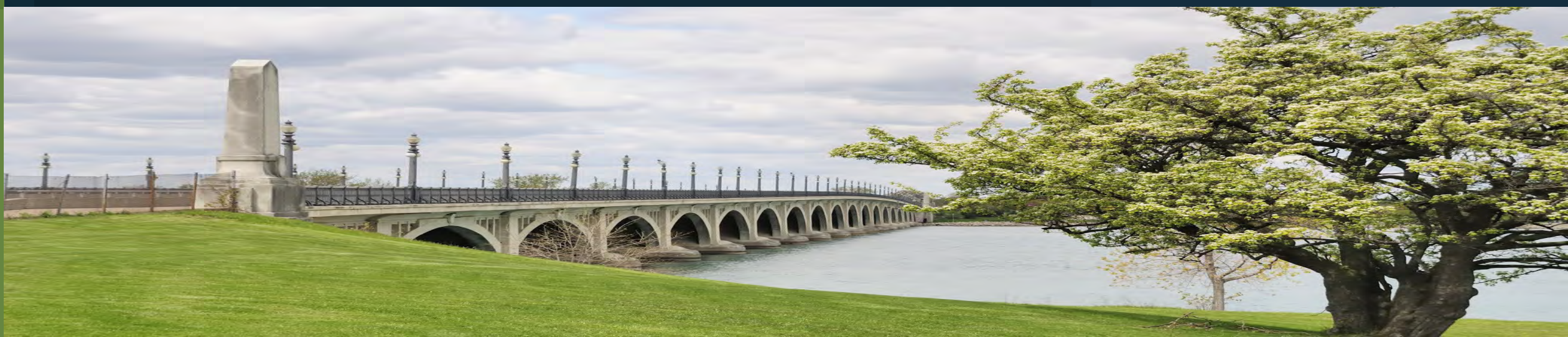
With no further business the meeting was adjourned at 10:15 a.m.

Next regular meeting: Thursday, October 17, 2024 at 9:00 a.m.



Belle Isle Park Operations Update

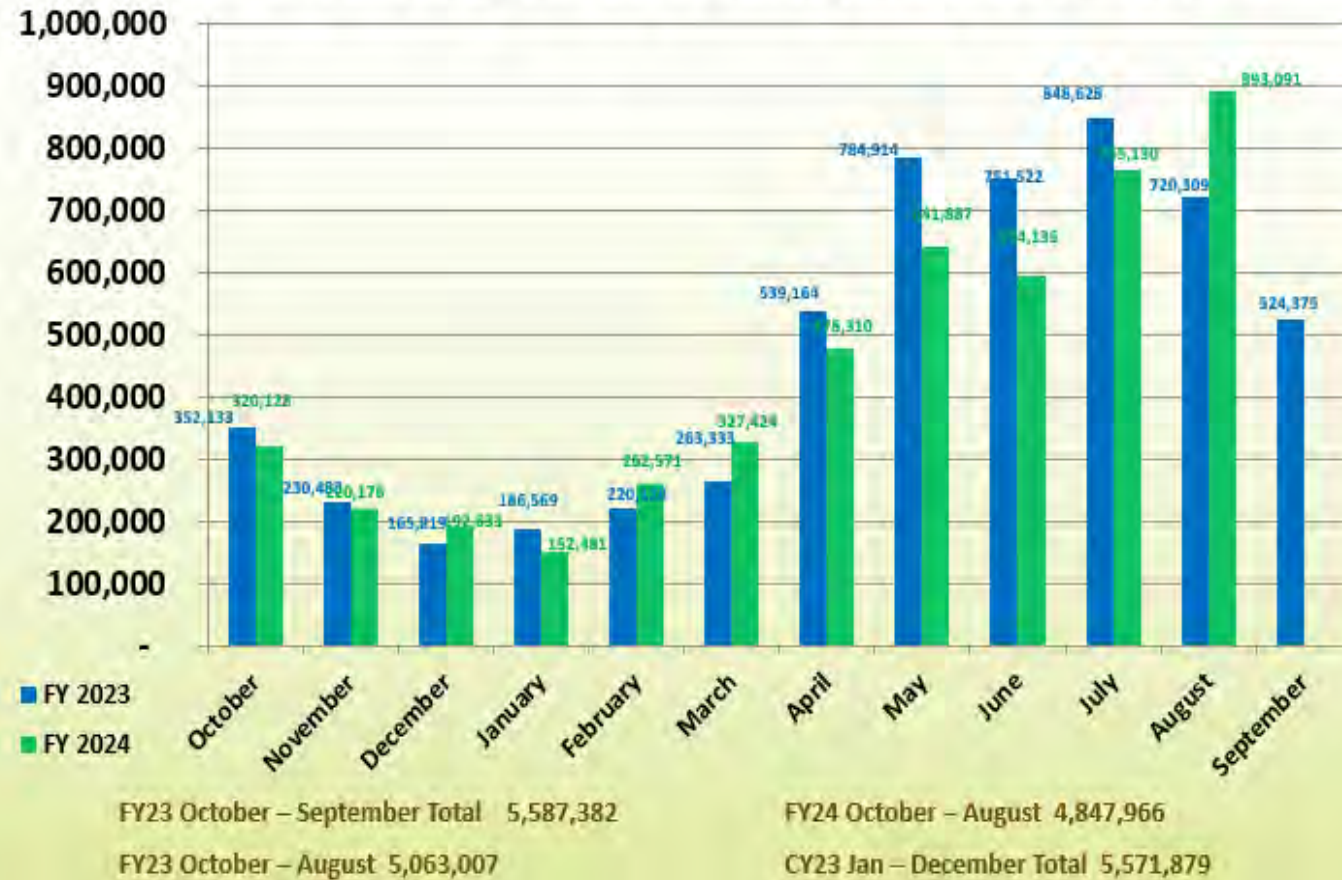
September 2024



Park Attendance

- 2024 Attendance
- August was a record Month
- Overall park attendance actually down from 2023
- Still on track for over 5 million estimated visitors

Belle Isle Average Monthly Attendance



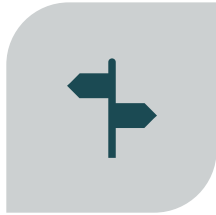
Park Staffing Update



- 2 Ranger positions at the interview stage
- Seasonal (summer) staff working until October 12th
- Seasonal Rangers, Janitors & GOAs stay on into December
- Full Time GOA vacancy

GREAT Summer Season!

Facilities Update



MDOT SIDEWALK
& ROAD
RESURFACING



PARKING LOT
PATCHING



FLYNN BUILDING
IN OPERATION



BEACH CLOSED
FOR THE SEASON

Fountain Operating into Fall



Construction

- Conservatory
- Garden Reopening
- Shelters 2 & 8
- Shelter 9
- Iron Belle Trail
- Casino



Playground Work



Replacing Broken Equipment



Replacing Broken Equipment



Replacing Broken Equipment



Replacing Broken Equipment



Events

- ASWC Garden Party – 9/10
- Tour de Troit Bike Ride – 9/14
- Detroit Women’s Half-Marathon – 9/15
- Growler Gallup – 9/22

FREE EVENT
*Recreation
Passport
required

**BELLE ISLE PARK
ANNUAL HARVEST**
Festival

FOOD
TRUCKS
ONSITE
DURING
EVENT

Saturday, October 12, 2024
12:00 PM - 4:00 PM

FREE CIDER,
DONUTS,
POPCORN,
CANDY BAGS
& S'MORES
WHILE
SUPPLIES
LAST

Event will take place at the
Cricket Field near the
Belle Isle Casino &
Scott Memorial Fountain

FAMILY FUN FOR ALL AGES!

ACTIVITIES INCLUDE: FACE PAINTING •
HAYRIDES • ARTS AND CRAFTS • PETTING FARM •
BOUNCE HOUSES • LAWN GAMES AND MORE

For more information, call the Belle Isle Park Event Office: 313-821-9851

Tree Project

- Tree Removals
 - Picnic Areas
 - Disposition of Lumber
 - Forestry Division and PRD Construction Crews



Removal of Dead/Diseased Trees



Standing Dead





MICHIGAN STATE POLICE - METRO SOUTH POST



2023 vs. 2024

- 2023
 - Traffic Stops - 85
 - Citations - 61
 - Verbal Warnings - 45
 - Arrests: 1 Felony, 11 Misdemeanors, 3 Fugitive
 - OWI Arrests 1
 - Traffic Crashes - 5
 - Incidents - 20

- 2024

- Traffic Stops – 35
- Citations – 19
- Verbal Warnings – 24
- Arrests – 4 Felony, 2 Misdemeanors, 1 Fugitive
- OWI - None
- Traffic Crashes – 5
- Incidents - 17

- 2024 Mission

- Public Relations focus with visual presence during weekends
- Attempt to walk around Sunset Point and other areas meeting visitors
- Respond to after-hours calls of trespass violations and escort out
- Make all visitors feel welcome and safe during their visit

Main Events

Detroit Fireworks

Gift of Life Walk/Run Escort

Law Enforcement Torch Run Escort

Presence During Unauthorized Events (Car Shows) and safely clearing

Assist DNR on Major Incidents such as Missing Boater and Mental Situations

QUESTIONS?

F/LT. LANCE COUTURIER
POST COMMANDER – METRO SOUTH

COUTURIERL@MICHIGAN.GOV



Belle Isle Park Advisory Committee Infrastructure Updates

September 19, 2024



Anna Scripps Whitcomb Conservatory

Items completed



New Planting beds filled with soil and new plantings.

Anna Scripps Whitcomb Conservatory

Items completed



New concrete walks within gardens and on the North side.

Anna Scripps Whitcomb Conservatory

Items completed



Scaffolding removed on Palm House. New upper catwalk.



New lower catwalk and safety ladder.

Anna Scripps Whitcomb Conservatory

Items Underway



Deteriorated steel column was replaced.



Remaining steel columns all received cleaning and new coating before limestone to be installed.

Anna Scripps Whitcomb Conservatory

Items Underway



New limestone panels mock-up installed around dome base.



Waterproofing and fastener details for new limestone.

Anna Scripps Whitcomb Conservatory

Items Underway



Tropical house with completed glazing and abatement.



Belle Isle Casino



Fall protection installed and safety lines painted.



Structural reinforcement needed throughout the flat roof area and along the end beam on the west side of the roof. .

Belle Isle Casino



Finishing touches being completed now, historic copper finials, lighting protection and painting.

Shelter #9



Overview of post replacement.



Replaced fascia board.

Shelter #9



New footings, Post and straps is complete.



The remaining concrete will all be replaced around the footings..

Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Trail

Interim circulation recommendations

- Increase pedestrian circulation
- Increase bicycle circulation
- Improve vehicular circulation

- Phase 2 Wilson Trail, 2024
- 2-Way Cycle Track, 2024
- Central Ave. Conversion, 2025
- Vista Ave. Reconnection, 2026



Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Trail



When complete, the road surface will accommodate the 2-way cycle track, 2 vehicular lanes and a multi-use bike path. ..



Trail work has begun at the Lake Muskoday Parking lot..



BELLE ISLE
CONSERVANCY

Volunteer Program
9/19/24

Volunteers at a Glance

	<u>Core Volunteers</u>	<u>Service Hours</u>
2023	121	7,452
2024	112	5,171

New Volunteers:

2023 = 50

2024 = 60



Why Volunteer on Belle Isle?



How To Volunteer



by famed Detroit architect, Albert Kahn, who designed the aquarium to give visitors the impression that they are underwater.

Volunteer Greeters are truly the face of the Belle Isle Aquarium and ambassadors for the park. They are a friendly smile, welcome visitors to the facility, and available to answer general questions. Training is provided. Shifts are 3.5 hours and are available Friday, Saturday, and Sunday year-round.

Requirements: Friendly and approachable; Enjoy interacting with the public. Available to attend an on-site training.

[Volunteer Application Form](#)

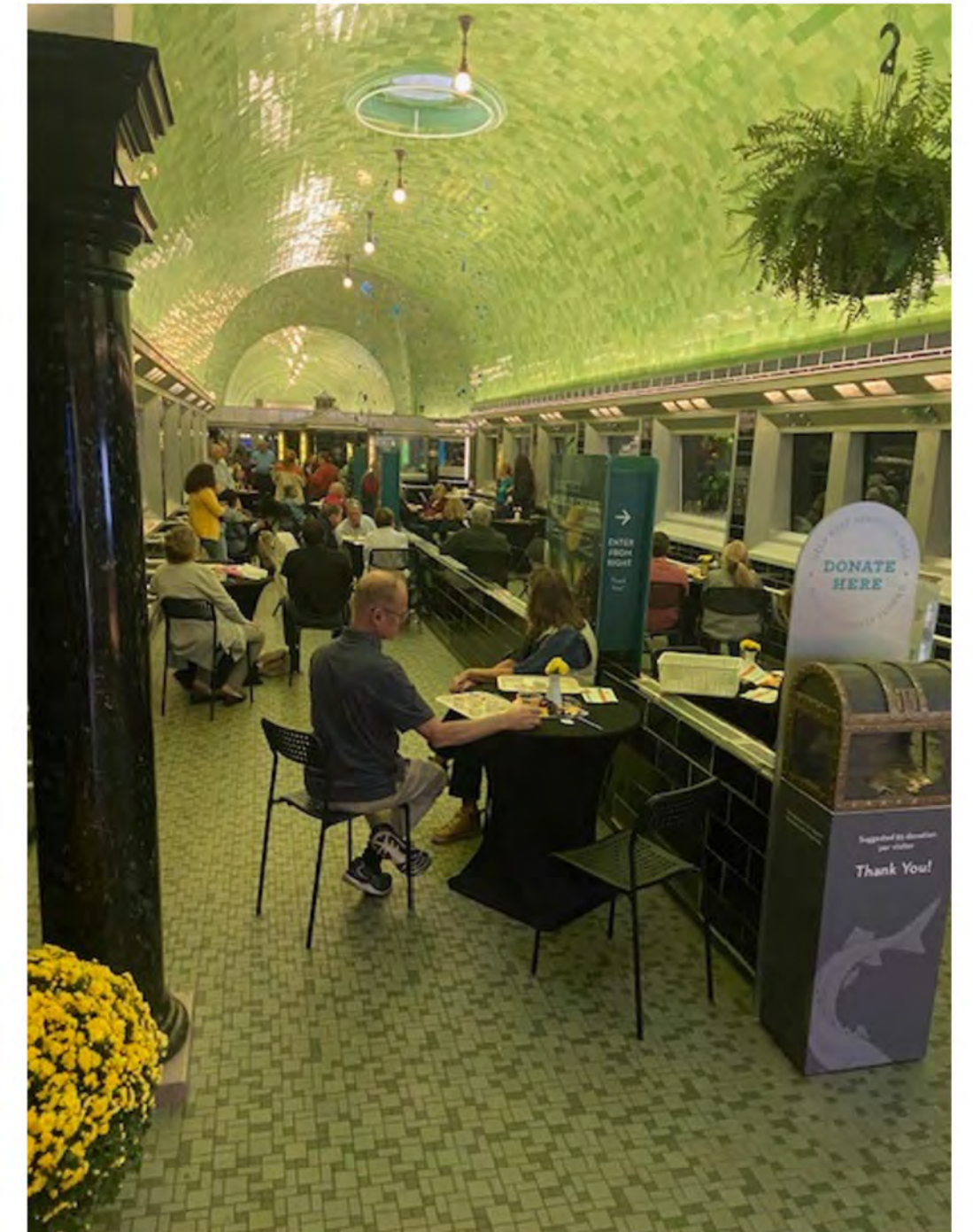
[Already a Volunteer? Click Here!](#)

Belle Isle Park volunteers are required to have a recreation passport to access the island. Submission of a volunteer application does not guarantee a volunteer position.



Appreciation, Recognition and Ongoing Education!

- **Two Appreciation Events**
- **Two Education Sessions**
- **Mary Waterstone Award**





Anna Scripps Whitcomb Conservatory

Rebuilding an Excited and Engaged Volunteer Base!



Questions? Email

martind@belleisleconservancy.org