



Belle Isle Park Advisory Committee

Meeting Minutes

Date: December 19, 2024

Location: Flynn Pavilion, 4435 Muse Rd., Detroit, MI 48207

Meeting began at 9:01 a.m.

Present for BIPAC

Dr. Meagan Elliott, Chair

Michael Curis

Angela Lugo-Thomas

Dr. Brian Banks

Virtual:

Melia Howard; Detroit

Sommer Woods; Detroit

Absent

Dr. Lonnie Peek

DNR Staff Present

Tom Bissett

Gail Fitch

Sgt. Danielle Zubek

Cynthia Boggerty-Craft

Nicole Hill

Marie Kaphengst

Griselda Trevino

Barbara Graves

Others Present

Lt. Lance Couturier, MSP

Aly Melnik, Belle Isle Conservancy

Amy Greene, Nature Center Director, Detroit Zoological Society

Chair Elliott called the meeting to order at 9:01 a.m. and turned the floor over to Tom Bissett, Urban District Supervisor, who made everyone aware of the passing of Karis Floyd, Belle Isle's park manager. Tom spoke of Karis' love for the park and the visitors and gave condolences to his family and friends.

Chair Elliott did roll call, and then asked for a motion to approve the November 21, 2024 meeting minutes. The motion was moved by Member Curis, seconded by Member Lugo-Thomas, and passed unanimously.

Chair Elliott then asked for a motion to approve the 2025 BIPAC meeting dates. The motion was moved by Member Curis, seconded by Member Lugo-Thomas, and passed unanimously.

Tom Bissett provided the park update which included an update on seasonal staff and the re-opening of the Conservatory and its hours of operation. Gail Fitch, park manager, advised the committee of the two heated restrooms in the park, which are in the back of the Flynn building and the Bus Stop. He also advised the committee of the upcoming hiring of a new park ranger.

Sgt. Danielle Zubek gave a DNR law enforcement update. Sgt. Zubek advised everyone that while the park was slow, traffic enforcement is the priority of the department and the department is working to get all officers radar certified. Lt. Courtier from MSP had no updates.

Chair Elliott gave the Belle Isle Conservancy update that included information about the RFP that is due on December 23 for landscape design services and renderings for some of the ideas that were built from the Multimodal Mobility Study. They are also in the process of recruiting a new Chief Development Officer to fill the position that Katy LaBarrie is vacating. If anyone is interested, information can be found on their website at <https://www.belleisleconservancy.org>. She then gave the business hours of the Conservatory, which are Wednesday through Sunday, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. All facilities will be closed on December 24, 25, 31, and January 1. The Aquarium will be open Friday through Sunday 10 a.m. – 4 p.m. The Nature Center will be open daily 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. and is open on December 24 and 31. The Dossin is open Friday through Saturday 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., Sunday 1 p.m. to 5 p.m. and is open December 26.

Tom Bissett then gave the infrastructure updates that covered the Conservatory, casino, Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Trail, Multimodal Mobility Study, athletic shelter, and the American Rescue Plan Act projects. (Presentation attached).

Member Lugo-Thomas asked about the amount of wayfinding signs that will be around the island and the fountain. Tom Bissett said the signage is in three phases with the first phase being facility signs, then roadway signs. The second phase will be trails. As they get funding, these will be implemented. The entire lower bowl of the fountain needs to be replaced and he is assuming work will go into 2026.

Member Curis said it would be a great asset to have the wayfinding. He also asked about a boathouse update. Tom said there will be one at the next meeting since there has not been any major updates since the last meeting.

Public Comment

David Carleton, Stuart-Pittman, boathouse proposal developer – Expressed his excitement concerning the boathouse and asked if the boathouse update could be added to future meetings. He said that he was already getting questions concerning possible weddings at the boathouse.

Lisa DiChiera, Deputy Director of Historic Designation Advisory Board under City Council – Congratulated park staff on the opening of the Conservatory and said that they are available to partner on projects.

Member Comments

Member Lugo-Thomas said she was very sorry to hear about the passing of Karis Floyd and she appreciated him accommodating her and others, as he was always helpful.

Member Curis said Karis was a sweet, caring, kind, and gentle person and that they were all going to miss him.

Member Woods said that she appreciates Amanda's presentation as it is always amazing and wants to point out that she appreciates the ADA piece as it is key when you think of quality of life and parks being accessible. She said she has had multiple people reach out to her regarding Karis. She wanted to acknowledge the impact he had as he touched a lot of people.

With no further business the meeting was adjourned at 9:44 a.m.



Belle Isle Park Infrastructure Updates

December 19, 2024



Anna Scripps Whitcomb Conservatory

The Conservatory is OPEN!



The 'closed' sign posted on the garden gate for 2 years came down and the Conservatory was officially reopened on December 4th, 2024 with a 'sign cutting'.

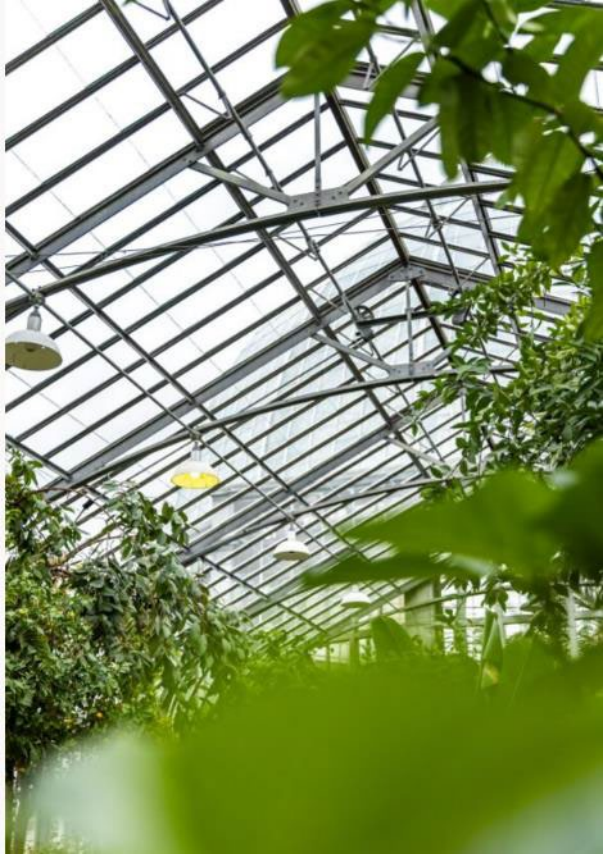
Anna Scripps Whitcomb Conservatory

The Palm Dome



The Palm Dome was abated, repaired, repainted and reglazed. Many new operational features were installed to better care for the plants..

Anna Scripps Whitcomb Conservatory Tropical House and Showroom



Glass replacement in Tropical House and Show Room Improvements are complete.

Casino

Interior Repairs

- Underway – installation of new plaster walls and repair of plaster damaged from roof leaks.



Interior plaster repairs at the Casino.



Casino Interior Repairs



Significant plaster repairs need from the leaking roof before repairs on second floor.

Casino

Exterior Repairs

- Porch scope identified for repairs in spring 2025.



Exterior surfacing will be repaired and replaced to remove trip hazards. Work will take place alongside new ADA accessible ramps in spring 2025.

Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Trail

Iron Belle Trail

Project Look Ahead

- Work on hold for winter conditions.
- USCG Section – Asphalt paving complete.
- Native shoreline restoration complete near Lake Muscoday lot.
- Phase 2 of Trail is 30% complete.
Approximately 4 months to complete the remainder in 2025.



Wilson Trail Completed on south shoreline to the Lake Okonoka culvert for 2024.

Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Trail

North Shoreline Restoration complete



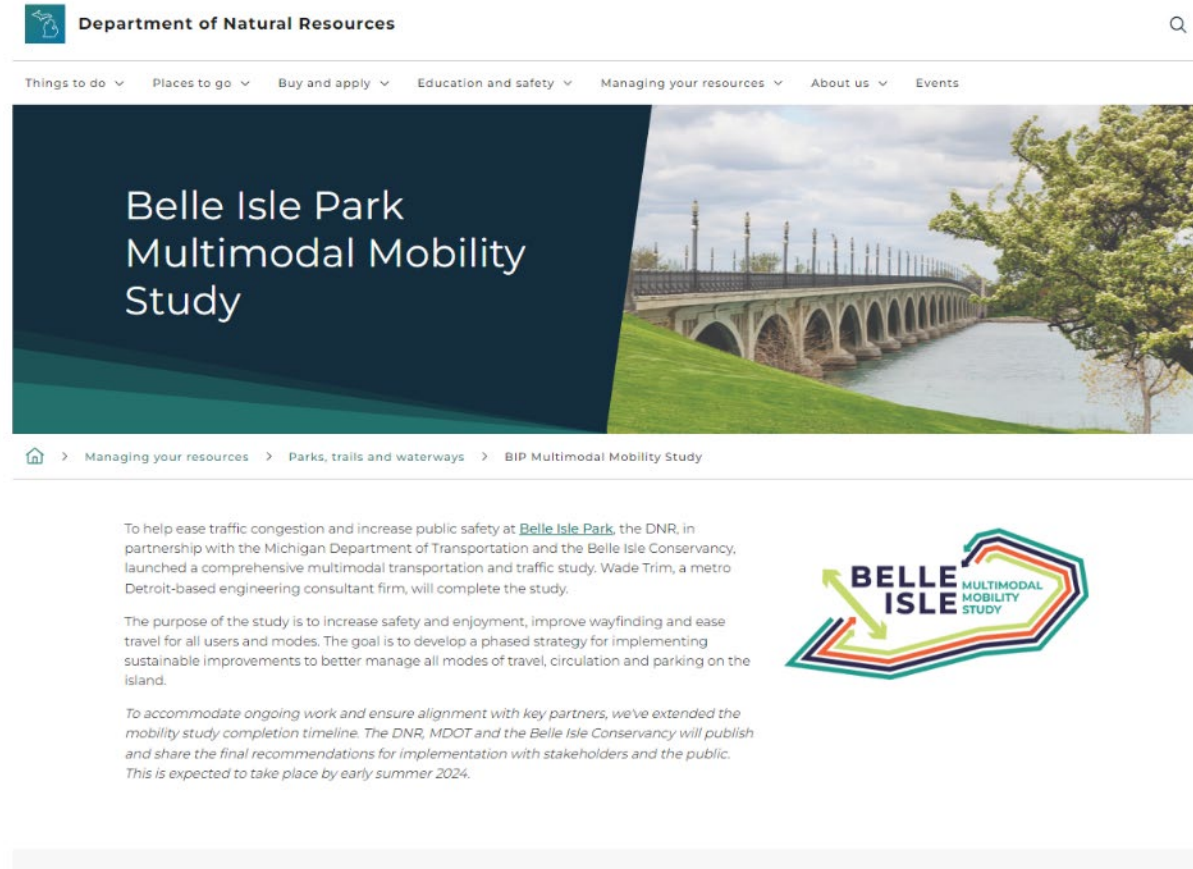
Belle Isle sourced plantings installed along the Wilson Trail.



Signage to highlight the native plantings and ask for care has been installed.

Belle Isle Multimodal Mobility Study

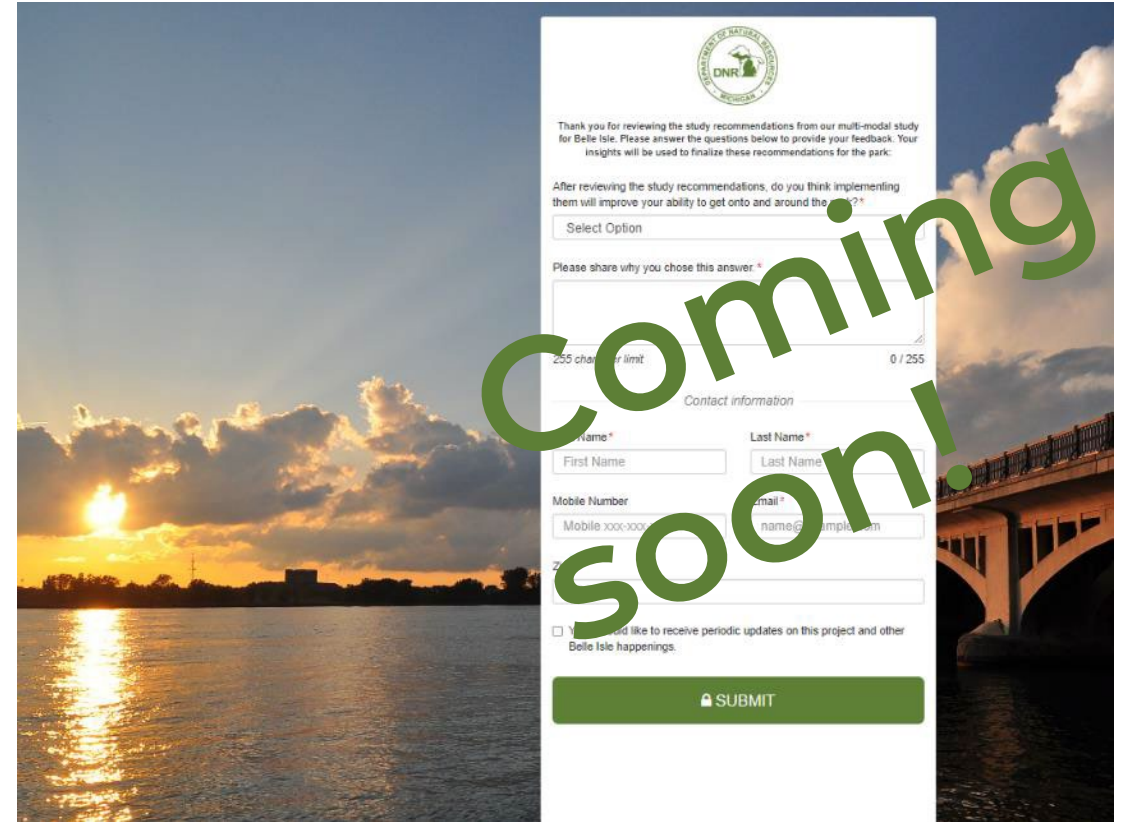
- Executive Summary and Final Report will be published week of December 16th.
- Recommendations will be posted on the project website.
- [Belle Isle Park Multimodal Mobility Study](#)



Multimodal Mobility study webpage will be updated with recommendations.

Belle Isle Multimodal Mobility Study

- The final BIMMS report - a long-term vision and 10-year implementation plan for making improvements to the park access and circulation for all mobility types.
- Recommendations will improve
 - Park arrival and departure experience,
 - Creating a people-focused Central Avenue
 - Providing connections between facilities for walking, rolling, and biking,
 - Expanding transit, and providing parking in areas where it is most needed.
- Opportunity to share feedback online will be provided.



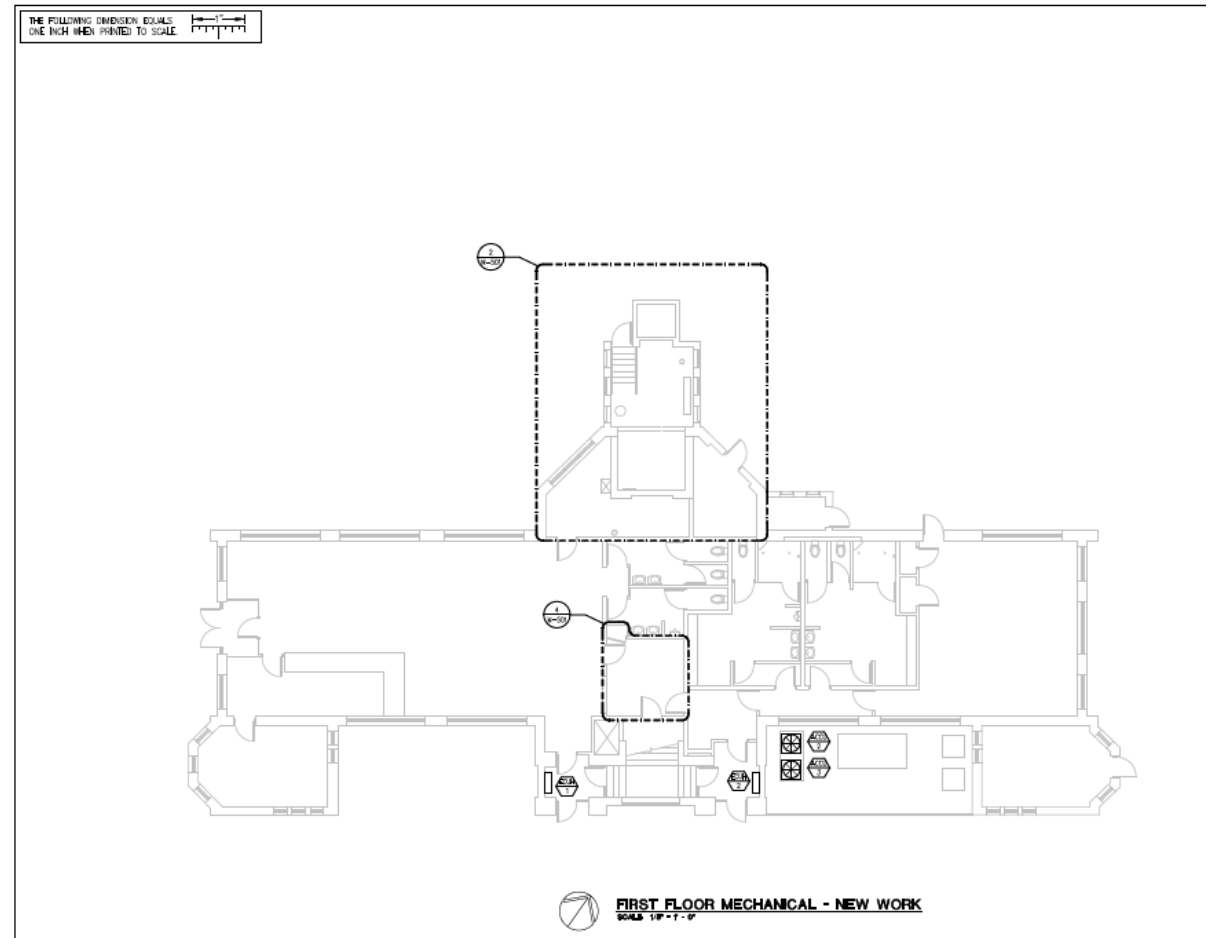
The screenshot shows a web-based feedback form from the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR). The form includes a header with the DNR logo and a thank-you message. The main question asks if implementing recommendations will improve mobility, with a 'Select Option' dropdown. Below is a text area for 'Please share why you chose this answer' with a 255-character limit. The 'Contact information' section has fields for First Name, Last Name, Mobile Number, and Email. A checkbox at the bottom allows users to opt-in for updates. A green 'SUBMIT' button is at the bottom of the form.

Public invited to comment on the final recommendations.

Athletic Shelter Heating

Scope of Work

- New Heating unit for building to provide comfort level air conditioning.
- Utility Improvements will require implementation of Fire suppression system in building. Currently, only the mechanical room is sprinklered.



Engineering underway for new heating system and fire suppression system for Athletic Shelter.



American Rescue Plan Act Projects

Project Review Construction Engineering

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

- **Scott Fountain** - Design and cost estimates under development and review.
- **Facility Plan** - DNR & BIC reviewed facility plan submittal. Final submission expected early spring 2025.
- **Aquarium** - Design and cost estimates under development and review.
- **Abatement, remediation and removals** - Design and cost estimates under development and review.
 - Site investigation wrapping up for zoo site.
- **Community engagement** - In planning stages for events coming in summer 2025.
- **Wayfinding** - Construction bids under review. Phase 1 to be implemented in 2025.



Belle Isle Infrastructure Updates

2024 *in review* – Shelter #9 Complete

- \$280,000 Belle Isle Capital Outlay FY 2024



Parkwide structure review identified structural repairs required at Shelter #9

Repairs at Shelter #9 included new



Belle Isle Infrastructure Updates

2024 *in review* – *Flynn Pavilion Complete*

- \$250,000 Belle Isle Capital Outlay FY 2022 & 203



Significant repairs to replace deteriorated wood framing.



Belle Isle Infrastructure Updates

2024 in review – Belle Isle Sawmill – Phase 2 Complete

- \$307,000 DNR FRD and PRD Capital and Recreation Passport Funds.



ADA access, site drainage and new doors installed in phase 2. Partnership between FRD and PRD.



Belle Isle Infrastructure Updates

2024 *in review* – *Wet Mesic Flatwoods*

- \$4.2 million USFW and GLRI Grant Funding



Impediments to hydrology removed as part of this habitat and ecological restoration project.. Native vegetation is establishing over former Tanglewood roadbed.

Belle Isle Infrastructure Updates 2024 *in review* – *Wet Mesic Flatwoods*

Mammals of the Flatwoods Forest You may not always see these animals but look for their tracks to see who has been here.

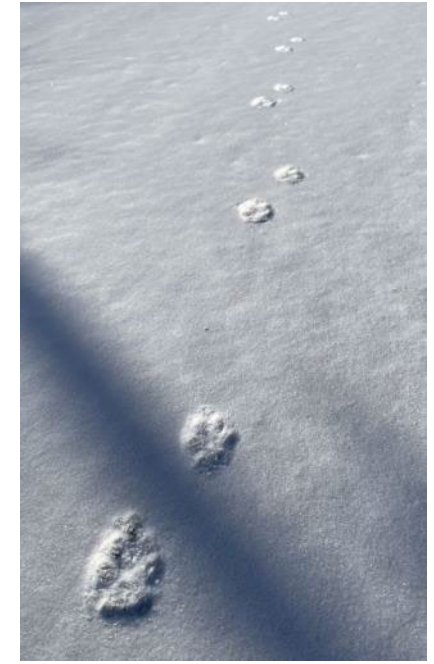
COYOTE
If you spot medium sized tracks that resemble a narrow dog's footprint in the flatwoods, you could be seeing signs of a species long known for its adaptability. Coyotes are native to North America and are present throughout Michigan, including urban and suburban areas. Active mostly in the evening, night, and early morning, you may not catch sight of a coyote, but they tend to stay in local open areas. In the flatwoods, coyotes help spread mammal populations by preying on animals. Foxes, raccoons, and squirrels need perform an important role as scavengers.

WHITETAIL DEER
White-tailed deer leave a distinctive two-toed, hoof-shaped track with their hooves. You can observe a wide variety of deer on Belle Isle in both the landscape and the flatwoods. A deer's hooves are made of keratin and are covered in small ridges. Deer were also present on the island after being introduced by humans in the 1930s, but now they are considered a native species. Deer are also native white-tailed deer.

NORTHERN LONG-EARED BAT
We may catch a glimpse of these mammals in flight if you're visiting the flatwoods on a warm evening. Northern long-eared bats are a federally endangered species that are active at night with many other native bats due to a deadly disease, white nose syndrome. Bats are a vital part of the ecosystem, especially when it comes to insect control. Bats are also important for the flatwoods' ecosystem as they help control insect populations. Bats are also important for the flatwoods' ecosystem as they help control insect populations.

BEAVER
Beaver populations are on the rise in Michigan. Michigan offers excellent habitat for beavers. The beaver's characteristic tracks are often found in the flatwoods. The beaver's characteristic tracks are often found in the flatwoods. The beaver's characteristic tracks are often found in the flatwoods.

NASHUA CANAL



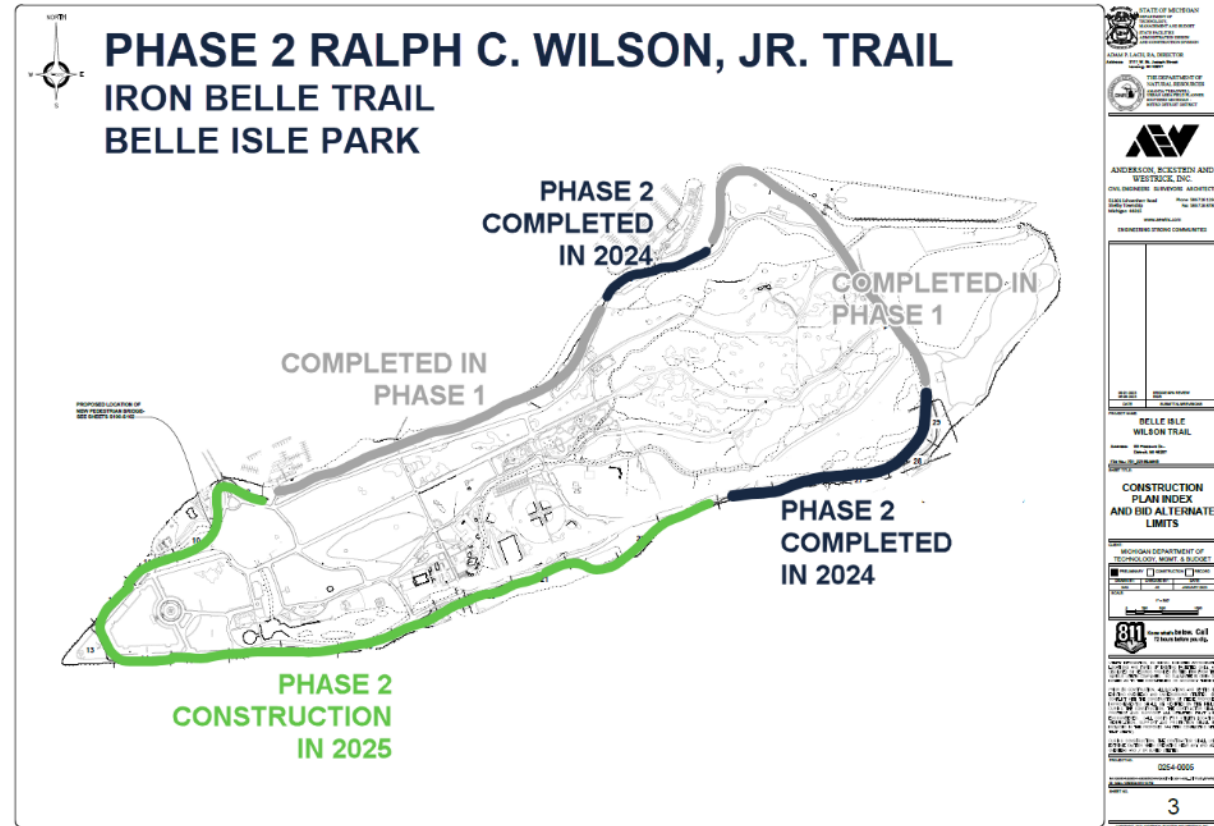
Interpretive signs will be installed on the 3 kiosks before the end of 2024. Project will be complete end of December 2024.

Wildlife and hiker tracks on a quiet Central Ave. in the winter.

Belle Isle Infrastructure Updates

2024 *in review* – Wilson Trail

- \$10 million (phase 1 & phase 2) multiple private, state and federal grants



30 % of phase 2 trail construction complete before winter conditions stopped work.



Belle Isle Infrastructure Updates

2024 *in review* – James Brady Statue Maintenance

- \$71,000 Goodfellows gift



James Brady statue and stone monument were restored, a gift from the Detroit Goodfellows.



Belle Isle Infrastructure Updates

2024 *in review* – *Dante Alighieri Maintenance*

- \$ 46,000 gift of *Dante Alighieri Society of Michigan*

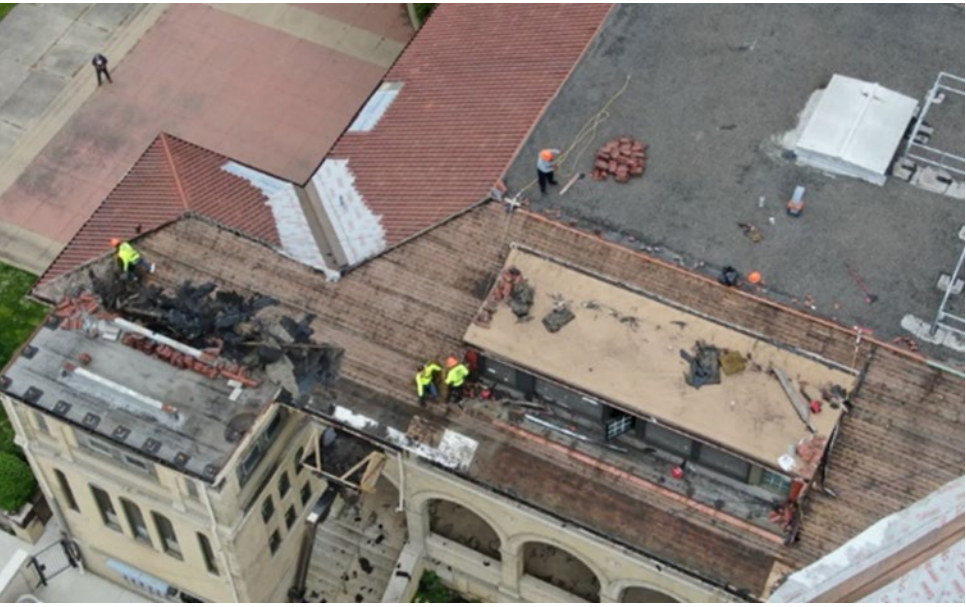


The Italian consulate funded and celebrated on site a new pedestal and concrete pad installed.



Belle Isle Infrastructure Updates

2024 in review – Casino Roof Replacement Complete



Complete replacement of clay tile roof, flat roof, skylight, drainage system, porch ceiling repairs, window repair, interior water damage repairs..



Belle Isle Infrastructure Updates

2024 in review – Conservatory Show Room Complete



New floors and a new planter wall were installed in the showroom.



Belle Isle Infrastructure Updates

2024 in review – Conservatory Palm Dome Complete



Abatement, steel repairs and new paint followed by reglazing were key items addressed.