

MINUTES

Belle Isle Park Advisory Committee Meeting

Thursday, June 18, 2020

Location: Teleconference

Meeting called to order at 9:04 a.m.

A Quorum was established at 9:06 a.m.

EXCUSED ABSENCES

None reported

UNEXCUSED ABSENCES

Bryan Barnhill

Brad Dick

Approval of Unexcused absences:

Moved by: Bud Denker

Seconded by: Lonnie Peek

PRESENT FOR BIPAC

Chair, Michele Hodges

Lonnie Peek

Michael Curis

Bud Denker

Sommer Woods

DNR STAFF PRESENT

Ron Olson, Chief

Karis Floyd

Scott Pratt

Michael Terrell

Amanda Treadwell

Darlisa Rickman

Barbara Graves

Kimberley Hicks

Lt. Todd Szyska

OTHERS PRESENT

Lance Couturier, MSP

Jennifer Johnson, MSP

Bill Shreck, MDOT

REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Approval of Minutes for May 21, 2020:

Moved by: Bud Denker

Seconded by: Michael Curis

Chair Hodges called the meeting to order and welcomed everyone.

GENERAL UPDATES

Ron Olson, Chief, DNR-PRD

Executive Orders allowed outdoor activities to restart across the parks system. Opened harbors and state forest campgrounds as of June 10, and full camping to restart June 22. Flush toilets and running water are being prepared for use in compliance with CDC guidelines, particularly with Belle Isle, and portables will start being removed. We were granted an exemption from the hiring freeze to fill some positions and those are slowly being filled. Have had great participation with crowds and have had to close some areas due to reaching capacity. The indoor facilities' restart plan has been submitted for review. Once approved, we will be working closely with the Conservancy to be in alignment. Progress is being made and things are improving. Over a week ago, we worked with the Civil Rights Department of Detroit, the Conservancy, and others to allow for an organized Selma march across the bridge. The event was very moving and orderly. The group was happy and our staff and law did a great job being patient with the group.

Scott Pratt, Southern District Supervisor, PRD

Presented pictures of the recent clean up effort on the park. Some restrictions have been lifted, allowing staff to complete cleanup. Staff is trying to keep up with the volume, doing their best with the limited staff. They are optimistic the work will be accomplished as quickly as possible. He thanks staff for doing a good job keeping up, and thanks the Grand Prix for teaming up with staff to cut grass and clean up.

Karis Floyd, Park Manager, Belle Isle and Milliken

We have had 94 applications for summer employment submitted. Seeking to fill 17 more positions. Staff is concentrating on trash clean up. Approval for volunteers was granted to help. The Grand Prix donated about \$30K to help, and he thanks them. He wants everyone to keep in mind that they are still in layoff mode until July 25. Park use is up; he has not seen this amount of people in a long time. Please understand that there may be some closures, and if so, they will be posted on Facebook. He thanks the COs and MSP for helping with the closures. Restrooms on Sunset, and the Bus Stop are first restrooms to be open. They are having issues with the water pressure at Scott Fountain but are keeping it running as much as possible. Have not received approval to open office yet; they are still teleworking and coming in periodically during the week. If you need to make contact, there is a staff member taking calls. The Selma march went very smoothly considering the timeframe.

Chief Olson updated the members on the Trust Fund legislation. The Trust Fund was exempted from the spending freeze because it is protected funds. Encouraging appropriating the funds so the grant projects can move along and go forward. There is federal legislation that has moved

out of the Senate, a very impactful funding bill for outdoor recreation. If approved, it will double what the state gets for land and water funds, granting more potential for projects on Belle Isle.

The Recreation Passport is going into effect June 22 and there are protocols in place for restart. **Scott Pratt** said a press release went to all major Detroit avenues, DNR email blast participants, and Facebook posts, as well as few public notifications for visitors to the island such as a digital sign and sandwich boards spread throughout the island. There is understanding that the message will not get to everyone at the same time, so it will be a soft roll out with the staff informing people of the process. The \$5 convenience fee is waived for Belle Isle State Park this year.

Karis Floyd said they are still experience flooding along the Strand. Some areas have gone down quickly, but there are still a few roads blocked off to traffic.

Michael Curis thanked Karis, Scott and the PRD team under the difficult circumstances to keep the island clean and organized and thanked the Penske corporation for the donation. He appreciates everyone's help. **Chair Hodges** concurred and appreciates the Penske team and Grand Prix for coming in to help.

Karis Floyd said that each vendor has been required to turn in their COVID-19 plan. All vendors are still on the list, and PRD is letting them know the park is open and they can still provide services if they wish to do so. The food truck should be up and running soon. Bounce house companies will not be providing services this year due to concerns with distancing and disinfecting.

PRD will follow what the City of Detroit puts in place for the August 31 fireworks. If Detroit is allowing viewing areas, the park will be consistent. **Scott Pratt** is meeting with the city and will provide an update.

As with all other projects, the Oudolf Garden project had to be approved before restart. It is back on track and moving forward quickly.

The big slide is considered a carnival ride and there is not a plan to open it at this time until more guidance is received.

Amanda Treadwell, PRD Planner, Southeast Michigan

The coffer dam progress was set back due to contractor backlogs. She received a quote from a marine contractor and it has been submitted as a critical project request for approval. Once approved, they will move forward. The cost will be about \$50K which puts it in a different category for spending approval. She anticipates three or four weeks for someone to be able to install it.

Lt. Todd Szyska, DNR Law

Thanked the partnership with the MSP and PRD to get the march planned and running smoothly. More officers are on deck now. Together with MSP, they are still doing 24 hour staffing. Some closures have happened due to overcapacity. He thanked Penske and PRD for helping out with lawn mowing. With all the restrictions, he appreciates the teamwork and collaboration. The

public interaction with officers has been good and there has been a lot of people wanting to help out. Karis and Mike set up a meeting and met with MSP and Law regarding closures. Park rangers do their best throughout the day to monitor traffic. They are trying to get to the point to see the backup issues before they happen. If they see it, they contact MSP and COs to communicate if it's a safety issue, or not. If so, they procedure is in place for closure.

Belle Isle Conservancy Update

Chair Hodges said they are hoping to have the aquarium open in July. The Giving Society will join in support of the operation. A level was added to acknowledge individuals donating \$25K or more. In addition to the Giving Society, a second appeal was implemented for the spring. Created funding initiatives with Tip the Scales, where they were able to bring in \$19K, with matching funds, for a total of \$37K to offset some of the revenue losses. The Koi festival was moved to July 12 and will be primarily a virtual event; please follow social media for details. You can also enjoy kite fest on that day. Keep Belle Isle Beautiful campaign will be this coming Saturday from 9:30 a.m. - noon. They will be complying with all CDC recommendations. They ask people to bring water in reusable bottles and practice social distancing. They will be providing bags and gloves. She thanks the community for stepping up during this difficult time. She encourages people to join the online Creative Clubs.

She said the Selma march was an important and powerful movement and was an important significance to have it be on Belle Isle as well as it be near the date of Juneteenth. She was glad to be part of continuing awareness. Discussion and comments continued on about the significance of Juneteenth.

Mike Terrell, District Supervisor, PRD

Mike Terrell said that Belle Isle is unique and is the most diverse park in the state park system. Leadership around Belle Isle are minorities, as well as office and law staff, and it also serves a diverse clientele. He expressed his appreciation for everyone, including staff, the Conservancy and Penske.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Submitted via e-mail June 16, 2020

Jimmy Riordan - I was wondering if that group of seniors, who constantly complain about the Grand Prix, are going to step up and raise the money to replace the Conservancy's revenue loss this year because the race was cancelled? The way some comment, it should be easy for them to raise \$500,000.00.

There were no further public comments.

Rev. Peek acknowledged staff and MSP for their work on Belle Isle. He said we never could have imagined what we are going through now. The situation doesn't matter. It's what we aspire to do. He extended his appreciation to the staff at Belle Isle who are the backbone of what the Island should be.

Michael Curis reaffirmed what **Rev. Peek** said. He thinks this is one of the most important meetings and looks forward to the continuation of them.

Motion to Adjourn:

Moved by: Michael Curis

Seconded by: Rev. Lonnie Peek

Meeting concluded: 10:23 a.m.

NEXT REGULAR MEETING:

July 16, 2020

9:00 a.m.

Approved: _____

Michele Hodges

Ronald A. Olson, Chief

Date: _____