

MINUTES

Belle Isle Park Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes

Thursday July 18th, 2019

Location: Belle Isle Flynn Pavilion

Meeting called to order at 9:02 a.m.

EXCUSED ABSENCES

Bryan Barnhill

PRESENT FOR BIPAC

Chair Michele Hodges

Michael Curis

Bud Denker

Rev. Lonnie Peek

Sommer Woods

DNR STAFF PRESENT

Ron Olson

Michael Terrell

Karis Floyd

Darlisa Rickman

REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Approval of Minutes for May 16th, 2019:

Moved by: Michael Curis

Seconded by: Sommer Woods

On June 20th no Quorum was established the minutes will be received and filed.

General Updates

Ron Olson, Chief, DNR, Parks and Recreation

We have invited a representative from the Army Corps of Engineers to update everyone on the Great Lakes levels. The impact from the high-water level has been felt all over Michigan not just here at Belle Isle Park. We even had to move our annual Metro Youth Day to the drier area of the park due to those issues. It was a success and the staff did a great job. It was a great highlight event at the park.

United States Army Corp of Engineers Presentation

Lauren M. Fry, Ph.D.

All the information from the presentation can be found online at:

<https://www.lre.usace.army.mil/>

The slides will also be posted on the Belle Isle Website: BelleIslePark.org

Ron Olson: There were 2 major things that we confronted due to the ongoing flooding: One of the DTE electric supply substations had to be closed due to the flooding and we came very close to losing complete power on the island. There was also a concern from Detroit Water and Sewer Department (DWSD) about there being too much water run-off from the land into the storm sewer, and the possibility of it mixing and causing a backup. The Department of Environment, Great Lakes and Energy (EGLE) was out here and did some testing and extra efforts had to be made due to that issue. So those were the two issues that were raising the most concern for now. There are a lot of issues at work that are difficult to control. It does create safety issues because people want to fish and get close to the water. There are also kayakers that the currents can create an issue for.

Bud Denker: What do you expect for us next year relative to the trends that you've seen? What is your relationship to the International Joint Commission on the Great Lakes?

Lauren Fry: There is really no way to fully anticipate what the trend will be, but we utilize a tool called the Water Level Outlook Scenario. Folks in our office support the International Joint Commission in terms of forecasting and monitoring the waters of the Great Lakes as well as supporting the regulation of Lake Superior outflow through the Lake Superior Border patrol.

Rev. Lonnie Peek: Relative to Belle Isle what kind of processes do we have in place as far as water quality?

Ron Olson: The beach out here is tested periodically through the Health Department and we haven't had many beach closures like many of the other parks. This water here is really fresh the flow of water here is substantial. This is some of the cleanest water around.

DNR Law Enforcement Update

Damon Owens, C.O., DNR

Jennifer Johnson, MSP

- Law Enforcement continues with being vigilant about our parking issues and watching for drivers going the wrong way on our one-way streets.
- On June 30th and July 4th, we had to shut down the island for a bit due to traffic, but other than that everything has been relatively quiet. There have been no big issues. The beaches have been packed and the flooding has resulted in even less parking areas than usual.

Park Operations Update

Karis Floyd

- Thank you to the staff for their hard work during the flooding.
- We have hired 2 rangers which will be introduced at the next BIPAC meeting. The new GOA for the events department has been hired. Her name is Kimberly Hicks and she will be assisting Darlisa Rickman in the events department.
- We still have 2 ranger positions available to fill and 132 applications to review for the positions.
- The Army Corp of Engineers are anticipating at least 4-6 more inches before the water crests.
- The Metro Youth Day was successful. We had to move it to the Cricket Field due to the flooding.
- The Youth Connection and the Police Cadets have started. You will see them completing projects like tables, grills and helping to pick up litter throughout the island.
- We will have periodic beach and bridge closures to try to keep traffic flowing on the park we will try to get notifications out as quickly as we can.
- Part of the road on Central has collapsed due to the flooding so you will see safety cones and barriers on that section of the road. MDOT has moved the date for the road repair back. We have had several park guests move and drive around the barriers to look at the eagle's nest and get stuck. We request that you please steer clear of the area for your own health and safety.

Bud Denker: As far as the issues with the power station, is that still down relevant to the high-water levels?

Karis Floyd: It is still down, yes.

Ron Olson: Just to aid in that process we brought down some large water pumps from DNR Forestry Division up North. They are helping to keep the water levels in the canals moving and dispersing excess water out to the river.

Sommer Woods: Karis, you made a response to my email about the grass and it still looks a bit tricky. Is there any status on the mowers that you said were down?

Karis Floyd: We have a mowing contract that we have put in place to accommodate some of those issues. With the terrain that we are dealing with out here at Belle Isle we are getting some more heavy-duty mowers. The purchases for these will be next season but currently we have our big mower back up and running so that will be 4 mowers and the contract that will be utilized to keep the island intact.

Infrastructure Updates

Amanda Treadwell (See attachment)

Scott Pratt: The Flower Clock was working temporarily due to a small fix, but there is a bigger issue where the wires have burned all the way through so it will not be functional. We decided to keep the flowers there for the aesthetics but once the season ends you will see construction there to make the necessary improvements and updates.

Outreach and Upcoming Events

Darlisa Rickman

- Our shelters have been impacted by the flooding. We have had to cancel 31 shelter reservations and relocate 39 families to accommodate their events as a result. The Boat House cancelled 14 weddings and 2 special events.
- We are at capacity for all weekends in July and August as far as the Shelters and event space.
- The Annual Kite Festival and it was a great success it was also listed as one of the 10 popular island festivals in the National Geographic.
- We have also had to cancel some of our walks and runs that we host due to the routes not being available due to flooding.
- 8/3-8/4-Art Fair
- 8/15- Grand Opening for the dome at the Conservatory

Sommer Woods: Is there a permit needed to take pictures? There were a couple of photographers for people's weddings that reached out and they wanted to take pictures at the Scott Fountain and different places on Belle Isle. They said they've been asked for a photo shoot permit for pictures. I can understand if it's pictures for an ad or for commercial purposes. But to ask people for a permit to take pictures is a little tricky for me. So I guess I need some understanding for why that process is necessary.

Darlisa Rickman: Yes, permits are required. One of the functions of the permit is that it helps to regulate the traffic at our wedding venues and make sure that the photographers are courteous to other park users. Some of these rules we kept in place from before, and it made sense because we need to control where people go. It's difficult for us to have weddings take place and then have 4- or 5-party busses show up trying to take photos. Most of our designated wedding spots are at places that all people want to take photos.

Sommer Woods: The communication of that is important. If there is a process it is very important with how that is communicated. And are the photo shoots prices the same as a commercial shoot?

Darlisa Rickman: The information is available on our website. We issue probably 75-100 photography permits a year. Again, we do about 250 weddings a year, so it is certainly necessary to know where people are especially when you have guests celebrating their important day. This process has been in place since before we arrived in 2014, photo shoot pricing is not commensurate with Commercial shoots pricing but the pricing for all of. We have all of the prices listed on the website

Belle Isle Conservancy Update

Chair Michelle Hodges

- The Oudolf Garden may be delayed due to the flooding, but you can get updates by visiting <https://oudolfgardendetroit.org>
- Sept. 10th Garden Party at the Anna Scripps Whitcomb Conservatory
- Polish the Jewel October 10th
- The Keep Belle Isle Beautiful Initiative continues
- The Aquarium will be open this weekend, but we are taking measures to keep it cool because it is not air conditioned.
- The Anna Scripps Whitcomb Conservatory is open on Wednesdays until 8 pm.
- Lake St. Clair appreciation day is on July 31st
- City Parks Alliance Conference is next week
- A fundraiser we have done in the past with the Fenton family that involves Yoga is going online this year making it easier to donate to that cause. You can find links to that event on our Belle Isle page or Facebook page.
- Thank the Wheeler Family Foundation that donated \$60,000 to the Belle Isle Aquarium.

PUBLIC COMMENTS (3 minutes each)

- Don Graham** Admiring of the management and the activities that have been taking place on the park.
- Debra Taylor** Would like to make a public comment about the condition of Belle Isle and lack of access to “appropriate” clean & healthy bathrooms. If something is going to be closed there should be proper communication of that. When a park goes pays for a Shelter they should not have to resort to port-a-johns when there are buildings available for usage. There are many areas of the park that are unkempt and uncut, and I have pictures to reflect that.
- Michael Betzold** Michele Hodges has a severe conflict of interest and shouldn’t be on the committee. This committee was appointed nearly 6 years ago for a 4 year term aren’t their terms.
- Mary Ellen Howard** The damage to the island from the Grand Prix has not been repaired. Threat of Auto Show invading Belle Isle-what is the status? Fewer picnic tables every summer-they are not being replaced.
- Donald Green** A little girl was injured at the Kite Fest as a result of damage to the terrain by the Grand Prix. Her mother was upset that the DNR & Belle Isle “Conservancy” fully support the Grand Prix. A DNR staff member lied in a response to a report that an agency employee stole a directional sign from a gathering of citizens on Belle Isle in May 2019.

Angela Lugo-Thomas Against use of Belle Isle Park by the Grand Prix. Do not extend or renew contract. Are there any concrete plans for the old Children's Zoo space? When do your board appointments to BIPAC end? What is the process of getting new/replacement members? Request a 3rd party environmental impact study of effect on Belle Isle of the Grand Prix set-up, race event and break down. Thank you to the DNR staff for all that you do on Belle Isle.

Carol Rhoades Safety of attendees of the Kite Festival - there were ruts in the cricket field. Dangerous due to the Grand Prix and the damage they left behind. I have a concern for the safety and preservation of the Scott Fountain seeing as though people were putting their kites in the fountain.

COMMITTEE MEMBER ITEMS

No Committee Member Items

Motion to Adjourn:
Moved by: Bud Denker
Seconded by: Michael Curis

Meeting Concluded: 10:56 a.m.

NEXT REGULAR MEETING:

August 15th, 2019
Flynn Pavilion
Belle Isle Park
Detroit, MI 48207
6:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.

Approved: _____
Michele Hodges

Ronald A. Olson, Chief

Date: _____