

MINUTES
Belle Isle Park Advisory Committee Meeting

Thursday, September 23, 2021
Location: Teleconference

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

A quorum was established at 9:13 a.m.

PRESENT FOR BIPAC

Attending remotely:

Chair Michele Hodges; Grand Rapids, Michigan
Michael Curis; Detroit, Michigan
Bud Denker; Rochester, Minnesota
Brad Dick; Detroit, Michigan
Rev. Lonnie Peek; Detroit, Michigan

DNR STAFF PRESENT

Ron Olson, Chief
Karis Floyd
Amanda Treadwell
Scott Pratt
Barbara Graves
Mike Terrell
Darlisa Terrell
Kimberley Hicks
Lt. Todd Szyska
Ashley Jackson

OTHERS PRESENT

Ayo Thomas, Belle Isle Conservancy
Nancy Vella, Belle Isle Conservancy

REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Approval of Minutes for August 19, 2021:

Moved by: Bud Denker
Seconded by: Brad Dick

GENERAL UPDATES

Ron Olson, DNR Parks and Recreation Chief

The state FY22 budget was approved by the House and Senate and is awaiting the governor's signature. The efforts to advocate for Belle Isle and the Summer Youth Employment program did not go unnoticed. The Summer Youth Employment program was reinstated and the budget for Belle Isle remained intact. The legislature will be taking up the governor's proposed \$250M for state park infrastructure. We are working on refining the list of projects to leverage as much as possible and take care of critical items. There will be an update in the future of the Boathouse.

Park Update – Karis Floyd, Park Manager

- A vendor has been found to strike the aquarium parking lot and the contract is set to be executed soon.
- Heidi Frei, Stewardship Unit and volunteers planted 100 trees on the island.
- Summer season is winding down. Quite a few summer workers have gone back to school. The rest of the workers will be done on October 16.
- Stewardship volunteer day will be Saturday, October 19 and they will gather around the athletic complex from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.
- Goose Busters removed over 4,000 geese from the island. They will return next season to complete the project. The geese were relocated to different states.
- A new supervisor, Joel Thomas, was hired and will start October 4. Joel comes to us from the Golden State Park in San Francisco. He has been a supervisor for about 11 years and has a strong background in mentoring. We are excited to have Joel on the team, and he will be introduced at the next meeting.
- The clock is now working. It turned out there was a lack of power during the conversion from DTE and a fuse and wiring was also lost in that process. Ranger Sean has been working on it and the next step is to get the music working again.
- In fall and winter operations at this time, so starting to winterize the buildings. The buildings that are not heated will need to be shut down for the winter. Bus stop #7 and the casino outdoor restrooms will be open all winter as they are heated. Updates will be posted on social media.
- An Iron Ranger, which is a kiosk, has been installed at Bus stop #7, for the general public to purchase recreation passports year-round. Signage and messaging will be displayed and put on social media announcing this new item.
- The Oudolf garden opening took place and was a big success with lots of smiling faces, which is good to see. There is a lot of foot traffic there daily, and it is a nice addition to the park, and people are flowing from there to the Conservatory.

Law Enforcement Update - Lt. Todd Szyska, DNR Law Division

- Currently at winter staffing levels unless there is an incident on the weekends that brings in more people.
- Lt. Johnson of MSP is taking a promotion to Inspector and Lt. Lance Courtier is now the acting lieutenant for the Metro Region post. Congratulations to Cpt. Johnson.
- The Tour Detroit event went well with no incidents besides one medical.

Infrastructure Update - Amanda Treadwell, Urban Field Planner (see attachment)

Stakeholder Update –Ayo Thomas, Belle Isle Conservancy

- The Boathouse program is expanding to include community outreach and numbers are up. They had an incredible racing season. They are finalizing plans to construct a new temporary structure to house equipment. Beer Fest will take place October 2 and proceeds will go towards building improvements. Boatclubbeerfest.com
- The Nature Center remains closed to the public while renovations are taking place. The aquarium has new tanks that are being renovated. The field trips and tours have returned, and they started back up for this new school year that includes the partnership with DPSPD for the cultural passport with second and 5th graders.
- Masks are now required for all staff, volunteers, and guests while visiting the Belle Isle Aquarium.
- The Oudolf Garden had a successful opening and will continue to be open through the winter months. There are free guided tours for the month of September every Friday.

- The Bourbon and Bowties fundraiser scheduled for October at the Dossin Great Lakes Museum has been cancelled, and masks are now required inside of the museum for all staff, volunteers, and visitors.
- MDOT is doing some work around the island and will not be clearing as many roads for snow removal as they have in previous years.
- There is work scheduled for the MacArthur Bridge in the upcoming year and hopefully more details about that will be coming soon.

Michele Hodges, Belle Isle Conservancy

- Attended Petals in the Park at Erma Henderson earlier this month. It's a lovely experience and a wonderful tribute to our first African American Councilwoman. Encourages everyone to go.
- The Polish the Jewel luncheon is October 15. It is being billed as Timeless Treasures and is being hosted at the Rooster Tail. She encourages all to come.
- The fairies will arrive on Belle Isle on October 8 and will be similar to the previous year and will stay on the island through December 3.
- Gave a shout out to Joe Aiken and the team of arborist that he's working with to restore the sawmill. They had a tree climbing competition this past weekend that was very well received by the community.
- Thanked the Garden Party team and Robin Heller for a lovely evening. There were more than 600 people in attendance. She also thanked Jeremy Kemp and Emily Erdman for making the Conservatory something to be proud of, and the rest of the DNR team as well.
- The Great Lakes Now partnership continues. Programming is on the first Friday of each month at 1:30 on Facebook Live and you can find that information on the Conservancy's Facebook page as well as Great Lakes Now.
- Gave a shout out to Nancy Vella, the Conservancy's incoming board chair.

No public comment

COMMITTEE COMMENTS

Bud Denker thanked PRD staff and thanked Ron and staff for taking care of Mackinac Island.

Rev. Peek said the entire staff is doing a great job and he is very proud of what we are all doing.

Michael Curis said Erma Henderson was a wonderful lady and he has tremendous respect for her.

Meeting concluded: 10:03 a.m.

NEXT REGULAR MEETING:

October 21, 2021

9:00 a.m.