

## **MINUTES**

### **Belle Isle Park Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes**

Thursday, January 18, 2018

**Location: Belle Isle Flynn Pavilion**

No Quorum: Meeting started at 9:00 a.m.

Roll Call and Excused Absences

Quorum reached at 9:20 a.m.

#### **PRESENT FOR BIPAC**

Chair Michele Hodges

Michael Curis

Bud Denker

Sommer Woods

#### **DNR STAFF PRESENT**

Ron Olson

Scott Pratt

Michael Terrell

Karis Floyd

Jacob Brown

Amanda Hertl

Darlisa Rickman

Egypt Burnley

Damon Owens

Mia Moore

Deb Jenson

Murdock Jemerson

Alexis Horton

#### **EXCUSED ABSENCES**

Rev. Lonnie Peek

Brad Dick

#### **REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

**Chair Hodges** requested approval of the minutes from the November 17, 2017 meeting.

**Denker** moved to approve minutes, with **Curis** supporting the motion. Minutes for November 17, 2017 were approved.

## **PRESENTATIONS**

### ***Belle Isle Draft Strategic Management Plan***

**Ms. Deb Jensen**, DNR Parks and Recreation, Park Management Plan Administrator, presented a status update on the draft Belle Isle Strategic Management Plan. The current plan has been in process for over a year. The draft plan will be available for public review beginning on January 18, 2018 on the project website at Michigan.gov/parkmanagementplans. There will be two public meetings held in February 2018 at the Outdoor Adventure Center. Park stakeholders and members of the public are invited to attend one of the two hour meetings. The meetings will review a presentation of the draft plan and the planning process. Materials will be available for public review and comment. Comments will also be accepted on the project website through February 12, 2018.

Ms. Jensen further reviewed the DNR and Belle Isle Conservancy management goals and core values for Belle Isle Park for the next 10 years.

### ***Summer Youth Employment Program – Year in Review***

**Murdock Jemerson**, DNR Parks and Recreation District Supervisor and **Alexis Horton**, DNR Parks and Recreation Promotional Agent shared a presentation regarding Summer Youth Employment Program. The program began in 2012 and includes 10 summer youth agencies; including a new partnership with AmeriCorps. This program provides youth various work activities such as landscape cleanup, painting, etc. Belle Isle Park had all 10 agencies provide youth to work on the island this year. Youth that have participated in this program have shown positive results many have gone on to become short term workers within the Department of Natural Resources (DNR), Parks and Recreation Division (PRD); some have gone on to college or obtained other employment. Van Riper State Park also had 6 youth provided by the Healthy Kidz agency that worked alongside DNR Parks and Recreation staff to make park improvements and learn about various career opportunities. Current Belle Isle Park, General Office Assistant, Egypt Burnely, started with the Healthy Kidz Summer Youth Employment Program.

**Ron Olson, Chief PRD**, responded to a question regarding the demand for this program. Mr. Olson indicated that the demand is great for the program and that the budget determines the participation levels that are available.

## **GENERAL UPDATES**

**DNR Law Enforcement Update Conservation Officer Damon Owens** reported that it is a slow time of the year in the park. DNR Law Enforcement is still working with the Michigan State Police (MSP) to protect Belle Isle Park and that the number of incidents has steadily reduced.

### *Park Operations Update*

**Karis Floyd**, Belle Isle Park Manager, shared the following operational items with the committee:

- The White House is closed for clean-up. Staffing is spread out over the island but can be reached at the main phone number 313-821-9844.
- Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) will be working on Mac Arthur Bridge later this year to perform maintenance on the bridge.
- The Friends of Detroit Rowing Club, current lease holder of the boat club on Belle Isle Park, are working to establish a Master Plan for the site in partnership with park staff and BIC. The plan would include building restoration based upon planned future use.

**Jacob Brown**, DNR Parks and Recreation Belle Isle Park Supervisor shared the following operational items with the committee:

- During the winter months staff has been working on various projects such as fixing the interior steps in the Casino, they plan to be finished with that project before Shiver on the River February 3, 2018.

**Michele Hodges** asked if there is an opportunity for cross-country skiing, snowmobiling, and other winter activities on the island; asking for an overview of what Belle Isle has to offer in that aspect?

*Karis Floyd, Park Manager, stated that there is no snowmobiling permitted on the island at this time. We do encourage snowshoeing and cross-country skiing.*

### *Infrastructure Updates*

**Amanda Hertl**, Urban Field Planner, provided a written update regarding the infrastructure projects; a full update was provided to committee members' in their packets. Some of the highlights are listed below:

- Lake Okonoka project is continuing to be dredged and remove the soil to the lighthouse with a completion estimated by early summer.
- One lane on the "Strand" is closed for construction
- The former Internal Affairs Building is currently scheduled to be renovated into the Parks Administrative Office; staff should be relocated back into the building sometime in the coming summer. The goal is to include the Belle Isle Conservancy staff into the facility. A pre-bid walk through is scheduled with the contractors for Monday, January 22, 2018.
- The Casino roof repair project will be completed when the weather is adequate; the ceramic tiles have arrived for this repair project.
- The fire suppression system building renovation in the Casino is complete.

- The Athletic Complex renovation meeting was held in December 2017. Roof repairs will begin, masonry rework and the field will be reformed in the spring. The soccer field will be open in the spring.
- Piet Oudolf visited Detroit last month where he met DNR staff and Garden Club members to discuss his planning process for the garden in Belle Isle Park.

**Sommer Woods** inquired as to the availability of the renovated picnic shelters for rentals this summer. She also asked who brought Piet Oudolf to Detroit.

*Amanda Hertl responded that the only shelter that may not be ready until spring is shelter 19 due to its poor condition. However, the remaining shelters will be available to rent. Amanda further explained that the Detroit Garden Club wrote to Piet Oudolf requesting him to come to Detroit and consider a garden. Belle Isle was chosen as his preferred site.*

Committee member **Curis** asked about the contract under the City?

*Amanda Hertl responded that the City is in the process of determining what credits are available to offset their storm water fees based on the areas that storm water directly drains into the river.*

*Ron Olson further responded that the formula that is used to calculate the storm water usage also dictates the cost of the water usage. Currently working to find a way to use storm water runoff for example at the golf course for irrigation.*

### ***Upcoming Events***

**Darlisa Rickman**, Belle Isle Park Events Coordinator, shared the winter season is still as busy as the peak season.

- February 3, 2018 Shiver on the River (please see flyer)
- Belle Isle Conservancy will be hosting “The Flying Pancake Breakfast” at the Flynn Pavilion on February 3, 2018.

### ***Belle Isle Conservancy Update***

**Chair Hodges** shared that the Memorandum of Understanding with the DNR was recently approved and signed. Chair Hodges further thanked the Conservancy and DNR staff for their work on this.

DNR staff will have responsibility for executing the findings of the management plan and the provisions of it according to the lease with the City. The Conservancy will continue collaborate jointly on communications, revenue strategies; vendor opportunities and working together on large scale events.

**PUBLIC COMMENTS** (3 minutes each)

**Michael Betzold**

He stated that the Grand Prix is incompatible with the Oudolf Garden. He believes the island is being gentrified for suburbanites.

**Donald Green**

Stated that the MO-GO bike system was mentioned as a possible addition to the island and it is not a good fit for Belle Isle Park for the following reasons:

- Kiosks work half of the time
- Bikes must be returned to a kiosk every 30 minutes
- You will be charged a \$4 fee every half an hour the bike is not returned
- Competition for the vendor currently located on the island

Mr. Green further stated that the “new” solar power lights are nonfunctional, and the boat ramp is a “Stupid” idea.

**Janice Ellison**

Shared that this coming Sunday the Detroit Nature Center will present a program on Albert Kahn’s influence on the Island, and Chris Mister will be speaking on the Aquarium movement and Victorian age. The event will take place between 2:00 and 2:30 p.m., January 21, 2018.

**Chair Hodges** spoke on behalf of **Gloria Myers**. Myers is interested in obtaining crime statistics for 2016 compared to 2017. Meyers would also like to know about the possibility of food trucks on the Island.

**Paul Andrew Kettunen**

Requested proof/ certification of the Grand Prix extension to 2018. He has been unable to obtain paperwork from the City of Detroit stating the Grand Prix is granted an extension into the year of 2018. Further questioning what contract the Grand Prix is currently being conducted under and requesting a copy of the current agreement.

*Ron Olson replied that when the DNR leased Belle Isle Park we agreed to honor the original agreement that the City of Detroit and the Grand Prix had in place. It stated in the original contract it was extended out to 2018 through the City of Detroit. What is currently being discussed is if we will re-negotiate the contract with the Grand Prix for future years to come. Both Olson and Chair Hodges indicated a copy would be provided and the extension is available for review.*

**Chair Hodges** spoke on behalf of **Kevin Hennessey**, sharing that the cement pad placed to accommodate the Grand Prix is the first thing you see when you enter the island. Restore the island to its natural beauty.

**Mary Ellen Howard**

Stated there is a need for picnic tables in the park. Further stating that the Grand Prix is a huge impact on the Island and for 3 months there is no access to the west side and she would like to be made aware of the public meetings. She believes the Piet Oudolf Garden is a great idea however not compatible with the Grand Prix. She expressed concerns that these public meetings are a one way conversation and we are not allowed to ask questions during the meeting and we do not get answers after.

**Chair Hodges** replied that there is always staff available to answer questions after the meeting.

**Betty Roberts**

Stated that unlike many other comments about the Grand Prix; I am in favor of the Grand Prix. The public interaction especially with youth is something to factor in.

**Sandra Novacek**

Did not get a chance to speak; her comment card stated the following regarding the strategic plan

- Careful attention needs to be made to criteria for approving large events
- Pay careful attention to developing guidelines for reviewing privileges/ donations. The donor's mission should match with the DNR and BIC mission.

### **COMMITTEE MEMBERS ITEMS**

**Denker**

Thank you to the DNR and local staff for all that you do. Thank you Ron Olson for helping us in keeping Metro Youth Day going for many, many years.

**Curis**

What happened to the beavers on the Island?

*Ron Olson replied the beavers are fine; we are taking the proper steps in keeping the balance. Beavers have been on the island long before they are just migrating out of the wooded areas.*

**Woods** I just wanted to make sure shelters would be open for use. I have open sentiments in regards to the Garden. Also, in this down time I hope the two booths are being worked on and will be fully operational.

**Ron Olson** Stated that although Amanda didn't cover, a thorough study of the Conservatory was conducted and we discovered that key structural improvements need to be made as a high priority that is estimated to cost up to \$800,000. We are looking to get that repaired this year.

**Chair Hodges** In regards to the Grand Prix, the DNR is responsible to negotiate the contract. At this time a renewal contract has not been submitted for review.

**Denker** interjected that it has not been decided to move forward with considering extending the event past 2018.

**Hodges** further pointed out Denker's grandfather is present in the photograph shown in the Summer Youth Employment Program presentation and was one of the original Civilian Conservation Corps. Members.

Meeting Concluded: 10:54 am.

**NEXT REGULAR MEETING:**

**February 15, 2018**

Flynn Pavilion

Belle Isle Park

Detroit, MI 48207

9:00 a.m. – 11:00 am.

Approved: \_\_\_\_\_  
Michele Hodges

\_\_\_\_\_  
Ronald A. Olson, Chief

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

\*November 2017 minutes approved at the January 18<sup>th</sup>, 2018 meeting.