

**MINUTES**

**Belle Isle Park Advisory Committee Meeting**

Thursday, August 16, 2018

**Location: Belle Isle Flynn Pavilion**

Meeting called to order at 6:00 p.m.  
Quorum established at 6:08 p.m.  
Roll Call and Excused Absences

**EXCUSED ABSENCES**

No excused

**PRESENT FOR BIPAC**

Chair Michele Hodges  
Rev. Lonnie Woods  
Bryan Barnhill  
Michael Curis  
Sommer Woods

**DNR STAFF PRESENT**

Scott Pratt  
Jacob Brown  
Michael Terrell  
Darlisa Rickman  
Bill Shreck (MDOT)  
Carrie Warren (MDOT)

**APPROVAL FOR EXCUSED ABSENCES**

There was no motion to approve excused absences.

**REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

There was no motion to approve the minutes from July 13, 2018 and August 2, 2018

**GENERAL UPDATES**

None given.

### **DNR Law Enforcement Update**

Gerard Goulette, Conservation Officer from Leelanau County was present for the meeting as well as Amanda McCurdy, Conservation Officer from Ottawa County. No Law Enforcement update was given.

### **MDOT Update**

**Carrie Warren**, MDOT representative reviewed the areas where signage would be needed with Lieutenant Joe Molnar and found 6 probable areas. Signage is now clearly posted in those areas to help alleviate any further issues. There are hopes to do a full study of the island over the next couple of months to identify signs that may conflict with some of the pavement markings. The construction on the bridge should be completed soon. The Boat Club parking lot has been completed, and the drainage updated. There is about \$200,000 dollars for resurfacing next summer. MDOT is working with the DNR to identify the areas; currently reviewing Central, Vista and possibly one other area. There is also bridgework needed on the substructure of the bridge over the next few years. That work will be a lot less impactful then work recently done.

**Committee member Bryan Barnhill:** Has anything happened to the “way finding” signs when you first enter the island? When entering the park last week, I did not see them have they been removed.

**Carrie Warren:** *Yes, they have been removed*

**Jacob Brown:** *The signs were causing backups to traffic coming on to the island, so they were pulled and will be moved to spaces that will be less impactful in a negative way to the incoming traffic.*

**Committee member Bryan Barnhill:** I was here with my family and I depend on the signage to direct me where to go. Way finding in general is important to people that want to use and enjoy the island, so I'd be interested in the follow up.

**Chair Hodges:** Scott that is something that you guys are looking into correct? Is there a study pending or underway?

**Scott Pratt:** *We are in talks to determine how we would like to go about it and seeking funding.*

### **Park Operations Update**

**Jacob Brown, Belle Isle Park Supervisor** gave the following update;

- With the storm last week there were 60 to 80 trees that were down around the island. Very proud that the city and volunteers rallied to help in our time of need. And thank you to the state for sending workers in to assist as well.
- Scheduled interviews for our 2 Ranger positions and our open Janitor position.
- “Street EatZ” will be providing vending machines deployed at the beach and Sunset Pointe locations, giving park goers additional food options.

- A healthy option machine and a machine catering to more traditional fare will be available. A percentage of the sales will be donated to the Conservancy.
- The Giant Slide is open and operational.
- The golf course water pump was installed so the greens will be closed for the rest of the season. They will be open and operational again next year. The range is open and the greens behind them are closed. More information is available on the website.
- The lack of the hands for the clock at the entrance is due to the motor burning out. We are in the process of determining a long-term solution to this reoccurring problem.

**Chair Hodges:** Thanked the DNR and all who participated in the wonderful team effort during the storm clean up.

### ***Goodbye Geese Program***

“Goodbye Geese” will be volunteering their services to Belle Isle Park to help control the population of geese on the island. The Goodbye Geese Program uses trained Border Collies to haze the geese from the Island. It is one of the most humane processes to date with wildlife and people remaining unharmed in the process. Signage will also be posted in the park while hazing is in progress to advise patrons not to feed the geese and to make them aware that the dogs are working and should not be distracted or disturbed. For more information on the study you may contact the company at [info@Goodbyegeese.net](mailto:info@Goodbyegeese.net) (Please see attached)

### **Infrastructure Updates**

**Scott Pratt and Jacob Brown** briefly spoke about the Infrastructure update provided in committee members packets.

**Committee member Bryan Barnhill** stated he would like to start looking into minimizing traffic onto the island by exploring options such as park and rides, mogo bike stations and perhaps bird scooters. Also, would like to explore longer term options such as establishing partnerships to support not having as much car traffic on the island.

**Chair Hodges** stated there have been discussions about this matter and looking at all different modes including water taxis. We would like to have that conversation so that people can get here more effectively.

**Committee member Sommer Woods** asked about the Athletic Complex, is there a contractor that facilitates the operations there, and are they responsible for these upgrades or is that coming out of a different budget?

**Scott Pratt** replied that it is all through the contractor.

**Committee member Woods** stated she thought that the Complex was managed by Come Play Detroit are they overseeing the construction?

*Scott Pratt* replied that no, *Come Play Detroit* is not overseeing the construction, the

**Chair Hodges** stated that there is a myriad of federal and state resources; we had a great meeting with a major foundation, the Conservancy team and the DNR, so the stage is set to be doing more.

**Committee member Sommer Woods** asked where the plan for the road diet is regarding the Iron Belle Trail? It looks like we are reducing lanes based off what I have seen. There is only text saying that there is going to be a road diet, so I am curious to know what it is going to look like.

*Jacob Brown* explained that the area they are speaking of goes from 3 lanes to 2 lanes. At that point there is an awkward amount of space where there are 2 lanes they would like to claim for portions of the trail, but it is not cleared yet. They do not have the full idea developed yet, but an example would be if you go from the Yacht club to the beach. That area goes from 3 lanes to 2 lanes and there is about 12 extra feet out of the 2 sections of the lanes that could possibly be another lane, but it is not. Currently working on alternatives there.

**Committee member Sommer Woods** further questioned is there an overall conversation holistically about how a road diet would look for the whole island not just an area?

*Carrie Warren* replied that it is her understanding that the focus for the Iron Belle Trail is towards the East end of the island where the lane system jumps from 3 to 2 and then back to 3 to make that consistent and to capture some of the extra space and make it usable for other modes. What Scott alluded to as far as seeking funding is to really look at the traffic circulation coming off the Boulevard and Jefferson onto the island, where we get the big backups, where the bike lane becomes awkward at Sunset and all the way around. Are there areas where there is obsolete signage? Yes. Are there areas where the signs and the pavement markings conflict with each other? Also, yes. We are trying to get our arms around all of that and then figure out a series of projects to address these issues, since we probably won't have the funding to do it all at one time. But if we identify all pavement marking issues, for example and that those pavement markings are maintenance every year in various places and we had the plan in our back pocket then we could implement it as a part of the maintenance.

**Committee member Sommer Woods** that is something that is being discussed to look at holistically? I'm just trying to understand the bigger picture of it.

*Scott Pratt* replied that Carrie has been saying from day one that it needs to be a holistic island life and we are trying to get the people together.

*Bill Schreck (MDOT)* stated that we did make some possible progress on funding.

**Committee member Sommer Woods** further requested if there is going to be the same spacing for the bicycle lane as it was previously on the McArthur Bridge?

*Carrie Warren responded that the first plan calls for the bicycle lanes to be the same as previous and the reason for that is to make things different we would have to get into concrete work on Jefferson because of how those islands are. So that's another focus that within that study we are going to try to undertake, how to balance the bike access, pedestrian access and car access. But like you said we need to look at it as a big picture.*

### **Outreach and Upcoming Events**

**Darlisa Rickman** gave the following update:

- August 18, 2018 the Youth Connection back to school fair with some free giveaways and a 5k walk
- This year our numbers will be down in the Conservatory and the Flynn Pavilion due to construction. We are not taking any additional requests for events at the Conservatory.

The Belle Isle Conservancy is our partner in distributing information about events on Belle Isle and just general information, feel free to sign up for emails from the Belle Isle Beat.

**Rev. Lonnie Peek** asked, “Were you responsible for the article in the paper on the Aquarium?” Because that was a good job.

**Chair Hodges** replied that was our team and thank you and thank you Darlisa.

*Scott Pratt stated he would also like to add to that with the special events hosted on the island. With the help of the Conservation officers, the Michigan State Police and our own ranger staff we designed backup parking plans in case of overcrowding on the park. Our staff is ready to enact the plan to successfully filter people through the park when it gets to that point, so that we are not shutting down the island as we have been forced to do in the recent past.*

### **Belle Isle Conservancy Update**

**Chair Hodges** gave the following update

- The Deeper Dive is taking place tomorrow night, August 17, 2018 where there will be an unveiling of the new Puffer Fish exhibit and a lot of African culture is represented.
- Sunday, August 19, 2018 the winner of last years Belle Isle Soup will be presenting her healthy walk at the Belle Isle Nature Center from 1:00 – 4:00 p.m.
- There is the Canal Clean up this weekend and other clean up opportunities
- On August 29, 2018 at 5:30 p. m. this year's Belle Isle Soup will be held at the Aquarium

- The Garden Party will be held September 11, 2018 to fundraise for improvements to the Conservatory grounds leading into the Oudolf Garden
- On October 11, 2018 the Polish the Jewel will be held, this event is raising funds for the splash park
- The Farrow Group donated \$50,000 of work to take down the old Giant Water Slide
- Fiscal Assessment of the Saw mill
- Hired a Capital Campaign Consultant
- \$50,000 grant received from the Wheeler Family Foundation for the Aquarium
- Billboard on I-94 eastbound for the Belle Isle Nature Center
- Holiday Stroll (details to be announced)
- Piet Oudolf will be in town in October and there will be a chance for engagement
- Summer Fridays at the Aquarium 12:00 – 4:00 p.m.

*Chair Hodges* stated that the Grand Prix agreement has been approved with the conditions outlined by the BIPAC committee and the DNR. Thanks everyone for the hard work that went into the agreement. Hoping to continue to move forward and focus on the island.

**PUBLIC COMMENTS** (3 minutes each)

- Gary Callender:** Is thankful that the Grand Prix could stay active.
- Debbie Stefanides:** Thanks for keeping the Grand Prix.
- W. B. McIntyre:** Would like to know is any action being taken on silting or dredging on the channel between Belle Isle and Detroit Yacht Club.
- Ed Weglarz:** Supportive of the Grand Prix.
- Deborah Alrutz:** Would like to thank the DNR for keeping the race on the island.
- Mary Kay DeMayo:** Thank you to BIPAC and the Michigan DNR for work on the issue of the Grand Prix on Belle Isle.
- Carol Rhoades:** Would like to see the study that was done that said “no animals were harmed” by the race. Also, would like to see decibel testing June 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> during the race.
- Mary Ellen Howard:** Expresses her disappointment in the renewal of the Grand Prix contract.
- Tiffany VanDeHey:** The Giant Slide is now open. The awning blew off the top during the windstorm. Working on getting quotes for a replacement. For 2019 will be renting bicycles from the Giant Slide location.

- Michael Betzold:** Please explain what efforts were made to verify the claim of \$58 million in economic impact as a rationale for the Grand Prix contract? What did Bud Denker mean by saying the Grand Prix is not sustaining here in the future? What things does he plan to “fix” on the Island before the Grand Prix leaves?
- Cheyenne Jones:** Thank you for keeping the Belle Isle Grand Prix.
- Cedric Johnson:** Thank you for keeping the Belle Isle Grand Prix on the island.
- Ade Oba Abdalla** I appreciate and applaud the DNR approval to allow us to have the Chevrolet Detroit Belle Isle Grand Prix here on the island for the next 3 years with a 2-year option. Looking forward to having a banner year for Belle Isle, Detroit and ourselves.

**COMMITTEE MEMBER ITEMS**

- Bryan Barnhill:** By November there will be a new Gubernatorial administration. Moving forward, I’d be interested in seeing updates on how we see the new relationship playing out and what role this board is going to play in terms of making some sort of gesture or determination about our feelings as it pertains to the current relationship between the state and Belle Isle.
- Chair Hodges:** Conversations have been had regarding that and would like to have a future meeting about how we plan to work with the candidates and them temperature support for Belle Isle and other related issues.
- Scott Pratt:** Submitted a transition plan sitewide and Belle Isle was highlighted. Believes Ron will comment on that at the appropriate time and hoping for the same support.
- Michael Curis:** After November there could possibly be another board appointed that could. Be a possibility. Felt that everyone learned a lot by bringing up the pros and cons of having the race upon the island and hopes to be able to continue to minimize the impact of the race.

Motion to Adjourn: 7:19 p. m.  
 Moved by: Bryan Barnhill  
 Seconded by: Michael Curis

Meeting Concluded 7:19 p.m.

**NEXT REGULAR MEETING:**

**September 21, 2018**

Flynn Pavilion

Belle Isle Park

Detroit, MI 48207

9:00 a.m. – 11:00 am.

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

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

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