

MINUTES

Belle Isle Park Advisory Committee Meeting

Thursday, October 15, 2020

Location: Teleconference

Meeting called to order at 9:01 a.m.

A Quorum was established at 9:02 a.m.

PRESENT FOR BIPAC

Michele Hodges, Chair

Michael Curis

Sommer Woods

Bud Denker

Bryan Barnhill

Brad Dick

Lonnie Peak

DNR STAFF PRESENT

Ron Olson, Chief

Karis Floyd

Scott Pratt

Darren Swan

Mike Terrell

Darlisa Rickman

Amanda Treadwell

Deb Jensen

Meghan Stevens

Mia Moore

Barbara Graves

Todd Szyska

OTHERS PRESENT

Michael Montri, Grand Prix Representative

Lance Couturier, MSP

Bill Shreck, MDOT

Ayo Thomas, Belle Isle Conservancy

REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Approval of Minutes for September 17, 2020:

Moved by: **Bud Denker**

Seconded by: **Brad Dick**

Michele Hodges called the meeting to order and welcomed everyone.

GENERAL UPDATES

Deb Jensen, PRD Park Plan Administrator, updated the group on the **Michigan Managed Public Land Strategy** (presentation attached). The draft sections of the 2021 strategy can be reviewed at Michigan.gov/PublicLands. Feedback can be submitted to DNR-LandStrategy@michigan.gov.

Michael Montri, Grand Prix Representative, gave an update on the **Grand Prix Event**. Please see the attached presentation along with a memo to the Belle Isle Park Advisory Committee.

Chair Hodges thanked Mr. Montri for the update and reminded everyone that the update is for information only. It is important information to have, but the Belle Isle Advisory Committee does not have authority to act on it. **Chief Olson** said the department first made sure the adjustments followed the agreement, and that the public had access to the park as they have had in the past with the event. **Chair Hodges** reminded everyone that there are two separate issues; the current year plan which is what was presented today, and the option to extend for two additional years, which is NOT under consideration at this time. If the request to extend was under consideration, it would require a public comment period.

Rev. Lonnie Peek wanted to make sure it was clear that it is still three days; one day will be the proceeding week and the next weekend will be two days. **Mr. Montri** confirmed this; some adjustments were made, but the timeframe of set up and tear down has not changed.

Chair Hodges commented that she does think this is in the best interest of Belle Isle Park and its stakeholders. It is within the contractual boundaries so there is no standing to use this as an opportunity to stop the Grand Prix. She thanked the Grand Prix for working hard and being compliant.

Michael Curis commented that everybody is concerned about the increase in footprints, the timelines, the disruption to the island visitors, noise, traffic, etc. COVID has changed the whole world. The Grand Prix has come up with creative solutions and adjustments to make this a palpable event. Everyone is trying to make the best of some tough times and tough decisions.

Sommer Woods commented the Grand Prix has done their part in taking into consideration the schedule. Being a frequent user of Belle Isle Park, she understands the dynamics of people's concerns, but also as a person who works in special events, she knows that events are part of the quality of life. There are different events taking place outside of traditional "spaces". Quality of life and activities look very different for different people and we cannot always be of one mindset of what that is. It is important to note this is a one-off, and not a precedent.

Ron Olson, Chief, DNR-PRD

There was a surprise reception held yesterday for Ed Deeb at the Flynn Pavilion where he was presented with a photograph of the dedication that we did a few years ago in the declaration of Ed Deeb Drive. Ed was very appreciative.

The supreme court ruled on the executive orders of the Governor regarding the COVID enforcement, and subsequently the rules were reformed under the Department of Health and Human Services quickly thereafter. We are still operating under the same rules that we have been operating under, including wearing masks indoors and social distancing. We will keep everybody informed as the rules evolve. Right now, rules under the Health Department are enforceable.

The Army Corps of Engineers had presented a prognosis of water levels at the Waterways meeting a few weeks ago. The good news is water levels are receding. An Army Corps representative will present at the next BIPAC meeting.

Chair Hodges asked about the opening meetings act and the ability to still meet virtually. **Chief Olson** said it is being reviewed and will be signed into authority soon.

Chair Hodges asked about the analysis of concessionaires on the island. **Chief Olson** said Jen Zieger, the consultant, will come back at the November BIPAC meeting to provide an overview.

Karis Floyd, Park Manager, Belle Isle and Milliken

We are into fall/winter operations and are currently winterizing buildings. Shelter 7 and the Bus Stop will remain open all winter. We hired two rangers and are waiting on human resources approval. We are at fiscal year end and are busy closing out books. We are in the process of planning out winter and spring operations and getting ready for next summer; looking at all aspects if we are still in pandemic. Starting recruitment for 2021 for summer workers. Had 100 applications last year and hired a lot of people, but a lot of people backed out due to COVID. We are hoping in 2021 we can retain individuals. If anyone knows of landscaping companies, please pass along as our contract will be going up for bid near beginning of January for lawn services on Belle Isle.

We have had Healthy Kidz on for about 4 weeks; working on teaching the kids everything from cutting down trees, maintaining them, including them in sawmill operations, building tables and chairs. We have included them in winterization of the buildings. They asked if they could do the landscaping in front of the new office building. They also took the opportunity to map out areas along Shelter 2 where they want to start installing coal burn containers. **Gary Williams** came out of retirement and has been leading them and it has been a good collaboration. **Chair Hodges** asked to have Gary at a future meeting to recognize him for his impact. **Scott Pratt** said **Maria Lawton** will be at the next meeting as well.

Amanda Treadwell, PRD Planner, Southeast Michigan, gave an infrastructure update (presentation attached). **Bud Denker** asked about the water levels and timeline on dam removal. Amanda said the water levels have gone down and will continue to taper off. The plan is to

remove the dam before the ice comes in, end of November/beginning of December. They are anticipating putting it back in next March.

Lt. Todd Szyska, DNR Law Enforcement

We will start winter rotation on Sunday. We will continue coverage with MSP but will not have as many officers as in the summer. The weather has slowed down visitation a little bit. There have not been many incidences but there have been a few minor fender benders. The MCL 333.2253 is the emergency order put in place by the Department of Health and Human Services which mirrors the executive orders with enforcing mask wear and participation. They can enforce the rules, but they are going for education first as best as possible. Gives a shout out to Karis and his team with their partnership with Healthy Kidz and Gary Williams who has been a big asset and doing a great job with the youth.

Belle Isle Conservancy Update, Michele Hodges

Proposal 1 is on the November 3 ballot which will afford more flexibility in the allocation of the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund dollars. The Conservancy has taken a position in favor of the proposal. More than \$3M of the dollars have been invested on the island to projects that include the canal improvements, fishing piers, shelters, Iron Belle Trail, etc. Fairy Doors will be installed by this weekend on the Conservatory and Aquarium grounds, with conservation and habitat educational messages accompanying each. These will be displayed through Thanksgiving. Additional details of the program are on the website. We would like to thank the DSO and community groups for coming out and cleaning up the island. Our last Keep Belle Isle Beautiful campaign is this Saturday, October 17, continuing the message of encouraging behaviors of keeping the park clean. They will be hosting Trash Talks on October 24 at 4 p.m. The Polish the Jewel luncheon is today and will be virtual. Everybody will be given a picnic basket with goodies and swag. It looks like they will meet their goal even after losing the Grand Prix dollars. The aquarium is closed but is still active virtually. Once open, you will be able to see some of the capital improvements. Senior Days have convened, which allowed us to pilot some of the measures we will implement once they are reopened. We are grateful for BCBS for enabling us to make that happen. We have a partnership with Great Lakes Now doing educational programming out of the aquarium for one month every Friday. We are working with WDET on the partnership as well. We also have a partnership with DPTV with programming with the Mr. E Show. The Aquarium continues to move forward even with the challenges. The island stakeholders are meeting regularly, a chance for us to make sure we are coordinating well.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Michael Betzold expressed his opposition to the Detroit Grand Prix.

Diane Cheklich provided and read the following statement:

My name is Diane Cheklich. I'm a resident of Detroit and a board member of Detroit Audubon. I appreciate Belle Isle as a place to go birdwatching and enjoy nature. The peace I feel when going to Belle Isle has been especially important during this stressful pandemic. I believe Belle Isle offers the most value to people and wildlife as a natural space for peace and quiet. I oppose the Grand Prix, and I oppose the plan to expand the Grand Prix to two weekends next year. This plan to hold races two weekends in a row seems like the one four years ago to hold the Red Bull race

right after the Grand Prix. That proposal was a bad idea, was met with public outcry, and it did not move forward. This one should not either.

There seems to be a constant drumbeat of more encroachment by more car events on Belle Isle, starting with the threat of that Red Bull race, expanded permanent Grand Prix infrastructure, rumors of the auto show coming to Belle Isle, and now this. The Grand Prix already monopolizes the island for several months for setup, and this two-weekend race just represents more encroachment.

Belle Isle is a park, not a racetrack. It is home to many species of birds and other wildlife who have no voice in this debate. There are Ospreys that made a nest in the athletic field this year. That nest is close to the racetrack—what will happen to those birds when the race rolls in? Belle Isle is in a migratory bird flyway and is an important stopover habitat that deserves to be protected. Please respect nature and people's ability to enjoy it. Do not expand the Grand Prix to two weekends, and do not extend the Grand Prix contract. This race does not belong on Belle Isle at all. Thank you.

Angela DiSante expressed her opposition to the Detroit Grand Prix.

Regina Kuper expressed her opposition to the Detroit Grand Prix.

Chair Hodges read a statement from **Amy Greene**, Belle Isle Nature Center – The reopening of the Belle Isle Nature Center will commence tomorrow and will follow all health and safety regulations. Anyone interested in registering can reach out to Ms. Greene at (248) 336-5895 or email binc@dzs.org. They will be able to receive groups of 10 or less, Wednesdays through Saturdays.

Stanley Kempista submitted the following written statement:

I am looking forward to the two weekends of racing next year, the 29th year on the island. Thank-you DNR and thank-you the Detroit Grand Prix.

Sandra Novacek – submitted the following written statement:

To the Members of the Belle Isle Park Advisory Committee:

We are living in historic times that open up a window of opportunity for change. Business as usual has failed to keep the people of Detroit healthy and safe.

In July 2020, Detroit City Council President Pro Tempore Mary Sheffield and Council member Raquel Castañeda-López stood in front of the Spirit of Detroit to announce the Detroiters' Bill of Rights. These rights are based in the belief of racial equity — among the rights: to live free from discrimination, the right to water, safety, housing, environmental health, access and mobility, fulfillment of basic needs/quality of life, and the right to recreation.

The right to recreation declares that every resident is entitled access to parks, recreational opportunities and urban green spaces to protect and enhance their health and well-being.

The expansion and continuation of a private auto race which commercializes and defaces the natural landscape with massive amounts of concrete, signage, fencing, and commotion; and that deprives citizens of full year 'round access to their public park; violates their rights, the mission of the DNR, and is generally in conflict with nature.

Natural views and natural landscapes have extremely impactful and lasting mental and physical health effects on everyone who lives in, works in, or visits our city and state. As we are seeing more evidence that nature is offering the comfort and solace people are craving at this time and that park usage is increasing, this is not the time to expand and continue the Grand Prix on Belle Isle Park.

It is time for the DNR to do what's right: Follow its mission and work for the health and well-being of people - not privatized interests. It is time for the DNR to declare that the Grand Prix being held on Belle Isle has run its course and expedite the race to its finish!

Thank you!

Carol Rhoades (Due to technical difficulties, was unable to comment during the meeting and subsequently submitted the following written statement):

My name is Carol Rhoades and I am a frequent Belle Isle Park user. I disagree with the decision to extend the Grand Prix races to 2 weekends next year. With Covid 19 causing more park usage and folks using outdoor recreation, it is insane to extend the car races another weekend in June in a public park that has such high volume of use. I could not find anything in the contract for the Grand Prix race to extend the scope of the race without public input. Who authorized this decision? Did the Grand Prix pay their \$325,000 event usage fee this year? I also think the denial of entrance to the Oudolf Garden during the 2 weekends of racing is horrible. The garden is surrounded by racetrack and cannot be enjoyed due to barricades, fencing, concrete and grandstands. I would like to tell Mr. Montri that there are also downsides to the hotel use that increases with the Grand Prix race. Ask the Detroit Police Dept. about the higher incidence of sex trafficking during the race along Jefferson Ave. and downtown hotels. This is a negative impact of the race. It is unfair to park users that the race occurs at all in a beautiful city owned island park that belongs to the residents of Detroit. The Grand Prix needs a permanent place to race and that should be somewhere else, not Belle Isle.

Angela Lugo-Thomas, Long time park user and member of Belle Isle Concern, submitted and read the following written statement:

It has been a while since I have spoken up at one of these meetings and that is because I feel that it is a waste of time to say anything at these BIPAC meetings. In order to let people know that no matter what accolades, awards or recognition any of you receive and that your participation on this committee is a joke, many of us will continue to speak up, even if it makes no difference in the outcome.

It feels like a broken record, same shit, different year. I am against the occupation of Belle Isle by the Grand Prix. No amount of made up "funding" or "revenue" is worth the destruction of this historic park. The recent surprise announcement of having two events associated with this sham is a slap in the face of park users who need to have full access to Belle Isle, 365 days of the year. Mentioning that the amount of days of the occupation will stay the same is a mute point. As

BELLE ISLE PARK ADVISORY COMMITTEE

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mentioned in previous years, it should be zero days not 59, 60 or 61 days. When will someone finally stand up to this occupation and side with park users against the Grand Prix? Although few can attend these daytime meetings, we know that there are many people against this event and also still against the takeover of the DNR of Belle Isle as a state park, which was done against the wishes of the Detroit City Council and residents of Detroit.

Why can't a park just be a park? I am not sure why you feel developments and events make a park more attractive.

Personally, I am tired of all of you associated with this race event spinning this narrative that this is somehow great for Detroit, Belle Isle and the region. I guess you should award your publicity and marketing departments because your narrative has stuck and people actually believe it. What does it feel like to lie so effortlessly? To continue this sham? To continue to violate the mission statements of the Michigan Department of Natural Resources and the Belle Isle Conservancy?

Continuing to hold this destructive event on Belle Isle makes anyone involved in it culpable. You all are bought and sold. Instead of looking for other sources to cover the revenue Belle Isle needs, you have made the decision to continue this so called public/private partnership. This corporation owns Belle Isle Park. They do whatever they want and you accept it. You all have your heads so far up the Grand Prix's ass, you are oblivious to the real state of things.

Get the Grand Prix off Belle Isle!! It does not belong in a public park. Protect Belle Isle Park!

End of public comment

Bud Denker thanked everybody for their passion and feedback and thanked the team on Belle Isle for their work and tireless passion during this challenging time, as they do not get thanked enough. He wished Michele and Sommer well on their event today.

Sommer Woods said she appreciates the process of the people and community being able to speak. It is a challenging space in finding balance and she gets the complexity of it. She asked to see a report of the concessionaire analysis prior to the next meeting.

Meeting concluded: 11:02 a.m.

NEXT REGULAR MEETING: November 19, 2020

Approved: _____
Michele Hodges Ronald A. Olson, Chief

Date: _____



Belle Isle Park Infrastructure Update

October 20, 2020 Detroit, MI



Total Infrastructure Summary

9 - Construction

11 - Engineering

10 - Partner Agency coordination

(MDOT, OGD, FDR, DWSD, DTE, ATT & Verizon)

Belle Isle Park Infrastructure Update, October 2020



Lake Okonoka Habitat Restoration

- The Strand tentatively is scheduled to be paved next week, pending weather
- Woodside Road work, Nashua Canal pathways, and additional fill underway



Stop log structure is in and final shoreline grading is underway

Belle Isle Park Infrastructure Update, October 2020



Sawmill Roof Replacement

- Roof and structural repairs underway
- Project completion scheduled for last week in November



Belle Isle Park Infrastructure Update, October 2020



Iron Belle Trailhead & Trail Development

- **Project team walked trail layout to tweak alignment with existing trees**
- **Contractor has started removals for trail.**
- **Work this year will include all trail work to beach and potentially beyond Yacht Club (not including Yacht Club Drive or any road/curb work in 2020)**



Phase 1 of IBT and Phase 2 of the Trailhead has been funded by Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation

Belle Isle Park Infrastructure Update, October 2020



Northshore Fishing ADA Kayak Launch

- Launch complete
- Belle Isle Park staff will remove launch and ramp for winter
- ADA parking spaces will be striped in spring



Launch at Northshore fishing area

Belle Isle Park Infrastructure Update, October 2020



Wet-Mesic Flatwoods



Series of Ditches, swales and water control structures will improve hydrologic flow in flatwoods

- Engineer has submitted contractor recommendation to DTMB.
- November 2020 - Notice to Proceed for Contractor estimated
- December 2020/January 2021 – Mobilize to site. Complete prep. work as possible in winter
- March 2021 – Nov/Dec 2021 – Main restoration activities completed – all plants/trees planted
- May – October 2022 – Vegetation Establishment Period

Belle Isle Park Infrastructure Update, October 2020



Oudolf Garden

- **Raised Beds have been planted**
- **Contractor to finish pathways and rain garden**

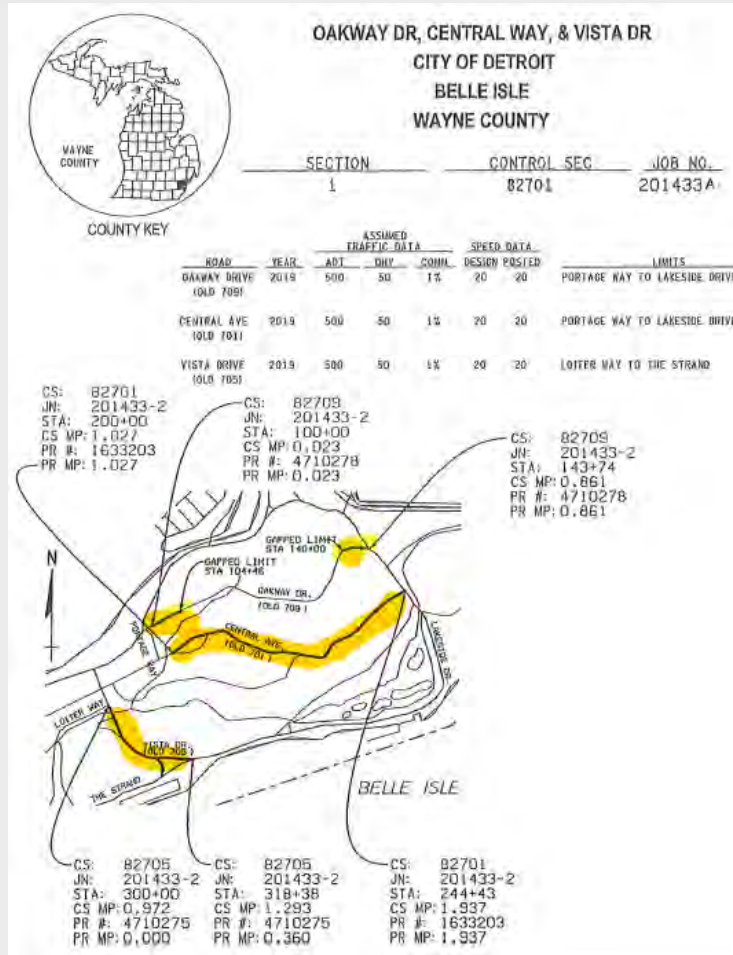


Raised beds for Oudolf Garden

Belle Isle Park Infrastructure Update, October 2020



MDOT WORK



- Central Ave. to be opened Tuesday, Oct. 20th
- Minor work remains on Vista and Oakway

Belle Isle Park Infrastructure Update, October 2020



MDOT WORK

- Picnic Way (between stone shelter and Loiter Way) & North block of Inselruhe will be complete by Friday, Oct. 23rd



Belle Isle Park Infrastructure Update, October 2020



DTE WORK

The logo for DTE Energy Services, consisting of the letters 'DTE' in a bold, blue, sans-serif font.



- PHASE 1 – Construction of System Backbone
- **COMPLETED**
- PHASE 2 – Construction of Infrastructure Loop
- **COMPLETED**
- PHASE 3 – Individual Facility Site Excavation
- **UNDERWAY**
- PHASE 4 – Conversion to DTE Infrastructure
- **SCHEDULED FOR 2021**

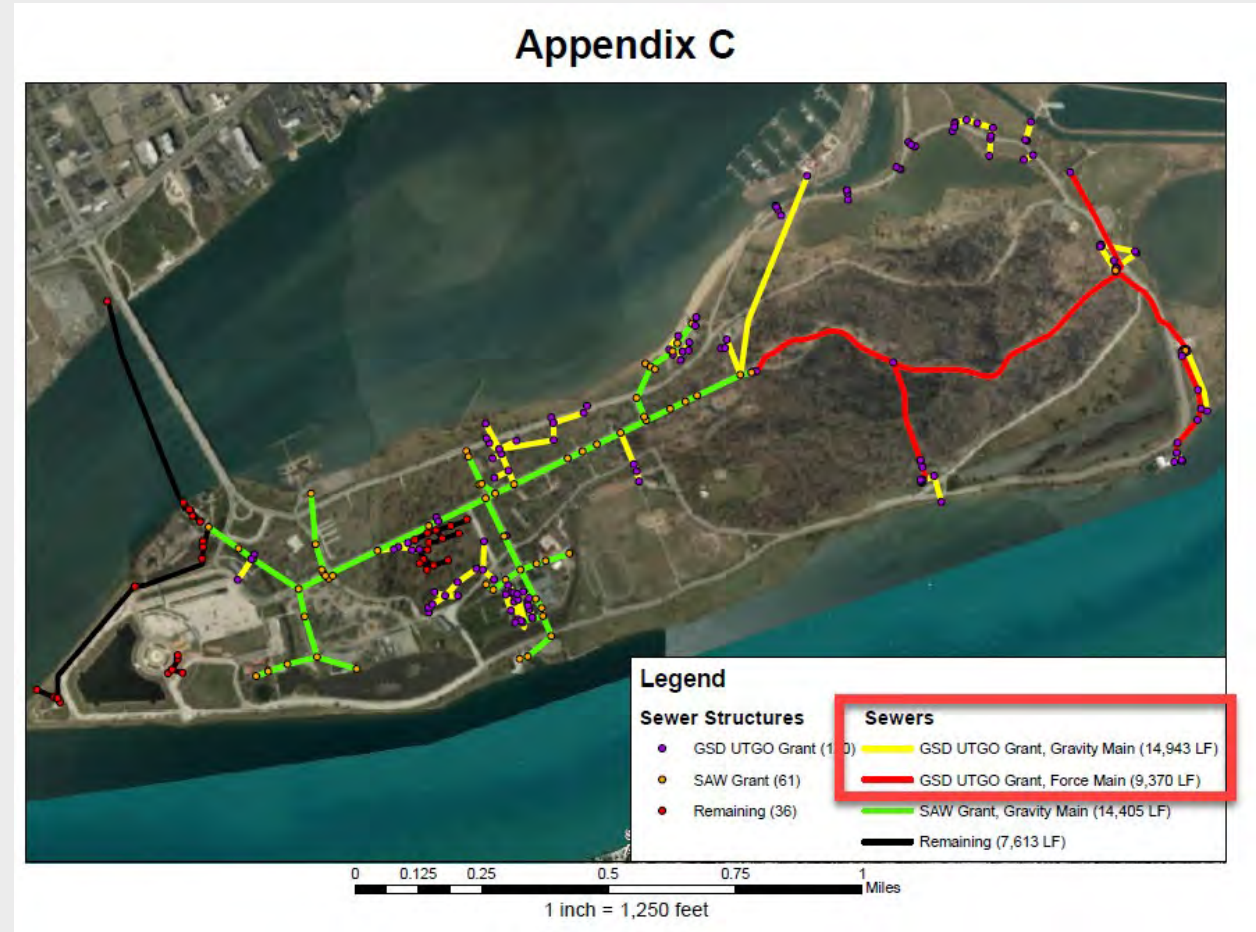
Belle Isle Park Infrastructure Update, October 2020



DWSD WORK

SCHEDULE & DELIVERABLES

- Sewer and Manhole Cleaning and Inspections - 8 weeks
- Flow Monitoring - 10 weeks
- Sewer System Model Summary Report 10 weeks
- Capital Improvement Plan – 2 weeks



Belle Isle Park Infrastructure Update, October 2020