

## MINUTES

### BELLE ISLE PARK ADVISORY COMMITTEE

September 25, 2014

Belle Isle Boat Club  
6 Riverbank Drive  
Belle Isle, Detroit, MI 48207

#### **Present for Belle Isle Park Advisory Committee (BIPAC)**

Michele Hodges, chair  
Rev. Lonnie Peek, Jr., vice chair  
Bryan Barnhill  
Bud Denker  
Alicia Minter  
Sommer Woods

#### **Absent for Belle Isle Park Advisory Committee (BIPAC)**

Michael Curis - excused

#### **Present for Department of Natural Resources (DNR) staff**

Ron Olson, chief, DNR Parks & Recreation Division  
Scott Pratt, chief, Southern Michigan Field Operations, DNR Parks & Recreation Division  
Jason Fleming, chief, Resource Management Section, DNR Parks & Recreation Division  
Mike Terrell, Metro Detroit District Supervisor, DNR Parks & Recreation Division  
Lt. Nathan McQueen III, Michigan State Police  
F/Lt. David Malloch, DNR Conservation Officer  
Joe Hall, park operations  
Karis Floyd, acting park manager  
Terri Conner, accounting assistant  
Darlisa Rickman, event outreach coordinator  
Erica Hill, volunteer coordinator  
Other department staff

Committee chairperson **Hodges** called the meeting to order at 9:02 a.m. She welcomed those in attendance and gave a brief summary of the Belle Isle Park Advisory Committee and the origin of the Belle Isle Boat House.

#### **Approval of August 19, 2014, Minutes**

**Denker** made a motion that minutes of the August 19, 2014, meeting be approved as submitted. **Woods** seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.

### **Excused Absences**

**Denker** made a motion to excuse the absence of committee member **Curis**, as well as the early departure of committee members **Barnhill** and **Woods**. **Barnhill** seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously. Due to scheduling conflicts, **Woods** left the meeting at approximately 9:15 a.m., and **Barnhill** left at approximately 9:45 a.m. **Minter** arrived at 9:08 a.m., and **Peek** arrived at 9:24 a.m.

### **Friends of Detroit Rowing Club Presentation**

**Todd Platt**, president of Friends of Detroit Rowing, provided an overview of the long history of the Detroit Rowing Club that celebrated its 175th anniversary in 2014. **Platt** introduced members of the club who were present, including **Dr. Henry Goitz** and **Alan Baur** and head coach **Dick Bell** who has been coaching for 42 years, during which time several club members participated in the Olympics, the most recent being in 2004. **Platt** highlighted the many different programs for all ages and talked about future plans to renovate and expand the boat house facility. **Olson** commented on where the facility is now and what it will take – short-term and long-term – to get where the club and department would like it to be.

### **Strategic Planning Process**

Discussion was held regarding a strategic plan to continue restoration efforts on Belle Isle. It was agreed that a facilitated work session would be scheduled in late November or early December to draft a plan that would focus on aligning, among other things, top priorities, partnerships, funding and resources, and ways to engage the public. It was decided that members would be polled to find a date that will work. Chair **Hodges** noted that the Belle Isle Conservancy also is working on securing partnerships to address top priorities.

### **Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) Update**

MDOT representatives **Bill Shreck** and **Carrie Warren** gave a brief transportation update, reporting that work continues on roads around the island.

### **Grant Applications**

**Olson** and **Pratt** reported on capital improvement grant applications that have been submitted, including the federal Urban Park and Recreation Recovery Program grant for athletic fields and facilities. **Olson** said he thinks there is a good chance the grant will be awarded for Belle Isle. **Denker** asked if there is a time limit for using grant monies. **Olson** responded that funds usually have to be used within a three-year time period.

### **Law Enforcement Update**

DNR Conservation Officer **F/Lt. Malloch** and Michigan State Police **Lt. McQueen** gave law enforcement updates, both reporting no major incidents on the island during the past month. They also reported on several events that had taken place, including the ITS Conference, which was attended by representatives from 62 different countries. The officers said rave reviews were received not only for Belle Isle but for the city of Detroit as well. It was also noted that over 7,000 cyclists were on the island for the Tour de Troit Ride September 20,

hunter education classes were taking place on the island, and over 2,000 walkers are expected for the ALS fundraiser September 27. Law enforcement is also preparing to assist with the Detroit Free Press/Talmer Bank Marathon October 19.

Both **Malloch** and **McQueen** agreed that these events help to showcase Belle Isle and the positive result of the community coming together to make things work. They said law enforcement officers also try to interact as much as possible with kids to dispel their negative image and to let the kids know that officers are there for the people.

### **Public Comment**

Public comment was opened at 10:20 a.m.

**Helen Gentry**, Detroit resident and member of Women Creating Caring Communities, said she doesn't think police should issue tickets during the major events on the island. She feels it is keeping some groups away. **Gentry** also would like to see more diversity in the rowing organization. She feels it is a prejudiced group that needs to have a better attitude.

**Eva Armitage** from Clinton Township talked about her family's history on the island since 1749 and offered her volunteer services. She was put in contact with Erica Hill, volunteer coordinator for Belle Isle.

**Donald Green**, Detroit resident, commented on an ordinance that regulates the placement of dumpsters and feels it is not being adhered to on the island. He also talked about a tax being used as a source of funding for the benefit of private citizens. Green also mentioned that he was rudely interrupted during his comments at the August meeting by a committee member's cell phone. He feels cell phones should be restricted during public appearances.

**Mark O'Brien** of the Friends of Detroit Rowing mentioned that he has been coming to Belle Isle for over 40 years, and he has never felt more comfortable or safer because of the presence of authorities. He also noted that the club has tried and asked for more diversity.

Public comment session was closed at 10:30 a.m.

### **Golf Operations**

**Olson** and **Fleming** gave an update on golf operations, reporting that the current contract will expire in November and bids will be out to get the golf course up and running. Fleming also noted that disc golf is currently on the big course.

### **General Updates on Park Enhancement Progress and Other News**

**Olson** gave updates on the following:

- Automated car-counters are on the island. **Olson** provided some numbers of vehicles that have visited the island since Memorial Day, as well as an estimate of the number of individuals visiting, based on the number of cars.

- DTE Energy is working on transitioning the old light poles that fell down to new poles. However, priority is with the lighting system for the city of Detroit. The same applies to water and sewer breaks on the island being repaired. The water and sewer department's priority is the city, but repairs will be made.
- There has been greater growth of the Recreation Passport in the southeast area of the state than other areas, due in part to Belle Isle State Park. As of September, there was 38-percent participation of registered vehicles for the city of Detroit, as opposed to only 8 percent last year.

**Hodges** reported on Belle Isle Conservancy projects, including the aquarium and having the Scott Fountain winterized. She noted that the alcove at the aquarium is now open, the skylights have been repaired and are open, and the weathervane has been refurbished.

**Peek** reported there was great participation in the Praise Fest held August 24 at Sunset Point on the island, noting that the three choirs who participated would like to return next summer. Peek indicated planning for next year should begin in January 2015 for the event to be held in July or August.

### **Committee Member Reports/Comments**

**Peek** stated he will be providing a report on Belle Isle to the Detroit Riverfront Conservancy during its meeting September 30.

**Denker** thanked the boat club for hosting the BIPAC meeting and also thanked **Todd Platt** for his presentation. **Denker** also commented that a lot has happened in the eight months the state has been engaged on the island. He also expressed his appreciation to the Michigan State Police and DNR conservation officers for all they do on the island.

\* \* \*

### **Announcements**

**Hodges** announced that the next advisory committee meeting is scheduled for Thursday, October 23, 2014, at the Dossin Great Lakes Museum on Belle Isle.

### **Adjournment**

A motion to adjourn was made by **Minter**, seconded by **Denker**, and passed unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 10:55 a.m.

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

---

Michele Hodges  
BIPAC Chairperson

---

Ron Olson  
DNR Parks and Recreation Division Chief