

Northville Parks and Recreation Commission
Meeting Minutes
May 24, 2023
Northville Township Hall, 44405 Six Mile Road
Time: 5:30 p.m.

1. **Call to Order:** 5:30 p.m.

2. **Roll Call:** Mark J. Abbo, Chair (Supervisor, Northville Township)
Mindy Herrmann (Trustee, Northville Township), arr. 5:45pm
James Mazurek (School District Board Member)
Barbara Moroski-Browne (Council Member, City of Northville)
Brian Trumbull, Vice Chair (Mayor, City of Northville)

Absent: Scott Frush (Trustee, Northville Township)

Staff: Debra Bilbrey-Honsowetz, Interim Parks and Recreation Director
Todd Mutchler, Northville Township Manager
George Lahanas, City of Northville Manager

3. **Citizens Comments** – Limited to 2 minutes per citizen/subject. If more time is needed, the item may be placed on the agenda.

Jim Porterfield, resident, explained that the recently formed group Northville Tree Champions was an advocacy group for tree promotion and preservation, as well as education. Northville Tree Champions was willing to help the Parks and Recreation Commission in any way it could, especially relative to tree questions and tree health in the parks.

Turnbull offered comments supporting the Northville Tree Champions, which was working toward becoming a 501(c)(3) organization. ~50% of the Tree Champions members come from Northville Township.

4. **Adoption of Agenda and Consent Agenda:** The Parks and Recreation Commission will approve the Consent Agenda by one motion. There will be no separate discussion of these items unless a commissioner or citizen requests that the item be moved to the main agenda.

MOTION by Turnbull, support by Mazurek, to approve the agenda as posted.
Motion passed unanimously by voice vote.

Chair Abbo said that as some Commissioners were time-constrained this evening and might need to leave early, and in order to maintain a quorum for priority items, the order of the agenda would be modified, and the modifications are reflected in the record below.

6. **Selection of Parks & Recreation Director**

Township Manager Mutchler explained that Interim Director Bilbrey-Honsowetz's term would be complete at the end of July, and a permanent Director – Derek Smith – was being recommended this evening.

Mutchler explained the recruitment process, which started with HR Director Caldwell working with the team and putting together a recruitment brochure. The position was posted in early April on the Michigan Townships Association website, the Parks website, the National Parks website, and other locations. The recruitment process also utilized social media.

27 applications were received from Michigan and Indiana. The Township's HR specialist redacted the applications, and Director Caldwell and Bilbrey-Honsowetz then reviewed the them. That process generated the top 4 candidates, and interviews were conducted on May 12 by Mutchler, Lahanas, Bilbrey-Honsowetz, and Coldwell. Derek Smith emerged as the top candidate, and he was then interviewed by Township Supervisor Abbo and City Mayor Turnbull. Both Abbo and Turnbull also recommended that Derek Smith be hired as the new Parks and Recreation Director.

Mutchler reviewed Smith's background and resume, noting that Smith had deep experience and extensive knowledge with other Parks & Rec departments, most recently serving as Independence Township's Parks and Recreation Department Director.

Smith is a Certified Parks and Recreation Professional (CPRP). Smith led Independence Township through their first accreditation under CAPRA (Commission on Accreditation for Parks and Recreation) in 2016, and later through their re-accreditation. Achieving accreditation under CAPRA was a Northville Parks & Recreation Commission goal.

In addition to other municipal work, Smith had served on the executive board of mParks, and remains active in that organization.

Abbo said that both he and Turnbull felt Smith was the right person at the right time to bring the needed leadership to the Parks & Recreation Department.

Smith offered comments relative to the opportunity to serve in Northville, and pointed out ways in which Northville's direction aligned with his own goals, including community stewardship, environmental sustainability, providing economic impact opportunities, and encouraging healthy active lifestyle choices.

Turnbull said that during the interview process he had specifically talked with Smith about the big projects occurring in the City of Northville, including the river walk. Abbo added that both he and Turnbull had worked to ensure Smith was coming in to the position with his eyes open.

Mazurek, speaking on behalf of the School Board, said that he appreciated the depth of Smith's experience. The community comprised of the School District, the Township, and the City was a collaborative one; they all worked closely together, and Mazurek welcomed Smith in his new role.

MOTION by Abbo, support by Mazurek, to accept the recommendation of Derek Smith for the position of Northville Parks and Recreation Director.

Roll call vote:

Abbo	yes
Mazurek	yes
Moroski-Browne	yes
Turnbull	yes

Motion carried 4-0.

5. Audit Presentation/Financial Report – Plante & Moran

Commissioner Herrmann arrived at 5:45pm.

Plante & Moran Audit Manager Kristen Colella presented the December 31, 2022 Northville Parks and Recreation Audit, highlighting the following:

- The Audit began in early March, and was completed in a timely way.
- Township staff is professional, responsive and knowledgeable relative to all accounting standards.
- Plante Moran issued an unmodified opinion on the financial statements, which is the highest level that can be achieved. There were no material weaknesses or significant deficiencies identified during the audit.
- Financial highlights included:
 - Total assets increased by \$657K, liabilities increased by \$443K.
 - Net position increased by \$357K.
 - Overall revenue increased by \$306K.
 - Expenses increased approximately \$327K this year on a full accrual basis.
 - On a fund basis, expenditures increased approximately \$611K.

The most significant reason for this year's increases is due to the implementation of new accounting standard GASB 87 for leases, which was new this year.

- Legacy Costs
 - Commission remains in a strong position as far as legacy costs go.
 - Pension plan is 102% funded at 12/31/21, with an asset of \$25K. This is a decrease in liability of over \$25K.
 - OPEB (Other Postemployment Benefits) plan is 162% funded at 12/31/22.
 - No contributions are required for the pension or OPEB plan, which means that the net position can go toward programs to support the community.
- Long-Term Considerations, Year ended December 31, 2022
 - The Commission continues to prioritize employee recruitment while promoting and prioritizing employee growth and development.
 - The Commission continues to strategically align its operating and capital needs with available resources while navigating the restraints of the market.

Commissioners expressed satisfaction with the positive fund balance and the audit in general, and thanked Interim Director Bilbrey-Honsowetz for her exceptional guidance and work over the past year.

MOTION by Herrmann, support by Moroski-Browne, to receive the Northville Parks and Recreation Audit for year ended December 31, 2022.

Motion passed unanimously by voice vote.

4. A. Approval of March 29, 2023 Meeting Minutes

Motion by Turnbull, support by Herrmann, to approve the March 29, 2023 minutes as submitted.

Motion passed unanimously by voice vote.

8. New Business

A. Budget Amendment for NCC Improvements

MOTION by Mazurek, support by Herrmann, to amend the Parks & Recreation budget for the Northville Community Center improvements to \$76,000 out of the Operating (Shared Service) fund surplus.

Motion discussion:

Bilbrey-Honsowetz explained that the Northville Community Center underwent a major renovation in 2003, when the building received massive expansion/upgrades to meet the increased demands of the community. It has been 20 years since that renovation and the Parks and Recreation Department is starting to focus on improvements to the facility including construction of a storage room in the gymnasium (2021), new banquet furniture (2022) and a completed LED renovation (2023).

The focus of the next phase aims to provide a fresh look to the facility. Project scope includes painting of the banquet hall, meeting rooms, office, and living room while also providing new flooring (carpet/LVT) in those rooms. A committee will make color selections for paint/flooring.

Originally, \$20,000 was budgeted in the NCC building improvement fund and \$10,000 was budgeted in the NCC building maintenance fund for this work. But like everything else post-COVID, every price came in very high, and the original budgeted amount won't complete the project. After receiving quotes, the project is estimated to be \$76,000. A budget amendment of \$46,000 is necessary to move forward. There is sufficient fund balance in the parks operating account to cover the additional costs.

The work is strategically planned for right after the year-end holidays. The building will be closed to do the upgrades, and re-open as a fresh, updated facility.

In response to questions, Bilbrey-Honsowetz said the new carpeting would be squares, with extra purchased so worn squares can be replaced when needed.

Roll call vote:

Abbo	yes
Herrmann	yes
Mazurek	yes
Moroski-Browne	yes
Turnbull	yes

Motion carried 5-0.

B. NBSA Request

Jason Stoops, President, Northville Baseball-Softball Association, explained that in order to provide fields with fence distance appropriate for softball, the Northville Baseball-Softball Association (NBSA) is requesting funds to provide temporary fences on three fields: Millennium SW and SE, and MGCP #6. Temporary fences would be used for league and tournament play and installed and removed by NBSA staff and coaches.

Mr. Stoops said that NBSA currently did not have a regulation softball field that has a normal fence. The temporary fences can be used for tournament games without taking the fields away from being baseball fields. They were hoping to have the temporary fences before the Northville softball tournament, scheduled for the second week of June.

In response to questions, Mr. Stoops said the fence posts would be recessed below grade every five feet, with the ability to sleeve down into the recess. When lowered, the posts will be flush with the ground with a cap.

The Commission suggested dropping metal into the sleeves so they can be found by a metal detector and using bright colored caps, so that the posts are easy to find when they are needed.

The temporary fences will have a lifetime of 7-10 years.

MOTION by Herrmann, support by Mazurek, to authorize reimbursement to Northville Baseball-Softball Association in the amount of \$6,898.80 to purchase three fences.

Roll call vote:

Abbo	yes
Herrmann	yes
Mazurek	yes
Moroski-Browne	yes
Turnbull	yes

Motion carried 5-0.

7. Department Report – Interim Director Bilbrey-Honsowetz

UPDATES

- February 11th Basketball Incident Update

Bilbrey-Honsowetz updated the Commission on the resolution of the February 11th basketball incident, involving adults that got in a brawl at a game. The Department had issued suspensions and filed disorderly conduct charges. Both participants had gone through the court process, both were very conciliatory, and the charges were subsequently dropped. Both agreed not to attend games for a year (one will not enroll their child), and the situation was resolved.

The Code of Conduct policy is being posted at all facilities.

- Popularity of Pickleball.
Pickleball is continuing to grow, and other activities are sometimes being pared (when slow) to allow more space for pickleball. The Ford Field Master Plan public input showed pickleball as one of the top desired amenities. Pickleball is being included in the middle school curriculum. College scholarships are also being offered for pickleball. The sport has transitioned from being a seniors-oriented activity to an all-age activity.

Herrmann suggested the Commission look at providing its own dedicated lighted outside pickleball courts.

Moroski-Browne noted that some individuals had spoken to her about privately funding the infrastructure if they could be provided outdoor space for pickleball courts.

- Fish Hatchery Parking Lot

After lengthy study, and the Department being unwilling to spend more money for more options and more potential designs, the recommendation was to utilize a portion of the available funds to grade and gravel the parking lot, and continue to monitor the situation relative to sustainable stormwater management.

- Cricket
Parks and Recreation is looking at a partnership with the Northville Cricket Club. The Township will be asked to fund a cricket pitch, which will in essence take up two soccer fields – probably Millennium #1 and #2.
- Skatepark
Construction will start in July, with final punch list items in October.
- Restroom Upgrades at Millennium Park
Last week the Board of Trustees approved a project to upgrade the restrooms at Millennium Park. The goal is to do this at off-times, with minimal disruption for users.
- Master Plans
 - Ford Field
 - 1200 survey responses
 - Open house scheduled for June 8 with separate plans for 1) people, 2) pedestrians, 3) pathways.
 - Department Master Plan
 - Legacy Park
 - Developing survey sessions for Department and Legacy Park Master Plans.
 - Soliciting input at the High School during lunch hours on June 6 in order to get student input.
 - RFP issued for trail construction at Legacy Park; responses due June 6.

Abbo reported that last week the Board of Trustees approved \$1.5M for Legacy Park improvements. The funds are coming from the difference between the \$12M in bonds that were issued, and the \$10.5M in final cost for demolition.

- New Staff and Staff Changes
 - New full time hire Ken Rundstadler – Park Specialist
 - Cheryl Sayn – Front Desk Associate (part time – replaces Libby Smith)
 - Margy Burkhart – Front Desk Associate (part-time – admin.)
 - Libby Smith staying on to assist with master plans

A LOOK AHEAD

- Employee Compensation
At the last meeting, there was a brief discussion about the compensation package, including benefits for Parks and Recreation employees, and how important it is to be competitive with other agencies, and be competitive internally with other departments, in order ensure longevity and stability within the Department. There have been some very, very preliminary discussions with HR and the Township and City Manager on this item. Director Smith will likely be continuing this conversation.
- Budget
As noted at the August meeting, due to staff vacancies there had been some lapses in service, followed by the learning curve of the new staff. Some program numbers had indeed declined partly due to the learning curve, and partly due to things outside the

Department's control. For example, the ski club was limited to two busses, which limited revenue opportunity.

Staff is working hard to offer new and additional programs, secure sponsorships, and reduce expenses whenever possible to offset any loss of revenue.

- **Fund Balance Policy**
Director Smith will likely weigh in on the draft fund balance policy before it comes to the Commission for final approval.
- **Parks Maintenance Building**
Bilbrey-Honsowetz recommended that when the Department of Public Services relocates to the Essential Services Complex, Parks and Recreation remain at its current location, which has indoor storage for equipment, bays, and is the right type of facility for that use. A fair rental rate will be brought to the Board.

A BRIGHT FUTURE!

The future looks bright for the Department. Staff is dedicated and hard-working. There is an excellent team environment with the entire organization, including the Commission.

Commissioners thanked Bilbrey-Honsowetz for her leadership during this interim period, and for keeping the Commission informed of events such as the February 11th basketball incident.

MOTION by Herrmann, support by Mazurek, to receive and file the Department report.

Mazurek reported on the successful bond millage in May, and how that related to funds spent on recreation facilities, including the new turf going in at the football stadium.

MOTION by Turnbull, support by Herrmann, to adjourn the meeting.

Motion passed unanimously by voice vote.

The meeting adjourned at 6:40pm.