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GOVERNOR

STATE OF MICHIGAN  
DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES  
LANSING



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DIRECTOR

May 24, 2017

TO: Council Member Mary Sheffield, Chair, Neighborhood and Community Services Standing Committee

FROM: Ron Olson, Chief, Parks and Recreation, Department of Natural Resources  
Bud Denker, Executive Vice President, Penske Corporation

RE: Belle Isle Grand Prix Questions

1. Is there auto racing in any other Michigan state park? What are the criteria used to determine this?

**Response:** *There are no car races at other state parks. However, there have been hydroplane boat races for over 20 years at Pontiac Lake Recreation Area over a long weekend in August. Also, we have had motorcycle races on designated off-road motorcycle trails at state parks.*

2. How does running of the Grand Prix fit in with the strategic long range plan for Belle Isle Park?
  - a. Can there even be a coherent long-term management plan that includes a months-long occupation by the race?

**Response:** *The plan, which is still being developed, does recognize the value of special events. However, the plan will identify criteria for accommodating requested events, either existing or new, that will be used to in the future. The Grand Prix is certainly an example of a major event.*

3. If the DNR decides to renew the Grand Prix contract how will the public be involved in the negotiations?

**Response:** *The agreement the City approved prior to 2014 for the Grand Prix extends through the end of 2018. There will be a public forum to allow the public to express their thoughts and perspectives during the contract review process.*

4. If the DNR decides to renew the Grand Prix contract, what does the DNR feel is a reasonable number of days to set up and take down the race? In recent years it has taken from 70-120 days for this process.

**Response:** *It is the Grand Prix's intention to reduce the set-up and takedown time from 11 weeks in 2017 to nine weeks in 2018. Further assessment of set-up and takedown timelines will occur during the contract review process.*

5. What attempt has the DNR made to locate donors whose missions match those of the DNR and Belle Isle Conservancy – to preserve, protect, and restore Belle Isle and its natural beauty for everyone?

**Response:** *The Belle Isle lease was approved in 2013 and the state started managing Belle Isle Park in 2014. At the time DNR management began, the department estimated the state would invest up to \$20 million into the park in the first three years. This included operations, capital improvements, public safety funding grants, gifts and partnership investments. The total state investment now exceeds \$32 million for the first three years of state management. A number of donors have been sought and provided investments to leverage funding to improve the park.*

6. Has there been any communication with the immediate neighborhood organizations in the area of Belle Isle about the load in and load out time for the Grand Prix?
- a. Will the public have input for the new lease between the DNR and the Chevrolet Belle Isle Grand Prix?

**Response:** *Communication is provided through the monthly Belle Isle Park Advisory Committee meetings. This park-specific advisory body is unique within our state park system.*

- a. *There will be a public forum to allow the public to express their thoughts and opinions during the contract review process.*

7. What benefits, besides the lighting on the bridge, has the City received since the Grand Prix has been taking place?

**Response:**     **BELLE ISLE IMPROVEMENTS:**

*Since the Grand Prix returned to Belle Isle in 2007, event organizers have coordinated over \$13 million in lasting improvements to Belle Isle:*

- *Repaired damaged lighting and drainage systems*
- *Renovation of Scott Fountain*
- *Renovation of the Belle Isle Casino*
- *Repaired picnic shelters by fixing roofs, plumbing, fixtures and electrical*
- *Repaired and installed new picnic tables*
- *Upgraded Scott Fountain Lagoon, including pump repairs*
- *Removed old inoperable wooden piers at Belle Isle Boat Club*
- *Installed new pedestrian bridges and playscapes*
- *Replaced all MacArthur Bridge lights to LED for increased brightness, safety and energy efficiency*
- *Installed new playscapes*
- *Repaired Comfort Stations*
- *Enabled Scott Fountain to start and flow each year*
- *Repaired Harbormaster boat dock*
- *Removal of over 100 dead and diseased trees*
- *French drains installed in picnic areas*

### **COMMUNITY IMPACT:**

- *The Grand Prix benefits local businesses. The race generated over \$47 million in total spending for the Metro Detroit region in 2014. Over 95,000 people attended the Chevrolet Detroit Belle Isle Grand Prix events in 2007, 2008, 2012, 2013 and 2014.*
- *The Grand Prix donated over 2000 DNR annual passes – Recreation Passports – to local groups and residents in the last three years.*
- *In partnership with MDOT and DNR in 2016, the Grand Prix contributed funding for bringing regional busing to Belle Isle.*
- *The race has provided over 16 hours of national TV coverage annually, showcasing Detroit and its beauty to over 2.4 million people in 2016 alone.*
- *The race has employed over 100 people during start-up and take-down and over 600 during race weekend.*
- *Repaired and widened roads in cooperation with MDOT to provide smoother roadways and enhanced bike lanes.*

8. Has petty crime decreased since the DNR has assumed responsibility of the Isle? Please provide any statistics.

**Response:** *Since 2014, when the Michigan DNR Law Enforcement Division and the Michigan State Police began patrolling the island around the clock, we have seen a decrease in the crimes encountered. Speeding on the island has significantly diminished, although we deal with those violations on occasion. Both of the law enforcement agencies have noticed a decrease in criminal activity on the island, and we expect that positive record to continue. The attached information is provided by the Michigan State Police and the DNR Conservation Officers.*

9. Who owns the MacArthur Bridge?

**Response:** *The City of Detroit owns the McArthur Bridge and Belle Isle Park. This information is contained in the lease.*

10. What is the weight limit on the MacArthur Bridge and why is the MDOT spending \$7.1 million to fix it? a. Are the semis from the Grand Prix overweight?

**Response:** *The weight limit on the MacArthur Bridge is an axle weight limit of 8 tons. The semis from the Grand Prix are not overweight.*

11. Why is MDOT spending \$3 million for the parking lot at the Boat Club?

**Response:**

#### **Short Term Bridge Project**

*JN 124468: \$2.9 million (includes design, construction, and construction oversight), scope of work is deck patching, sidewalk patching, joint replacement, and epoxy overlay, all intended to improve the driving surface of the bridge. This is planned to be advertised for bids later this year, with actual construction occurring in 2018.*

#### **Longer Term Bridge Project**

*JN 200121: \$9.6 million (includes design, construction, and construction oversight), scope of work is repair to the substructure and superstructure of the bridge and*

*extensions to the deck drains. This is currently planned to be advertised and constructed in 2022.*

**Boat Club lot being used as a staging area for construction**

*For construction staging, we will use the parking lot at the Boat Club. Because of environmental requirements, we will restore the lot to current or better condition after the contractor uses it. The expected cost of that part of the project is approximately \$100,000.*

12. Has there been an environmental impact study of the race on the island?  
a. Will there be any such study before a new contract is negotiated?

**Response:** *No. The lease adopted by the City prior to 2014, did not require an Environmental impact study. No other major events in state parks require an environmental impact study, including the hydroplane races at Pontiac Lake Recreation Area.*

13. Where does the Grand Prix get the \$13 million number for improvements to Belle Isle?

**Response:** *The \$13 million dollars of improvements and investments to Belle Isle Park since 2006 is the result of the cumulative dollars spent by the Grand Prix organization, MDOT and Grand Prix sponsors.*

14. Where does the Grand Prix get the \$47 million number for economic impact from the Grand Prix for the city of Detroit?

**Response:** *An economic assessment was conducted by the Detroit Grand Prix organizers. Questions regarding methodology of this assessment should be directed to the Grand Prix.*

15. How does the Grand Prix impact bird migration along the Detroit River?

**Response:** *The footprint of the Grand Prix is limited to the highly developed west end of Belle Isle. Habitat for migrating terrestrial birds is minimal on this part of the island. Canopy trees in the day use/picnic areas of the middle of the island does provide limited habitat for migrants at the time of the Grand Prix. The wet-mesic flatwoods forest and the undeveloped areas of the east end of the island provide significant habitat for Neotropical migrants. However, these areas are not significantly impacted by the Grand Prix. Bird surveys by Alan Cartier and other documents detail this differential use. The events of the Grand Prix take place over a few days, limiting impact on bird populations. Other large events at Belle Isle Park are likely to similar impacts. The Grand Prix takes place after the major spring waterfowl migration. The warbler migration is underway at the end of May. The great majority of warbler habitat is on the east end of the island. There is not significant shorebird habitat on the east end of Belle Isle.*

16. Has a new contract for the race been signed?

**Response:** *No, a contract between the MDNR and Detroit Grand Prix organization has not been signed beyond 2018.*

17. Who paid for the new street cement smoothing done last week on the race track?

**Response:** *The Detroit Grand Prix organization paid for the road smoothing on Belle Isle in May, 2017.*

18. How much does the Grand Prix pay this year for the use of the west end of the island?

**Response:** *The Grand Prix organization paid \$200,000 per the City adopted agreement; to the MDNR each year.*

19. How does the Grand Prix put wires in the trees near the bandshell?

- a. There are also wires in the trees next to the fountain. Isn't this illegal in a state park?

**Response:** *We do not permit wire to be affixed to trees if the wires would harm the tree. For example, no nails are allowed in trees at the park. At a previous event one of the cellular companies did affix a box to a tree and Park staff required the company to remove it. The Grand Prix does not use nails in the trees to secure anything.*

20. If the DNR decides to renew the Grand Prix contract, what is its target for the time to set up and take down the race? In recent years it has taken from 70-120 days for this process.

**Response:** *As stated in response to question number 4, further review of these timelines will occur during the contract review process. Currently the targeted time for set-up and removal is 9 weeks whereas in 2017 it is 11 weeks.*

21. What is the actual solid dollar figure that the Penske organization has contributed to Belle Isle and what has it been used for specifically?

- a. What if any in-kind services have been given? Is the total dollar amount above the fee for the annual contract?  
b. Why has the annual contract fee changed from year to year?

**Response:** *See question number 7*

- a. *Yes, the dollar amount is an addition to the MDNR annual fee*  
b. *The annual contract fee has not changed, and has remained consistent annually.*

22. Why is there no transparency about the purported contributions of the Grand Prix? Nothing is listed on the DNR website where other financial info is quite detailed.

**Response:** *When the DNR assumed management of Belle Isle Park under terms of the lease, no listing of these items was requested. The DNR has managed the park for only a portion of the time the race has occurred on Belle Isle. We did not, therefore, have a comprehensive list of the Grand Prix's contributions. That information has since been provided by the Grand Prix. Per the Grand Prix organization, the investments provided other than those by MDOT, are private contributions provided by the Grand Prix organization and other private companies.*

23. Has there been any study done by the DNR, or will there be any study, of the impact of the race on the flora and fauna of Belle Isle? Or of its impact on the surrounding environment, nature, and wildlife—including the river, Detroit and Windsor neighborhoods, and Erma Henderson Park and Owen Park, which are used as parking lots to bus people over to the Grand Prix, destroying the property?

**Response:** *This was not required by the lease the City signed with the Grand Prix. The Erma Henderson Park and Owen Park are not used by the Grand Prix.*

24. What is the DNR's estimate on the amount of decline in park attendance during the run-up to the Grand Prix when Sunset Point and the Scott Fountain are almost completely blocked from public access?

- a. How many weddings take place at the island during GP set-up and take-down in April, May, and June compared to the rest of the year?
- b. How are the public use of the Scott Fountain and the rentals of the Casino affected by the race?

**Response:** *According to our records, there has been an annual increase in park attendance during the months of April, May and June. The data from our car counter is below. Please note that we did not get the car counter until the end of May 2014.*

|              | 2014    | 2015    | 2016    |
|--------------|---------|---------|---------|
| <b>APRIL</b> | N/A     | 253,524 | 318,471 |
| <b>MAY</b>   | 25,870* | 469,797 | 471,615 |
| <b>JUNE</b>  | 422,103 | 430,417 | 597,221 |

- a. *Peak wedding season is June through September. The Grand Prix "load-in" takes place during the less popular time of the year for weddings. This is also "non-peak" season for park visitation. Wedding statistics for April, May and June (non-peak season for weddings/attendance) is comparable to other non-peak times of the year. It's also important to note that the Conservatory is the most popular wedding location on the island, and rentals at this facility are only affected by the Grand Prix's events that take place during race week.*
- b. *Access to the Scott Fountain is restricted approximately two weeks prior to and after the Grand Prix weekend. All other times, the public has full access to the site. The fountain is not normally running prior to Memorial Day, so it's not a prime ceremony site for prospective clients. The Casino is not available for rental approximately seven weeks prior to and three weeks after the Grand Prix weekend.*

25. The Grand Prix organization is storing equipment, barriers, etc. on Belle Isle year round. If that is so, what equipment is being stored and how much is the Grand Prix organization paying/being charged for the storage?

**Response:** *This is being reviewed as part of the lease discussion. The Grand Prix stores barrier walls and pedestrian bridges on Belle Isle whose costs for such storage are*

*considered in the annual fee to the MDNR.*

26. Why has there been no report on the results of the March 29 "listening session" run by the DNR at which around 100 park users who attended ranked getting rid of the Grand Prix as the No. 1 priority for the future of Belle Isle?

**Response:** *The strategic planning process is underway. Further public meetings will be held this summer to review the draft plan. Summaries of the stakeholder and public input meetings, and the online questionnaire, are available for public view on the Belle Isle planning website at: <http://www.mdnrmanagementplans.org/belle-isle-park/>. This website is linked directly to the MDNR Belle Isle Park webpage and was made available in the press release advertising the meeting and on the meeting agendas. This is the forum we will be using for updates throughout the planning process.*

27. Who set up the Belle Isle Parks Advisory Committee and determined how its members should be appointed?
- a. Is this a provision of the 30-year lease of the island to the state? Or is this by some other agreement, and if so, what?

**Response:** *The 30-year adopted lease included the establishment of the seven-member Belle Isle Advisory Committee with joint appointments from the Mayor and the Governor.*

**General Comments:**

Detroit Grand Prix has made numerous operational changes to accommodate various suggestions and will continue to evaluate additional suggestions in the future. These include:

- Shortening the Preparation time from 10 weeks in 2015, to 7 in 2017
- Committing to shortening the preparation time to 6 weeks in 2018. This will add significant cost in overtime labor and additional equipment.
- Changing parking procedures on Belle Isle to include mostly asphalt surfaces. This change added a significant expense with 13 shuttle buses and drivers.
- Discontinuing the practice of using Emma Henderson Park and Owen Park for off-island parking.

## 2012 to 2017 Crime Statistics - Belle Isle, Michigan

| 2012 Belle Isle Offenses |             |               |
|--------------------------|-------------|---------------|
| MICR                     | Offense     | Offense Count |
| 12000                    | Robbery     | 1             |
| 13001                    | Assault     | 3             |
| 13002                    | Agg Assault | 2             |
| 20000                    | Arson       | 1             |
| 23001-07                 | Larceny     | 7             |
| 24001                    | MVT         | 6             |
| 29000                    | MDOP        | 4             |
| 52001                    | Weapons     | 3             |
| <b>Total Offenses</b>    |             | <b>27</b>     |

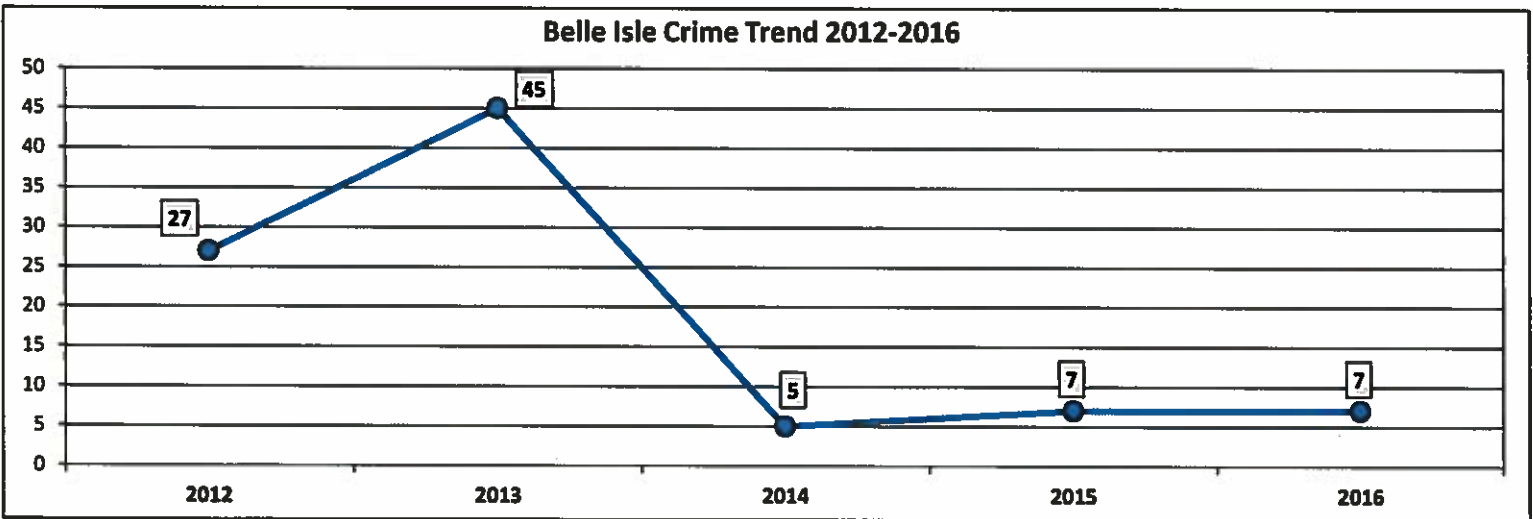
| 2013 Belle Isle Offenses |                    |               |
|--------------------------|--------------------|---------------|
| MICR                     | Offense            | Offense Count |
| 12000                    | Robbery            | 1             |
| 13001                    | Assault            | 6             |
| 13002                    | Agg Assault        | 2             |
| 22001                    | Burglary           | 4             |
| 23001-07                 | Larceny            | 21            |
| 24001                    | MVT                | 1             |
| 29000                    | MDOP               | 7             |
| 52001                    | Weapons            | 2             |
| 53001                    | Disorderly Conduct | 1             |
| <b>Total Offenses</b>    |                    | <b>45</b>     |

| 2014 Belle Isle Offenses |             |               |
|--------------------------|-------------|---------------|
| MICR                     | Offense     | Offense Count |
| 13002                    | Agg Assault | 1             |
| 23001-07                 | Larceny     | 2             |
| 35001                    | Drugs       | 2             |
| <b>Total Offenses</b>    |             | <b>5</b>      |

| 2015 Belle Isle Offenses |         |               |
|--------------------------|---------|---------------|
| MICR                     | Offense | Offense Count |
| 13001                    | Assault | 1             |
| 23001-07                 | Larceny | 5             |
| 29000                    | MDOP    | 1             |
| <b>Total Offenses</b>    |         | <b>7</b>      |

| 2016 Belle Isle Offenses |             |               |
|--------------------------|-------------|---------------|
| MICR                     | Offense     | Offense Count |
| 13001                    | Assault     | 2             |
| 13002                    | Agg Assault | 1             |
| 23001-07                 | Larceny     | 2             |
| <b>Total Offenses</b>    |             | <b>7</b>      |

| 2017 (Jan to April) Belle Isle Offenses                       |         |               |
|---|---------|---------------|
| MICR  | Offense | Offense Count |
| No criminal offenses reported for January 1 to April 30, 2017 |         |               |
| <b>Total Offenses</b>   |         | <b>0</b>      |



From 2012 to 2016 there were a total of 90 crime offenses reported on Belle Isle (Nothing to report so far for 2017). 80% or 72 of the incidents occurred during 2012 and 2013. 2014 to 2016 saw a significant drop of offenses reported. The drop in crime beginning in 2014 is also the year that MSP/DNR began patrols on the Island.

Source: Detroit's Open Data Portal as of 5/15/2017 - 2015 and 2016 should be considered preliminary and subject to change.

Crimes queried include: All part 1 Crimes, Non Agg Assault, Weapons, Narcotics, DUI, Drunkenness, Disorderly Conduct and Vandalism (MDOP)