

**MINUTES**

**1. CONVENE PARK COMMISSION MEETING**

Chair Hirner convened the meeting at 7:00 p.m.

**A. Roll Call**

Present: Chair Hirner, Commissioners Wenner, Garske, and Sylvester; City Council Liaison Gorham; Parks and Recreation Manager Czech

Absent: Commissioner Bahneman

**B. Review Agenda**

**Commissioner Wenner moved to approve the agenda as written. Commissioner Garske seconded the motion. Motion carried 4-0.**

**2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

**A. Park Commission Meeting Minutes of March 25, 2025**

Commissioner Garske noted small typographical errors on pages 4 and 6.

Commissioner Wenner noted the absence of a reference made by the Tonka Football Association regarding the 150 parent volunteers within their organization that she felt was germane and should be included in the minutes. She noted a reference on page 3 for the Council Liaison dates that still had her listed as 'Chair'.

**Commissioner Garske moved to approve the minutes of the March 25, 2025, meeting, as amended. Commissioner Sylvester seconded the motion. Motion carried 4-0.**

**3. MATTERS FROM THE FLOOR**

There were none.

**4. GENERAL BUSINESS**

**A. City Event Analysis**

Parks and Recreation Manager Czech noted that the Commission's Work Plan included an analysis of City events as a priority area. He reviewed the launch of a sponsorship guide in 2025 to provide incentives for local businesses to sponsor the existing City events and reviewed the sponsors that have come forward thus far. He highlighted some questions he felt the Commission should consider in taking a broader look at the City events. He noted that he felt the Commission, in addition to having a higher-level discussion about the City's events, should also spend some time discussing Arctic Fever, which, in the past, has been a 2 day event. He stated that for the past 2 years, it has had to be reduced to a 1-day event due to weather conditions, which seemed

to be fairly successful. He asked the Commission if they felt the City should continue trying to hold a 2-day event or if they should just focus on creating a 1-day event.

Commissioner Wenner stated that she did not like the idea of moving Arctic Fever to just a one-day event. She explained that she had heard from a lot of people that they were bummed out that the sled dogs had to be canceled. She stated that one of the trends that she has seen is that more people want to get involved in the community by volunteering, and felt the City should look at setting up more volunteer-type events.

Parks and Recreation Manager Czech stated that a discussion on volunteer events would be a separate discussion.

Commissioner Wenner suggested having a farmers market or a community food share opportunity at some of the City's events. She stated that she would like to see Arbor Day tree planting events, buckthorn removal events, and educational events, but noted that may land under a separate umbrella of discussion as stated by Parks and Recreation Manager Czech. She noted that she knows someone who had a small business selling jerky and asked if the City was looking for vendors like that to be invited to participate in City events.

Parks and Recreation Manager Czech stated that if the Commission had a vendor that they had connections with, he suggested that they pass that information along to him.

Commissioner Wenner asked if the goal was to have the events pay for themselves.

Parks and Recreation Manager Czech explained that the City had a budgeted amount from the General Fund that was included, but noted that sponsorship has helped to offset those costs. He noted that he would like to see if they were able to grow the events while staying within their budgeted window and explained that sponsorships and vendor tables would be a benefit.

Commissioner Wenner asked who was looking for presenting sponsors and if it was just Parks and Recreation Manager Czech trying to find people.

Parks and Recreation Manager Czech clarified that, as a City, they were not allowed to solicit and explained that they have information on the website and social media about sponsorships.

Chair Hirner stated that he felt he had seen some good movement over the last year, but it may be too early to tell. He noted that he would like to see what else Parks and Recreation Manager Czech could do with the events to be able to get more attendance or additional ideas for the events to help grow them before they make a recommendation to discontinue any of them. He explained that he felt there was some energy around some of these things right now, and people are starting to talk about them, which he felt was a good thing. He stated that now that they have a full trail in Freeman Park, he would like to see the City come up with an event that invited people to ride the loop in the Park. He noted that he would like to see the City take better advantage of some of the things that have been done with the parks.

Commissioner Sylvester asked about the leprechaun game that happened in March and if it fell into the City events bucket or if it landed somewhere else.

Parks and Recreation Manager Czech noted that, technically, it would probably fall under a City event, but he considered those things more of a community engagement activity rather than a

special event. He stated that event, and the Park bingo they did last year, which had low to minimal costs as well, and noted that if the Commission had other ideas for free or small budget things, those opportunities could be explored.

Commissioner Sylvester asked about the overall goal of these events and if it was for the community to meet each other or to engage with the park.

Parks and Recreation Manager Czech explained that he felt it was a combination of everything from providing activities for the community, showcasing the City's facilities, and giving the community a chance to come together.

Commissioner Sylvester explained that she thought the Lucky Pot 'O Gold thing was fun and required people to go and look through the parks.

Commissioner Garske stated that he liked the City's current event offerings but would like to see them look into whether they were hitting multiple demographics. He stated that he would also like to see if there may be a way to engage the other City parks because most of their activities took place at Badger Park or Freeman Park. He stated that he agreed with the earlier comments that he wasn't sure that they should remove any events, but acknowledged that he had not attended all of the events yet. He noted that he liked the idea of continuing to try to have Arctic Fever. He suggested that they may be able to add an event like Art in the Park in combination with something like Movie in the Park. He asked if there could be any value in doing something for National Night Out. He noted that in looking at the event costs per attendee, he would like to see general information on what it cost to run each event and what the amount was that the City had to fund.

Parks and Recreation Manager Czech explained that he was not looking for the Commission to take any specific action on this tonight, but the Council has had some discussions about what they wanted to do with events. He noted that what he was hearing from the Commission was a consensus that what they already have, they should continue for another year or two and re-evaluate them in the future, but also look for ways to add to the existing events as efficiently and inexpensively as possible.

Commissioner Garske stated that he felt the Commission would be open to new ideas on things that may change or enhance the existing City events. He asked if the City and the Commission would be open to ideas for add-on events, that would require people to pay a small fee, and gave the example of hosting a 5K, where they ask for a \$20 fee and the participant would get a t-shirt.

Park and Recreation Manager Czech stated that he did not believe there would be any reason that they could not do that, but would need to be strategic in their approach. He explained that he felt that they may need to have a minimum that the City would have to hit before they decided to proceed or cancel the event, but felt it was a good idea to piggyback off of what the City already had.

Commissioner Wenner stated that when she was walking over tonight, she noticed a lot of trash along the sidewalk on Smithtown and suggested that it may be something they could piggyback with events. She explained that the City could provide gloves and bags and give a prize for people who pick up trash in the parks.

## **B. Park Commissioner Handbook**

Chair Hirner noted that he felt much of this would be able to be fleshed out during the Commission's conversation with the Council next week. He asked if the Commission had any general input on the handbook. He explained that he was not sure he would want this handbook to be printed when it was completed and would like to see it put in a place where they would all be able to access it electronically, when needed. He noted that he had been on the Park Commission for 7 years and had a book, but there was nothing in it that was current, which meant he had not looked at it for the last few years.

Parks and Recreation Manager Czech stated that for this agenda, he was looking for high-level discussion on whether the Commission felt things were missing or if something didn't make sense. He stated that if they had smaller corrections, he asked that they just send those to him for him to update.

Commissioner Sylvester stated that she had some high-level thoughts because she was kind of the first guinea pig to get it. She explained that she loved it and liked that it was printed, and noted that the only feedback she would have would be about changing the order a bit. She stated that she felt the welcome letter should be first, then the table of contents, then the City information, and finish up with the information related to the Park Commission. She noted that, overall, she thought the content was fantastic and reiterated that she felt that there was some value in having it printed, but understood Chair Hirner's point about how quickly things can become obsolete. She suggested that they give people the choice of whether they want it printed or in electronic form. She reiterated that, overall, she thought it was fantastic.

Chair Hirner stated that the Commission had not typically talked about trails and that was a big chunk of what had been included, and felt that they needed to get some clarification from the Council on the Commission's responsibility in relation to trails. He stated that another thing included in the handbook was related to staff and noted that the Christmas Lake Boat Launch had typically been included in the purview of the Commission, but they did not usually talk about the Christmas Lake Boat Launch attendants, and asked where that level of staffing would fall.

Parks and Recreation Manager Czech explained that those attendants are handled through an agreement with the Christmas Lake HOA.

Chair Hirner stated that he felt it would be good to reference that and outlined it in the document so the new Commissioners can understand how that fits in. He asked whether the Community Center attendants were City staff or if they were volunteers.

Parks and Recreation Manager Czech stated that the daytime attendants were volunteers through South Shore Senior Partners, evenings and weekend attendants were City staff members.

Commissioner Garske asked if there was a desire to have current satellite images or just images of the parks be included instead of the old Parks Master Plan, which was not true to what the parks are right now.

Parks and Recreation Manager Czech explained that the section would be replaced by the new Parks Master Plan information.

Chair Hirner stated that he liked Commissioner Garske's idea and asked about the possibility of someone with a drone going up and snapping a few pictures. He stated that it would be nice if this could be updated on an annual basis, so any improvements that were made would be reflected in the handbook.

Parks and Recreation Manager Czech stated that he felt that it would be a fairly large expense because the City did not own a drone.

Commissioner Garske stated that he did not think they would need to do that and could just use the Hennepin County Property Maps GIS information because they take annual satellite images.

Commissioner Wenner suggested that they include information on technology and what the Commission should know, as well as a number for tech support. She stated that she also felt it may be a good idea to include parliamentary procedure and information on Robert's Rules of Order.

Parks and Recreation Manager Czech noted that the City was working on a document that would be in alignment with the other Commissions, so there would be a formalized City standard for running the meetings.

Commissioner Wenner noted that the Commission had not updated the Park Commission Goal Statement and suggested that they include something about natural areas and open spaces.

Parks and Recreation Manager Czech noted that was something that needed Council direction.

Chair Hirner stated that he expected the Commission to have more clarity after the meeting next week.

Commissioners discussed the possibility of having different start times for their meetings.

Commissioner Wenner stated that other things she would like to see be included was City Code Chapter 11.03 regarding tree preservation, the City's policy document on tree preservation/replacement, the Natural Resources and Park section of the Comprehensive Plan, and some of their working documents such as the IPM Work Plan, Invasive Species Management Plan, Vegetative Management Plan, Urban Forestry Management Plan, park maintenance checklist items, budgets, Field Use Policy, and event information like the Sponsorship Guide.

Commissioner Garske noted that he would like to see the digital version of this document have hyperlinks built in for easier navigation.

Council Liaison Gorham referenced page 9, where it talks about the park maintenance. He noted that there was a portion that stated that the Public Works Director would give an annual report and asked if that was already happening or if that was something that would happen moving forward.

Parks and Recreation Manager Czech noted that it was already happening on an annual basis and explained that Public Works Director Morreim had presented to the Commission information on what had been done in each of the parks.

Council Liaison Gorham asked if the report information was published.

Parks and Recreation Manager Czech stated that it would be included in the Park Commission packet.

Chair Hirner agreed that it should be published so other people can see it and know what was being done.

Council Liaison Gorham stated that he agreed that it should have more visibility and questioned how many people would download the Park Commission packet.

Commissioner Wenner stated that she would like to get some clarity from the Council regarding the reporting, for example, on the Bee-Safe policy, because the Park Commission was the named oversight body for that policy.

**C. Parks Master Plan Update**

Parks and Recreation Manager Czech stated that the City had issued an RFP in February and received six proposals. He explained that staff had done an internal review and identified three quality firms to bring in for interviews, which happened last week and landed on one firm that seemed to fit the City's needs. He stated that they would be bringing a recommendation to the Council to move forward with this firm at the next City Council meeting.

**5. REPORTS / UPDATES**

**A. City Council**

Council Liaison Gorham gave a brief overview of recent Council discussion and actions.

**B. Staff**

Park and Recreation Manager Czech reminded the Commission that they have a joint meeting with the City Council on April 28, 2025, at 5:30 p.m. He explained that the goal of this meeting was to provide alignment between the Council and the Commission and reviewed some of the expected discussion topics. He stated that the City would be holding a volunteer tree planting event on May 3, 2025, at Freeman Park from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon and encouraged the Commission to attend, if possible.

Commissioner Sylvester stated that she believed that there was a Spring Clean-Up event on May 17, 2025, and asked if the Park Commission actively participated in that.

Parks and Recreation Manager Czech stated that if the Commission would like to volunteer, he knew the City was still looking for some, but there would not be a direct Commission role with the event.

**6. ADJOURN**

**Commissioner Wenner moved to adjourn the Park Commission Meeting of April 22, 2025, at 8:15 p.m. Commissioner Garske seconded the motion. Motion carried 4-0.**