

MINUTES

1. CONVENE PARK COMMISSION MEETING

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

A. Roll Call

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

Absent: Commissioners Garske and Bahneman

B. Review Agenda

Commissioner Wenner moved to approve the agenda as written. Commissioner Sylvester seconded the motion. Motion carried 3-0.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. Park Commission Meeting Minutes of April 22, 2025

Commissioner Wenner moved to approve the minutes of the April 22, 2025, meeting as written. Commissioner Sylvester seconded the motion. Motion carried 3-0.

3. MATTERS FROM THE FLOOR

There were none.

4. GENERAL BUSINESS

A. Parks and Recreation Master Plan Update

Parks and Recreation Manager Czech explained that staff sat in on the kick-off meeting with Bolton and Menk last week to go over the schedule and finalize some key dates. He stated that they will start things off on June 2, 2025, 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m., with a park system tour with Bolton and Menk, and noted that staff planned to attend, but one or two Commissioners could also attend, if they were available. He stated that from this park system tour they would be able to have an initial inventory and analysis of the City's parks and clarified that he would continue to provide updates to the Commission as Bolton and Menk works through the process of creating a Master Plan to ensure input from the Commission would be integrated into the plans.

Commissioner Wenner asked if the Commission would be able to have any input on the community survey that would be put online June 16, 2025, through August 4, 2025.

Parks and Recreation Manager Czech stated he felt it would most likely be done at the staff level, alongside the consultant, because the Commission would not meet again until June 24, 2025.

Commissioner Wenner shared some information that she would like to see included in the surveys related to dog parks, additional pollinator gardens, and Gideon Glen signage.

Parks and Recreation Manager Czech stated that he has provided documentation to the consultants of past discussion topics from the Park Commission meetings, such as their parks inventory from last year.

Chair Hirner asked if adopt-a-garden was a topic included in what the consultants would be looking at and noted that he felt the community gardens and the adopt-a-garden would be something good to include in the survey, or at least make sure the consultants take a look at them as part of the overall plan. He asked if there would be anything regarding trees and explained that he felt it would be helpful for the City to have a general sense of where additional trees should and should not be put, for example, when they hold their tree planting events.

Parks and Recreation Manager Czech stated that this could be part of this, but did not think it would be super specific about tree locations and noted that the City works with Davey Resources for recommendations on where the trees should be planted, but did believe some natural aspects to the parks would be involved in their discussion and the plan. He asked the Commission to let him know if they were interested and able to attend the upcoming park tours with the consultant and cautioned that they could only have one or two Commissioners present due to Open Meeting laws.

Commissioner Wenner stated that she believed that she would be able to attend the park tours with the consultants.

Commissioner Sylvester asked if there would be a central repository of information available as part of this process, for example, a document on the parks tours that the Commission would have access to.

Parks and Recreation Manager Czech stated that on July 1, 2025, staff would get an inventory and analysis document, which would be shared with the Commission, once it was put together, but there would not be a central hub online for this information.

Commissioner Sylvester asked about the stakeholder listening sessions and if that was something that the Commission would participate in.

Parks and Recreation Manager Czech explained that it would be for the primary user groups of the parks and facilities. He stated that they would be facilitating sessions with the athletic associations and volunteers to get their input and thoughts on the City's parks. He noted that it would not be Commission-led or something that they would have heavy involvement in, but would likely get some deliverables from those sessions.

Chair Hirner asked if one or two of the Commission members would be able to attend the listening sessions to just listen.

Parks and Recreation Manager Czech stated that they could attend and listen as long as there was not a quorum. He assured the Commission that they would be heavily involved in this whole process.

B. Shorewood Community and Event Center Task Force

Parks and Recreation Manager Czech stated that the Council had discussed the possible formation of a Task Force related to the Shorewood Community and Event Center (SCEC) at their April Work Session. He explained that they were in support of a task force to evaluate and make recommendations on the future of the SCEC and were in favor of getting some recommendations in place by the 2026 budgeting process for 2027. He stated that following the Council direction, staff have begun formalizing a strategy and thinking about what the task force may look like, and asked if the Commission had any other thoughts following the Council meeting discussion.

Commissioner Wenner explained that her main concern would be how the City can recruit the task force members as soon as possible.

Chair Hirner asked if they should be recommending people with certain areas of expertise to serve on the task force.

Park and Recreation Manager Czech stated that there were people that staff intended to reach out to, but the best method of recruitment would be to rely on the people in the community who know of other potential experts. He stated that he felt that word of mouth was going to be the most effective way to get people for the task force.

Commissioner Wenner asked if this would affect the Commission's CIP recommendations.

Park and Recreation Manager Czech explained that the SCEC came out of a separate fund, which has its own CIP, and the Park Commission would just provide input for the Parks CIP. He clarified that for the time being, they are holding off on any capital investments into the SCEC.

C. Adopt-A-Garden Update

Parks and Recreation Manager Czech noted that he had included a map of locations as well as photos of each Adopt-A-Garden location in the City in the packet. He noted that it was a volunteer-led program, and they currently have ten dedicated areas where the volunteers manage and maintain the garden areas. He gave an overview of the Adopt-A-Garden process to register and the reimbursement funds that were available. He noted that staff have gotten comments related to how the areas were being maintained, but stated that it could be a bit subjective and asked if the Commission had any ideas on how to establish some guidelines for proper maintenance levels. He explained that he was also looking for input from the Commission on whether they would like to see some type of recognition for the volunteer gardeners, such as a sign at the garden location.

Commissioner Wenner asked if the volunteers had received any kind of recognition from the City in the past.

Parks and Recreation Manager Czech stated that the volunteers have only received reimbursement for the materials, and no official recognition.

Commissioner Wenner stated that she would recommend giving awards, especially for long-term volunteers, for example, every five years, acknowledging their commitment. She noted that she also felt adding signage would be a great way to bring more recognition to the program. She stated that the information on this program was buried deep within the City's website, was out of

date, and suggested that they may want to add it to the section that also gives people the option to adopt-a-drain, or just have a new section dedicated to volunteers.

Park and Recreation Manager Czech stated that the way registration was set up on the website was built like this, and there was no way around it. He stated that Adopt-A-Garden was primarily for returning gardeners, and for new ones, it ends up being a word-of-mouth kind of thing, but agreed that having better visibility on the website would be a good idea to promote the program.

Chair Hirner stated that he would like to see an 'Opportunities to Volunteer' page on the City's website. He noted that he also liked the idea of having signage at the garden sites and also that the City give a proclamation once a year, thanking the volunteers for maintaining the Adopt-A-Garden sites. He stated that there is a monument on the backside of Freeman that comes off the trail that does not have anything around it, and asked if that could be added to the list of available Adopt-A-Garden areas, and noted that another area may be the new trailhead area.

Park and Recreation Manager Czech stated that if the Commission has identified possible new locations, they could start a running list of potential future options if someone comes forward to volunteer, but the existing locations were already taken.

Chair Hirner suggested that they take photos of some of the gardens that look good, to use as an example of the type of care and maintenance the City would like to see.

Commissioner Sylvester suggested that they could do features in the Shore Report, including a photo of the volunteer standing by the garden as a way to acknowledge them and also make the community aware that these areas were being maintained by volunteers. She agreed with the notion that there should be some standards established so there would be some consistency.

Commissioner Wenner stated that, as a Master Naturalist, she was concerned about mulch and jumping worms, which have become a huge problem, and explained that she had been experimenting with living mulch in her flower beds as a way to hold off the weeds. She stated that it did not look as pretty as mulch around the plants, but felt that if the City was not going to establish standards, they should be able to explain their reasoning for some public education. She asked about the process for establishing new gardens and explained that she would like to see more pollinator gardens.

Park and Recreation Manager Czech stated that the process would be to consult with City staff and noted that they would want to ensure there were enough volunteers to manage and maintain the gardens. He noted that the desire and direction of the Council was also to have more pollinator gardens located throughout the City, but there were costs associated with getting them in place, which would be something identified in the Master Plan.

Chair Hirner asked about the community garden spaces and if all the spots had been filled.

Park and Recreation Manager Czech stated that last year, the City filled all the plots at Freeman South and two or three plots at South Shore that had not been taken, and explained that this year, they were able to fill all of the spots.

Chair Hirner stated that when the consultants were looking into the Master Plan, he asked if they would be able to tell the City if either of the existing community garden locations could be expanded.

D. May 3, 2025 Volunteer Tree Planting Event Recap

Parks and Recreation Manager Czech gave an overview of the recent volunteer tree planting event that took place on May 3, 2025. He expressed his appreciation to the Tonka United Soccer Association, which sent two volunteers who ended up working very hard during this event. He thanked Chair Hirner and Commissioner Wenner for also coming out and participating as well, and noted that they were able to plant about thirty trees, and staff and Public Works completed planting the remainder of the trees the following week. He stated that, in total, fifty-nine trees were planted in Freeman Park.

5. REPORTS / UPDATES

A. City Council

Councilmember Gorham updated the Commission on recent City Council discussions and actions.

B. Staff

1. Park Tour Maintenance Items

Park and Recreation Manager Czech stated that last year they put together a list of all of the things that were discovered as part of the park tours, which were not happening this year due to the Parks Master Plan work. He explained that staff had been working through the list and would bring an update to a future Park Commission meeting about what had been done and what was still on the list.

Chair Hirner asked if the Commission could just let staff know if they see anything at the City parks, since they were not going to do the official Park Tours this year.

Park and Recreation Manager Czech confirmed that they can just pass that information along to him, and he will add it to the list. He stated that he wanted to make sure he thanked the Public Works Department for their work throughout the City for Public Works Week and encouraged residents to stop and thank them if they see them around the City. He noted that Commissioner Garske was scheduled to report on tonight's meeting for the next City Council meeting, but was unable to attend tonight and asked if anyone in attendance could take on the reporting duties for June 23, 2025.

Commissioner Wenner stated that she would be able to give the Council a report on June 23, 2025.

6. ADJOURN

Commissioner Wenner moved to adjourn the Park Commission Meeting of May 20, 2025, at 8:00 p.m. Commissioner Sylvester seconded the motion. Motion carried 3-0.