

MINUTES

1. CONVENE PARK COMMISSION MEETING

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

A. Roll Call

Present: Chair Hirner, Commissioners Garske, Bahneman, and Sylvester;
City Council Liaison Sanschagrín; Parks and Recreation Director
Czech

Absent: Commissioner Wenner

B. Review Agenda

Commissioner Bahneman 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 May 20, 2025

Commissioner Garske moved to approve the minutes of the May 20, 2025, meeting as written. Commissioner Sylvester seconded the motion. Motion carried 4-0.

3. MATTERS FROM THE FLOOR

There were none.

4. GENERAL BUSINESS

A. Tonka United Soccer Association Presentation

Noel Quinn, Tonka United Soccer Association gave a brief presentation on their organization and noted that they were one of the biggest soccer clubs located in the Twin Cities, with 2,091 participants in recreational soccer, 960 participants in competitive soccer, 1,300 participants in camps/clinics. This past year, the Tonka Splash Tournament had over 465 teams participate, which made it the second largest tournament in the State. He shared information on where the participants come from, season details, practice scheduling, pros and cons of the facilities used in the City, facility needs, and ideal requests of their clubs, ways they are working to be efficient, desire to have their own facility and form partnerships with cities and school districts.

Chair Hirner stated that there was a big soccer facility in Blaine and asked what having that type of facility in this area would do for their soccer club.

Mr. Quinn stated that he believes that they would be able to double their current size, which would be about 2,000 year-round soccer players and about 4,000 seasonal soccer players. He stated

that he felt that they would be able to host about another 50% of players with their existing facilities, scattered over several sites, but having their own facility would help them maximize their membership. He explained that the biggest thing would be that it would make things simpler for the families and would help with the overall retention of players.

Commissioner Garske stated that Mr. Quinn had mentioned that parking at Freeman had been a challenge and asked if that was primarily during their bigger tournaments.

Mr. Quinn stated that it was common even when it wasn't related to tournaments.

Commissioner Garske asked if they had any recommendations on what could fix the parking situation.

Mr. Quinn stated that he did not currently have any ideas for what may help fix the parking issues.

Chair Hirner asked what kinds of things could be done to the fields to help enhance the experience for the players and their families.

Mr. Quinn stated that in an ideal world, they would have turf so they could guarantee play for more weeks in the year and longer within the year, and would also love to see lights in place. He stated that he would also love to see foundations built in, so that, in the future, a dome could be put into place.

Chair Hirner asked about alignment with European timing, which is during Minnesota winter, and what they may do to Tonka United's participation during the winter months.

Mr. Quinn stated that they are close to the maximum number of kids that they can have play right now. He noted that it is hard to create relationships and get contracts for the domed places because every sport in Minnesota was in the same boat. He stated that MLS moving a little earlier will drive any of their numbers for winter soccer and thinks they will see more impact in their spring recreational soccer and competitive tryouts in July. He noted that they rent an indoor facility in Eden Prairie and run some free soccer during the winter, which helped them bring in 90 children who had never played soccer before, and 60 of those children signed up to play summer recreational soccer. He stated that is where they would like access to more facilities, for example, with a domed field, to have free entry into soccer.

Chair Hirner asked which parks Tonka United currently played in.

Parks and Recreation Director Czech stated that they primarily use Freeman Park but have used Manor Park in the past for some practices.

Mr. Quinn stated that he had been with the club for the last two years, and they had only used Freeman Park in that time. He explained that Freeman Park was one of four key sites for their club and was where most of their recreational soccer took place.

Parks and Recreation Director Czech thanked Mr. Quinn and Tonka United Soccer for their continued involvement in the City's events and activities.

Mr. Quinn stated that they have an army of people within the club who want to volunteer and get involved in various events and activities. He stated that the club supports this involvement and wants them to be involved and have a bit of ownership.

B. Parks Master Plan Update and Stakeholder Sessions

Parks and Recreation Director Czech reminded the Commission that he would provide an update on the Parks Master Plan at each of their meetings. He stated that Chair Hirner, Commissioner Wenner, and various members of City staff met with the Bolton and Menk consultant on June 2, 2025, for a park tour. He stated that he believed this tour provided a good overview for the consultant and explained that, based on the tours, they were putting together an inventory and analysis of their existing amenities. He stated that they have a call scheduled in July to review findings, which would be brought back before the Commission. He stated that the next stage of the process will involve community engagement. He noted that there was a park and recreation survey completed that should be blasted out to residents in the near future. He stated that there would also be some engagement events, the first will be during the Concert in the Park event on July 17, 2025, at Freeman Park. He explained that another key piece of engagement would be holding stakeholder listening sessions, which were meant to engage groups who were already active in the City's park system. He noted that these listening sessions will take place sometime in late July or early August. He explained that they are looking for input from the Commission on what five groups they felt may be a good fit to participate in the listening sessions.

The Commission discussed possible groups that they felt would be a good fit for participation in the stakeholder listening sessions, including: Barry Brown and the group from Freeman Park that has been involved in buckthorn removal; Mr. Babcock who had ties to Freeman and Manor Parks; community gardeners/monument adopters; former Park Commissioners; the various athletic associations and the pros and cons of grouping them together for the session rather than separately; the possibility of including a short survey for the individual athletic associations in addition to the overall survey; seniors; teenagers; families with young children; ways to communicate with local families with children by contacting the school district or PTO organizations; and allowing two of the group sessions to be taken up by the athletic associations; pickle ball community.

Park and Recreation Director Czech thanked the Commission for their input and explained that he would start reaching out to some of these groups and would give the Commission an update at the next meeting. He explained that, technically, the survey was up and live, but the City had not promoted it yet, because they were waiting until the website was up and running, and explained that the survey would be open through early August. He noted that typically, the Commission conducts parks tours, but this year, the tours took place with the consultant and a small group of staff and Commission members. He stated that they were planning to bring a list of all the maintenance items that were found on last year's tours and updates on what has been done and what was ongoing, for their next meeting. He reminded the Commission that, because they were not doing the official park tours this year, they had discussed the idea of the Commission checking out parks on an individual basis and reporting back. He asked if the Commission would be able to check things out at the City's parks, send him updates, and then he could add them to the most recent list for discussion at the next meeting. He asked if the Commission felt it might also be a good idea to hit families with kids or teenagers, for instance, while they were at the park with the survey. He explained that his thinking was that they could develop a 3-question survey related to their feelings about the park. He stated that he may be

able to put together a card with a QR code that will connect people to the survey, so as the Commission was in the parks, they could hand them out and encourage people to take the survey.

There was a consensus of the Commission to direct staff to pursue the creation of a smaller questionnaire and card with a QR code that would lead people to the larger survey to have available to hand out at parks.

C. Concert in the Park Preview

Parks and Recreation Director Czech stated that the City's Concert in the Park will be on July 17, 2025, in Freeman Park and will be sponsored by Midco. He explained that the headliner, Shalo Lee Band, has been a crowd favorite in the past. A new component will be Back to Rock as openers for Shalo Lee Band. He gave an overview of the schedule for the event and noted that there would be food trucks, including Soft Serve Social and a pizza truck. He noted that as part of this event, Bolton and Menk would be there engaging park visitors regarding the Parks Master Plan project. He encouraged the Commission to participate in the public engagement efforts.

5. REPORTS / UPDATES

A. City Council

Councilmember Sanschagrín gave an overview of recent Council discussions and actions the Commission may be interested in.

B. Staff

Park and Recreation Director Czech stated that the last few weeks have been busy for the Parks and Recreation Department with things like a Spanish camp, soccer camp, and football quarterback clinic. Staff are currently working through budget projections for the 2026 season.

C. Commission

Commissioner Sylvester stated that she has tried to visit various parks during the week and take note of what was being used. She stated that the basketball courts at Cathcart and Silverwood almost always have people on them.

Chair Hirner stated that he had noticed that at Silverwood, now that they put in the new net and fixed the wall that both tennis and basketball were being used more frequently. He stated that the picnic tables are often hauled over to the area so people have a way to sit down. He noted that this showed that if the City kept things refreshed, the community would use the parks.

Commissioner Garske suggested that additional picnic tables be added to the CIP. He stated that they could also consider providing benches for the soccer fields.

7. ADJOURN

Commissioner Bahneman moved to adjourn the Park Commission Meeting of June 24, 2025, at 8:17 p.m. Commissioner Garske seconded the motion. Motion carried 4-0.