



# Park Commission Meeting

May 5, 2025

7:00 PM

Fridley City Hall, 7071 University Avenue NE

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## Minutes

### **Call to Order**

Chair Borman called the Parks and Recreation Commission meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

### **Present**

EB Graham  
Peter Borman  
Melissa Luna  
Tim Kirk  
Jodi Rehlander  
Don Whalen

### **Absent**

Ken Schultz

### **Also Present**

Mike Maher, Parks and Recreation Director  
Patrick Vescio, City Councilmember  
Jessica Nelson-Roehl, Recreation Coordinator  
Katie Dahl, Interpretive Coordinator

### **Approve Parks & Recreation Commission Agenda for May 5, 2025**

*Motion by Commissioner Kirk to approve the May 5, 2025, meeting agenda. Seconded by Commissioner Whalen. The motion passed unanimously.*

### **Approve Parks & Recreation Commission Minutes for April 7, 2025**

*Motion by Commissioner Luna to approve the April 7, 2025, meeting minutes. Seconded by Commissioner Graham. The motion passed unanimously.*

### **Open Forum**

No comments.

### **New Business**

## 1. Summer Programming Preview

Mike Maher, Parks and Recreation Director, stated that two staff members are present to highlight some of the upcoming summer programming.

Jessica Nelson-Roehl, Recreation Coordinator, and Katie Dahl, Interpretive Coordinator, provided a preview of summer programming for residents of all ages, volunteer opportunities, and events.

Commissioner Rehlander asked the number of events and/or programs that are new for this year. Ms. Nelson-Roehl noted a few of the concerts/locations that are new for this year.

Chair Borman asked questions about the seasonal staff and whether some of the program participants eventually become staff members for the summer program. Ms. Dahl commented that a large percentage of the junior leaders were previous summer camp attendees and continue to return as summer staff. Ms. Nelson-Roehl estimated that about 25 percent of the summer ROCKS staff were participants in the program as children.

Mr. Maher commented that he is very proud of his staff and the work they do, acknowledging the community engagement that is achieved through these programs and events over the summer months.

## 2. Community Gardens Future Planning

Mr. Maher stated that he wanted to open up the discussion about community gardens with the Commission. He provided background information on the previous community garden that existed at Locke Park and the identification of that amenity as a desire within the Parks System Improvement Plan process. He reviewed the potential community garden locations.

Commissioner Whalen commented that Locke Park seems to be the natural fit for the project.

Commissioner Rehlander asked if they would review the soil conditions and make recommendations to users. Mr. Maher commented that if they are able to establish an area for community gardens, they would develop a policy for the use, best practices, and a small deposit for users.

Chair Borman recognized the comments he had heard from the community about the desire for a community garden after it was removed from Locke Park previously.

Commissioner Rehlander asked if this project would take attention and/or funding away from another project. Mr. Maher replied that it is not the intention of staff to spread themselves so thin that they could not maintain other projects and maintenance needs. He recognized that this is a time of growth, but that was also the intention of the Parks System Improvement Plan, to improve the parks and add amenities.

Mr. Maher stated that with the support of the Commission staff would apply for grant opportunities, present the concept to the City Council, seek public engagement, and continue with the planning process.

*Motion by Commissioner Rehlander to recommend that staff begin a process to establish a community garden program in Fridley, with a preferred location of Locke Park, focus on community engagement, and eventual endorsement of the City Council. Seconded by Commissioner Luna. The motion passed unanimously.*

### 3. 2026 Parks Capital Investment Program Recommendation

Mr. Maher explained that the Capital Investment Program (CIP) is used for long-term planning of larger capital items, and the current plan would cover 2026 through 2030. He presented the 2026 items, which were identified last year, with a few suggested additions.

*Motion by Commissioner Graham to approve the proposed 2026 Capital Investment Program as presented. Seconded by Commissioner Whalen. The motion passed unanimously.*

### 4. Locke Park Improvement Priorities

Mr. Maher provided background information on previous work that was done to identify improvements for Locke Park, explaining the funding that has been identified for 2026 and future years. He asked the Commission for guidance on the priorities to be completed in 2026, highlighting some recommendations that were made by public safety, through public engagement, and previous input from the Commission.

Commissioner Whalen asked if the dog park is well utilized and whether there are complaints. Mr. Maher replied that the dog park is well used and could not recall a time he has visited the park, and there were no users in the dog park. He commented that it is the only off-leash dog area within Fridley. He stated that the City has made some changes to the space after taking control over it from the County, relating to waste management, and could not recall any complaints. He stated that there have been requests to have separate spaces for small and large dogs.

Commissioner Graham asked if the dog park would increase in size or whether the space would just be divided into two areas. Mr. Maher recognized that would be budget dependent, but his thought would be to expand.

Commissioner Kirk stated that he jogs by the dog park almost every day, and there are always users there. He suggested that the main area be left for large dogs and another area be added for small dogs.

Chair Borman recognized the improvements needed for the Rice Creek Regional Trail and asked if those improvements would be completed by Anoka County. Mr. Maher confirmed that there has been planning and funding has been allocated for Anoka County to complete the regional trail improvements. He noted that there is one steep north/south connection segment that the City controls and will be in charge of maintaining.

Commissioner Graham recognized that these would be nice improvements, but perhaps the funds should be saved to complete the improvements on the trail segment. Mr. Maher commented that they want to strike a balance between park and trail users.

Commissioner Luna commented that while she understands the thought of public safety for the gate, there are many ways to access the park other than by vehicle, and therefore, was unsure if the gate would solve that issue. She preferred to see funds spent elsewhere.

Chair Borman asked if the gate would be at the main access by the Civic Campus. Mr. Maher confirmed the proposed gate location and provided additional background information explaining that, in this instance, vehicles from outside the community are the main source of problems at Locke Park after park hours.

Commissioner Kirk commented that it seems the sand volleyball court would be popular, as many people are bringing their own nets to play within the parks. He noted that he would believe that people not renting the shelter would use the amenity as well. Mr. Maher replied that certain amenities can be included with a rental, and he believed that there are ways they could guide use.

Commissioner Whalen asked if the renter would receive confirmation via email that they could show people, if someone else was using the amenity included in their rental. Mr. Maher confirmed that renters do receive a rental permit, and if there are conflicts, they can call public safety.

Members of the Commission also suggested four-square and gaga ball as low-cost options for recreation amenities.

Commissioner Graham commented that it seems that the gate is needed. Commissioner Rehlander agreed, noting that she supports gates and lighting when necessary to deter unwanted behaviors.

Mr. Maher confirmed that the Commission supported the priorities as presented and discussed.

### **Old Business**

None

**Staff Reports**

5. Fridley Parks and Recreation Staff Report

Mr. Maher provided a brief overview of the report, including information on staffing, upcoming and recent events, and construction on park projects. He noted that next month's meeting will be held at Edgewater Gardens Park.

**Adjournment**

*Commissioner Kirk made the motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:43 p.m. Seconded by Commissioner Rehlander. The motion passed unanimously.*

Respectfully submitted,

Mike Maher, Staff Liaison