



Park Commission Meeting

September 2, 2025

7:00 PM

Fridley City Hall, 7071 University Avenue NE

Minutes

Call to Order

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

Present

Peter Borman
Tim Kirk
Jodi Rehlander
Ken Schultz
Don Whalen

Absent

EB Graham
Melissa Luna

Also Present

Mike Maher, Parks and Recreation Director
Jo Young, President of 49er Days Committee

Approve Parks & Recreation Commission Agenda for September 2, 2025

Motion by Commissioner Kirk to approve the September 2, 2025, meeting agenda. Seconded by Commissioner Whalen. The motion passed unanimously.

Approve Parks & Recreation Commission Minutes for August 4, 2025

Motion by Commissioner Schultz to approve the August 4, 2025, meeting minutes. Seconded by Commissioner Rehlander. The motion passed unanimously.

New Business

1. Fridley Community Festival Discussion

Mike Maher, Parks and Recreation Director, provided background information on Fridley 49er Days, which is a long-time community event. He stated that there have been discussions as to whether the changes at the park would result in changes to the event as well. He commented

that the Fridley 49er Days Committee met to recap the most recent event, and a representative is present to further discuss the event and potential future changes.

Jo Young, 49er Days Committee, stated that the organization has been looking at options for doing something different for the event. She discussed the name of the event and noted a desire to better publicize the reason for the 49er Days name rather than changing the name. She commented on the wet conditions in past years and a desire to change the date. She stated that the Committee was interested in potentially combining the 49er Days event with an opening for Commons Park. She noted that they have spoken to the City Manager, who supports the concept, and therefore she is present to gain the opinion of the Commission. She provided some concepts that the Committee has been discussing to update the event.

Chair Borman stated that the only hesitation he would have is whether the park would be open in July. He acknowledged that the plan is to have the park open before that time, but there could be a potential for project delays.

Commissioner Shultz agreed that the changed date makes sense.

Commissioner Rehlander suggested a history walk to help reinforce the 49er Days theme. She agreed that they should keep the name and work to educate people about the meaning.

Chair Borman stated that the Fridley 49er Days Committee is separate from the City, although they work cooperatively together. He recognized that when he served on the Committee, there was a cost to the organization of about \$25,000 to \$30,000 for the event. Ms. Young stated that the parade is fully funded through the Lions at a cost of \$14,500. She stated that the Fridley 49ers 501-3C spent \$43,000 on the festival this year. She estimated that the event would have a cost in excess of \$50,000 for 2026.

Chair Borman provided information about the carnival that was once a part of the event, which does not have a cost to the Committee and would include some type of profit sharing. Ms. Young commented that she has been contacted by a carnival company, but the festival Committee is not interested in adding a carnival back into the festival because of concerns with liability, public safety, and safety. She confirmed that their next step is to discuss the potential changes with the City Council.

Mr. Maher provided additional information on the next steps, should the Commission support the change to the dates.

Commissioner Rehlander noted a potential conflict with the Community Theater and the related parking lot at the high school. Ms. Young confirmed that she would find out additional information.

Commissioner Kirk commented that there will always be some potential conflicts, but agreed with the proposed date change.

Motion by Commissioner Schultz to support the Fridley 49er Festival date changes and maintain the 49er Days name with increased marketing and outreach. Seconded by Commissioner Whalen. The motion passed unanimously.

2. Cooperative Agreement with Great River Greening for Habitat Restoration at Innsbruck Nature Center

Mr. Maher presented an opportunity to accept grant funds from the State of Minnesota, given to Great River Greening, for the purpose of habitat restoration. He provided additional information on the proposed project, Cooperative Agreement, required matching funds from the City of Fridley, and the proposed scope of work for Innsbruck Nature Center.

Commissioner Schultz asked if this work would be similar to the work at Springbrook. Mr. Maher explained that the work being done at Springbrook is being done by hand through volunteers, whereas this work would be completed by contractors with equipment and herbicide.

Chair Borman asked if this would be a five- or seven-year commitment. Mr. Maher replied that the work would be completed within a period of five years.

Commissioner Rehlander asked how the City became aware of the program. Mr. Maher replied that the City has worked with Great River Greening in the past and provided more information on the grant application process.

Motion by Commissioner Kirk to recommend approval of the Cooperative Agreement between the City of Fridley and Great River Greening for habitat restoration at Innsbruck Nature Center. Seconded by Commissioner Whalen. The motion passed unanimously.

3. Commons Park Operations Planning

Mr. Maher stated that the project is underway with an anticipated opening in the summer of 2026. He stated that they have begun to discuss operations for the park as part of the 2026 budget discussions. He provided additional details on the collaborative operational model between parks and recreation and public works, building operations, potential schedule for the year, and staffing.

Commissioner Whalen asked for more information on staffing and how often the needs would be reviewed. Mr. Maher replied that they would like to deliver the same level of service the City currently does and expand from there. He stated that if the staffing is approved as discussed, staff would work within those parameters, and any adjustments would be made using interns and/or seasonal employees.

Staff Reports

4. Fridley Parks and Recreation Staff Report

Mr. Maher highlighted items from the report, including recent programming and events at different parks and facilities, as well as upcoming opportunities for programming and events. Additional information was provided on the Pumpkin Night in the Park event held at Springbrook. It was noted that volunteers are always needed for the event and the carving that occurs prior to the event.

Commissioner Kirk asked if there was any feedback on the sensory hour offered for Touch a Truck. Mr. Maher replied that staff received a number of comments in appreciation of that addition to the event. He expected that they would continue to offer that in the future.

Unfinished Business

None.

Adjournment

Commissioner Kirk made the motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:15 p.m. Seconded by Commissioner Schultz. The motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Mike Maher, Staff Liaison