



Park Commission Meeting

March 2, 2026

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
Melissa Luna
Tim Kirk
Jodi Rehlander
Ken Schultz
Don Whalen

Absent

EB Graham
Riley Auna (Ex-Officio)

Also Present

Mike Maher, Parks and Recreation Director
Councilmember Ann Bolkcom
Councilmember Ryan Evanson

Approve Parks & Recreation Commission Minutes for February 2, 2026

Motion by Commissioner Kirk to approve the February 2, 2026, meeting minutes. Seconded by Commissioner Whalen. The motion passed unanimously.

Approve Parks & Recreation Commission Agenda for March 2, 2026

Motion by Commissioner Schultz to approve the March 2, 2026, meeting agenda. Seconded by Commissioner Luna. The motion passed unanimously.

Open Forum

New Business

1. Islands of Peace Park History and Background

Parks and Recreation Director Mike Maher stated that the purpose of this park discussion is to understand the current uses and noted ongoing conservation with Anoka County regarding the future of the park, Joint Power Agreement, and possible transfer of land ownership. He provided information on the park property, park history, park features, and next steps.

Commissioner Rehlander asked if the County acts as the landlord for the MRPA. Mr. Maher confirmed that the County leases the building. He stated that there is some discussion for MRPA to look at other sites for their office activities. He noted that he will continue to provide updates on this as the year goes forward.

Councilmember Ann Bolkcom commented that the big issue has been that the City has wanted to program out of this space, but was not provided with that opportunity.

2. Discussion on the Impact of Federal Immigration Enforcement on Fridley Parks

Commissioner Rehlander recognized the impacts of recent immigration enforcement activity in the community. She wanted to have a discussion about the parks and how they can ensure that park users will have no fear in visiting the parks in the community.

Commissioner Whalen stated that he was unsure how the Commission was in a position to tell the local authorities or the federal government what to do. Commissioner Rehlander agreed that the Commission is not in the position to tell anyone what to do, but they could ask for clarification on what would be done. She reviewed the language that is on the website currently about the response of law enforcement in these situations, but believed that more information could be provided.

Chair Borman stated that more information was released from the City Council today. He commented that in his research, there is not much that local law enforcement can do in these situations.

Commissioner Rehlander commented that some municipalities have put signage in their parking lots and parks prohibiting ICE from staging in those areas. Chair Borman noted that he recently saw a sign of that nature in another community. He stated that he spoke with staff from that community, and the signs were a decision of the City Council, but also recognized that there is no ability for enforcement.

Commissioner Rehlander recognized that placing signs that cannot be enforced does not create safety. She stated that the City Council statement today mentioned some additional public conversations on this topic. She suggested that a member of the Commission participate in that process, along with a representative from each of the City commissions.

Councilmember Bolkcom stated that she and Commissioner Rehlander met with Mayor Ostwald and Public Safety Director Ryan George and provided an update on that meeting. She stated

that the statement released today was the first step. She recognized the work that people are doing to help their neighbors.

Councilmember Ryan Evanson stated that he was present to hear the comments from the Commission tonight. He stated that he is appointed to the Metro Cities group and provided an update on recent discussions that have arisen during their recent meetings. He recognized that placing signs banning ICE from parks creates a false sense of safety for those who may use the parks.

Commissioner Whalen was unsure why people want someone to be here if they have a warrant and should not be here. He commented that if the City places a sign in the parks banning ICE and someone is apprehended on park property, that could create additional liability issues for the City. He did not believe that people should be interfering with ICE activity.

Commissioner Rehlander commented that there are people being apprehended who are here legally, based on their appearance, and then being released at a later date. She did not believe that anyone would argue against taking someone who should be taken. She stated that she is not arguing that immigration activity is not needed, but ICE should follow the laws as well.

Commissioner Schultz stated that he supports people being taken who should be taken, but ICE should be following the rule of law.

Commissioner Luna asked if there has been a decrease in enrollment of parks programming. Mr. Maher recognized that some of the programming is done with partners, such as Fridley Public Schools, and commented that there had been a decrease in afterschool program participation during the height of the enforcement activity when school attendance had decreased as well. He commented that there are normal enrollment numbers thus far for the summer programming.

Commissioner Rehlander referenced a letter from area mayors, which came out before the second statement from the City, and asked if the City had been asked to sign the letter. Councilmember Evanson stated that would be a question for the Mayor, but did not believe Mayor Ostwald was asked to sign the letter in advance of it going out.

Commissioner Kirk asked for information on crime in the community recently. Councilmember Evanson commented that he can follow up with Public Safety Director George, but did not believe there were any changes one way or another during this time. The two members of the Council voiced support for the Police Department and acknowledged that the department remains fully staffed.

Chair Borman stated that he feels bad about what happened and how things happened, recognizing that things were handled badly by the federal government. He hoped that operation Metro Surge was done and things were beginning to return to normal.

Commissioner Rehlander provided suggestions for education and emergency procedures that could be put in place, and additional language that could be added to mailed park materials and/or park signs.

Motion by Chair Borman to appoint Commissioner Rehlander to represent the Parks Commission in any special meetings on the topic of immigration enforcement. Seconded by Commissioner Luna.

Further discussion: Commissioner Rehlander suggested that Commissioner Whalen also be a representative to ensure that two points of view are provided. Commissioner Whalen agreed. Commissioner Schultz commented that any members of the Commission could choose to attend. Commissioner Rehlander suggested that they simply state that a member of the Commission attend those meetings.

Chair Borman withdrew the motion.

The Commission made the statement that it would like to be made aware of special meetings on this topic to ensure that interested parties can attend.

Commissioner Luna commented on her experience as a social worker and in the mental health field, noting the importance of trauma-based responses for staff and people in the community, as these have been traumatic times. Mr. Maher welcomed materials that could be shared.

Chair Borman recognized that trust has been broken, and it will take time to build it back up.

Old Business

Staff Reports

3. Fridley Parks and Recreation Staff Report

Mr. Maher provided an overview of his written report, highlighting project updates, recent events, and upcoming events and activities. He noted that the April meeting will be held at Moore Lake due to upgrades that will be made to the Council Chambers at City Hall.

FYSA Report

Chair Borman recognized that the FYSA member was not present, but did provide a written report prior to the meeting.

Adjournment

Commissioner Schultz made the motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:13 p.m. Seconded by Commissioner Luna. The motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Mike Maher, Staff Liaison