

**PARKS AND NATURAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE
MEETING APRIL 21, 2026
MINUTES**

The April 21, 2026, meeting of the Parks and Natural Resources Committee was called to order in city hall at 6:33 p.m.

Attendees: Committee Members Zachary Michalk, Mary Sue Simmons, Margaret Ford, and Alan Mitchell. Council Member Kathy Weier. Resident Barton Winter.

Agenda. Chair Michalk requested that the proposal by Barton Winter to make improvements to the hockey rink, which Winter had raised earlier in an email to the Committee, be added as a specific agenda item. The proposed agenda with the addition of the hockey rink item was approved.

Public Forum. Barton Winter described the work that he thought should be undertaken at the hockey rink. He first mentioned that two corner posts and 100 vertical boards and 19 flat boards should be replaced, and that should be the end of the need to replace boards. He said that two light fobs needed to be replaced. Winter then indicated that the center of the rink should be painted, and he estimated that cost of that to be around \$2000. He then added that he was looking into flattening the figure skating rink because it is two inches higher on one side. He concluded by saying that tree branches from several birch trees near the hockey rink had branches that were protruding above the rink and their tree trunks were starting to get in the way. He said he would like to see those trees removed and replaced with trees planted farther away from the rink.

Minutes. The draft March 17 Minutes were approved unanimously.

Hockey Rink. Michalk decided to finish discussion of the hockey rink issues since Winter already had raised the matter during the Public Forum. Michalk summarized the issues as follows:

- Boards
- Painting
- Flattening the figure skating rink
- Birch trees

Winter said he would prepare a proposal for the city to pay for painting the center of the hockey rink. In response to a question, Winter said he would investigate what air temperatures were appropriate for painting. He said about the flattening

that he was not proposing that a liner be installed, but he would get a bid for the installation of a liner. The Committee discussed whether it might be possible to use dirt from the Tighe-Schmitz Project to raise the one side of the rink. The Committee said that it would consider the request to trim the trees near the rink and possibly plant new ones farther away. When asked about the boards, Winter said that he would pay for the boards and complete the installation. **A motion was made and seconded to approve Winter's request that he install new boards at the hockey rink at his expense and that the City arrange and pay for painting the center of the hockey rink and investigate the possibility of trimming the trees and leveling the figure skating rink. The motion carried unanimously.**

Clean-Up Day. The following list summarizes the discussion the Committee had regarding preparation for Clean-Up Day.

- There is a lot of buckthorn in the community that needs to be removed. A puller will be available for use.
- There is moss developing on the tennis courts. The Committee discussed whether the tiles on the courts might be treated to resist moss or other vegetation from growing. Ford volunteered to check on what might be available and effective.
- The storage shed across the street from city hall needed to be cleaned out and material behind city hall needed to be disposed of and that a dumpster would be available for these unwanted materials.
- The Grotto Walkway had a ditch at the bottom that was filling up with debris and water and needed cleaning out.
- Weier reported that the City has hired a part-time summer maintenance person who would be available throughout the summer.
- Weier said that the City has hired a different mowing company from last year and this company uses no fertilizers or other chemicals.
- Weier said that a youth soccer team has rented Tighe-Schmitz Park for soccer practice from May to the middle of July.
- The city hall flower beds are an area that needs work.
- The Committee emphasized that volunteers need to sign waiver forms and that such forms should be made available on Saturday.

Action Plan. The Committee discussed the various projects that were identified in the Action Plan that was submitted by the Committee to the Council in December 2025 and was approved by the Council. A copy of the Action Plan approved in

December was included with the Committee Agenda. During the discussion, the Committee identified a person to act as the Contact Person for each major project in the Action Plan and those individuals are identified in the Minutes when the project is discussed

Tighe-Schmitz Park. The Committee discussed that this work will begin in June or July. The city staff, particularly the city engineer, is the Contact Person for this project.

Elm Beach. Simmons described a meeting that was held at Elm Beach on March 30 to discuss the erosion problem on the beach. Attendees included Simmons, neighbors on both sides of the beach, and Lori Tella from the Washington Conservation District. Simmons reported that it was likely that a rain garden the length of Elm Beach would likely be necessary. She also added that when a nearby manhole cover was removed near the entrance to the beach, it was discovered that the sewer line had baffles. Weier said that the City has hired a company to televise some of the storm sewers at city expense. Simmons said that the private properties on both sides of the beach are at higher elevations and are draining runoff onto Elm Beach. The neighbors are supportive of the need to reduce runoff at Elm Beach and were advised that they could apply to the Rice Creek Watershed District for grants to help pay for improvements to their property. Tella advised that she would develop a “concept plan” for the project but that grant funding for this year was unlikely. The Committee agreed that controlling erosion on Elm Beach remained a high priority project. Simmons is the Contact Person.

Ash Beach. The Committee recognized that improvements were needed at Ash Beach to improve access and safety but no specific projects were identified. Ford volunteered to be the Contact Person for the Ash Beach project.

Polly’s Park. Weier stated that 101 dead trees have been identified in the Park, grant funding for this year is no longer available, and that the City might remove some trees at city expense.

Curt Feistner Memorial Park. The Committee discussed that it might not be practical to provide access to the beach but that some kind of viewing platform might be feasible. Weier reported that veterans organizations have no grant funding and there is no grant funding available for the City to apply for. In the meantime, the City will maintain a flag and a sign in Wildwood Park recognizing Curt Feistner. Amy Hulett had earlier volunteered to take the lead on this project.

Birch Beach. The City will be responsible for ongoing maintenance of the beach and the rain garden. Sperl is the Contact Person.

HELP Grant for Habitat Improvement. The Committee recognized that no grant funding is presently available and this project will be on hold.

Lake Links Trail. The Committee discussed that this work will begin this summer and be completed this year or perhaps next spring.

Music in the Park. Mitchell reported that there are twelve Sundays of music this year, beginning June 7 and running through the last Sunday in August, and excluding the Fourth of July weekend. Mitchell is the Contact Person.

Dead Tree Selection. The Committee discussed the results of the process to select a dead tree the city was responsible that would be removed at city expense. The tree is on Birchwood Avenue just down from city hall. Michalk reported that there was an article in the White Bear Press about the process. Michalk is the Contact Person.

Special Revenue Fund. The Committee focused on how much money was anticipated to be spent from the Special Revenue Fund this year. The Committee identified the Tighe-Schmitz Project (\$7500), the Dead Tree Selection (\$2500), the Swim Buoy (\$250), and Music in the Park (\$3600).

Action Plan Update. Michalk agreed to update the Action Plan with the best information we have at the moment. The update will identify the Contact Person for various other lower priority projects that were not discussed at this meeting and not identified in these Minutes.

Next Meeting. May 19, 2026

Adjourn. 8:03

Respectfully submitted,

Alan Mitchell
Secretary