

**PARKS AND NATURAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE**  
**MEETING June 17, 2025**  
**MINUTES**

The June 17, 2025, meeting of the Parks and Natural Resources Committee was called to order in city hall at 6:32 p.m.

**Attendees:** Committee Members Zachary Michalk, Mary Sue Simmons, Amy Hulett, Margaret Ford, and Alan Mitchell. Council Member Kathy Weier. Council Member Bridget Sperl arrived at 7:04.

**Others:** Barton Winter (arrived 7:06).

**Agenda.** The agenda was approved unanimously

**Public Forum.** No one was present to address the Committee.

**Minutes.** The May Minutes were approved unanimously with one amendment – under the discussion of the location of benches along the Lake Links Trail, the motion the Committee approved should say one bench near County Line Road and Birchwood Lane, not Birchwood Avenue.

**Exercise Stations.** Mitchell stated that he had visited Deer Meadow Park in White Bear Township to view the exercise stations that the Township has installed. He showed some photographs he had taken of the equipment. Mitchell added that he had talked to the Public Works Director for White Bear Township to get more information about the equipment and the costs. He learned that the exercise stations were installed in 2015, and that there are five stations in the Park. The cost for the concrete pads, the equipment, and the shipping of the equipment was about \$10,000. Chair Michalk said he would pass this information along to Mary Cahill of the Lake Links Trail Task Force.

**Tighe-Schmitz Park Update.** The Committee discussed the Public Forum that was held at the Park on May 31, to explain to neighbors and residents what was intended under the grant that the city has received. The Committee was pleased with the turnout of residents and indicated that the walking tour led by Lori Tella of the Washington Conservation District was particularly helpful and informative. The Committee recognized that local residents had expressed a lot of helpful information based on their experiences and preferences. The Committee discussed the fact that some participants at the forum had commented about the need to do some work improving Hall's Marsh, and confirmed that Hall's Marsh was already

being considered as part of the Priebe Lake issue and was not a part of the work to be conducted under the grant. Simmons remarked that Lori Tella will next begin work on the design of the specific projects to be pursued, which is required before any work can commence.

Hulett reported that she had arranged to have a soil sample taken from 608 Wildwood Ave in Birchwood as part of the Urban Soil Analysis study being undertaken by the University of Minnesota and the Washington Conservation District. Hulett indicated that the sample would be taken within the next week or so.

Simmons summarized a meeting that was held with Lori Tella and another Washington Conservation District employee on June 10 to look at vegetation near Hall's Marsh and along Jay Path. Mitchell also attended that meeting.

**Committee Budget.** Sperl and resident Winter both arrived as the Budget discussion began. Chair Michalk provided a spread sheet he had prepared with six different possible projects that might be undertaken. Here's the list:

- Funding match for Tighe-Schmitz Grant
- Lights at Tennis/Pickleball Courts
- Backstop Netting for Hockey Rink
- Painting Center of Hockey Rink
- Improvements at Curt Feistner Preserve
- Landscaping around Lift Station

Over the course of the discussion of this agenda item, each item on the list was discussed briefly. The consensus of the Committee was that these were possible projects to include in the development of the 2026 budget.

Sperl reported that everything the Committee had requested be funded as part of the Lake Links money had been approved by the Lake Links Trail Task Force and that the Task Force planned to bring that matter to the City Council at its August meeting. (The list is included in the May meeting Minutes.) The Committee discussed that it would be a good idea to add a drinking water station along the Lake Links Trail in Birchwood to its request. Ford moved, seconded by Simmons, that funding for a water station be included in the Lake Links request. **The motion passed unanimously.**

The Committee discussed the issue of making improvements to the hockey rink. Weier mentioned that certain work replacing boards and posts had already been approved by the Council and emphasized that Winter could help with the removal of existing woodwork but could not engage in any of the installation of new boards and posts.

Simmons suggested that it might be helpful to specifically solicit ideas for park projects from residents. Michalk volunteered to arrange for city staff to post such a request on the city Facebook page.

Weier mentioned that the Committee should consider what work might be implemented to improve the Curt Feistner Preserve.

The Committee agreed that it would be helpful as it discussed various projects to consider whether the costs would be part of an annual Levy, or would be funded with monies in the Special Revenue Fund. The Committee recognized that the money in the Special Revenue Fund was essentially dock and boat fees paid by members of the Birchwood Dock Association. Simmons suggested that the Committee solicit ideas for beach improvements from the Dock Association.

The Committee discussed what might be done at Polly's Park, particularly with regard to tree removal and runoff. No specific projects were identified, although the Committee indicated that Polly's Park should continue to be one area of interest.

The Committee discussed the matter of kids' playground equipment. Weier mentioned that most of the playground equipment was designed for younger children and that the Committee might want to consider installing equipment for kids about six and older. It was discussed that perhaps one of the swings in Tighe-Schmitz Park could be lowered to make swinging easier on at least one swing. The Committee reviewed the audit that had been created about a year ago regarding inspection of park equipment and recognized that it would be a good idea to conduct another inspection. The Committee determined that as part of the July meeting, the Committee members would visit some of the parks and inspect equipment and park condition.

Committee members agreed that more detail would have to be developed at the July meeting regarding a proposed budget for 2026, and that once a proposed budget was developed, the Committee would attempt to prioritize the projects included.

Michalk volunteered to prepare a list of comments and ideas that were suggested by residents at the public forum that was held in May 2024.

**Next Meeting.** July 15, 2025

**Adjourn.** 8:02 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Alan Mitchell  
Secretary