

**PARKS AND NATURAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE
MEETING MAY 19, 2026
MINUTES**

The May 19, 2026, meeting of the Parks and Natural Resources Committee was called to order in city hall at 6:32 p.m. by Secretary Alan Mitchell, presiding in the absence of Chair Zac Michalk

Attendees: Committee Members Mary Sue Simmons, Margaret Ford, Amy Hulett, and Alan Mitchell. Council Member Bridget Sperl. Resident Barton Winter.

Agenda. The draft agenda was approved unanimously.

Public Forum. Barton Winter stated that he was happy that the City Council had approved of his work installing some new boards at the hockey rink. He indicated that he would like the Parks Committee to look at the birch trees near the hockey rink because some may be interfering with the rink and have to be removed. He also said that he would like the Committee to consider possible improvements at the recreational skating rink. Winter said that he had not been able to gather data on the cost of paint for the hockey rink surface yet but that he would provide such figures at the Parks Committee meeting in June. He also added that he would like the City to purchase a new snow blower for the rink. Sperl asked whether it might be possible to just trim the trees near the hockey rink because the City would prefer to not remove healthy trees. Winter responded that it might be possible to trim some of the trees but the one closest to the rink should probably be removed. The Committee suggested that it would be a good idea to check on this with the arborist.

Minutes. The draft April 21 Minutes were approved unanimously with the addition of two names (Mayor Jennifer Arsenault and Rebecca Nestingen from the Washington Conservation District) to the list of attendees at the March 30 meeting at Elm Beach.

Elm Beach Clean Water Plan. Simmons provided a brief overview of a possible conceptual plan for addressing runoff at Elm Beach that had been prepared by Lori Tella of the Washington Conservation District. (A copy of the conceptual plan was part of the Committee's agenda packet for the meeting.) Simmons advised that any grant funding the City obtained for work at Elm Beach would likely cover 50% of the costs and that the City would have to cover the other 50%. She added

that the same cost sharing would apply to any work that was done on the property of the adjoining beach neighbors. Simmons stated that she had raised this cost sharing issue with the landowners and that the landowners were agreeable to pay half the costs of any work they agreed to have done on their property.

At this point, a phone call was placed to Lori Tella of the Washington Conservation District (WCS). Tella advised the Committee that she had been onsite for the March 30 meeting to look at the situation, including runoff and ice damage impacts, and to meet with the neighbors. Referring to the same conceptual plan drawing for Elm Beach that Simmons had mentioned, Tella described several options for reducing and controlling the runoff, including hillside stabilization, a shoreline buffer, some upland work, check dams, and installation of a device called an energy dissipator.

Tella emphasized that this was just one possible approach. She said the cost figures were only estimates and that the actual costs would depend on the quality and extent of the work undertaken and that these estimates could be low. She stated that labor on a project like this can be costly. Tella added that hard rains, like 5 or 6 inch rains, result in a torrent of water running down Elm Beach and into the lake. She added that the more work that is done to control the runoff, the better the result will be. In response to an inquiry, Tella cautioned that the City would need to get a grant award first, before any expenditures were incurred, or the City would forfeit the ability to get grant funding for the work completed. Tella advised the Committee that while she has been involved in this project up to this point, different WCS staff people (Ashley Petel and Rebecca Nestingen) would be the primary contact persons going forward.

Tella was asked what the Parks Committee should do to keep this project moving. She responded that the City should undertake a survey of Elm Beach to help with creation of a more specific concept plan. She thought that such a plan could become available in June and then a meeting should be held with the neighbors to solicit their responses and participation. Tella said she would put together a schedule of steps that need to be undertaken and email that to us. The steps would generally include the following:

- Confirm that it is a Water Quality Project. Tella said that the Rice Creek Watershed District has already determined that the project qualifies as such a project and is grant eligible.

- Develop Conceptual Plan. This would be more detailed than the one Tella provided for this meeting and would more specifically identify the steps to be implemented.
- Submit Grant Application. This needs to be completed before any work is done or any expenses are incurred.
- Select Contractor. Tella said this could be a firm that has experience maintaining rain gardens. It could be the same firm that has been selected to do the work at Tighe-Schmitz Park.

Tella said that there still is grant money available for this year. She reminded the Committee that for a project of this type, the maximum grant is \$10,000. She added that larger grants are available for different and larger projects such as installing curb and gutters or for City Comprehensive Plan projects if the City was interested in pursuing such larger projects.

The Committee discussed that there is a pre-construction meeting tomorrow (May 20) with the contractor for the Tighe-Schmitz Project. The Committee thought that it would be a good idea to ask the contractor about putting up a sign at Tighe-Schmitz Park describing what is going on during the construction period.

The Committee indicated its intention to remain in contact with the Washington Conservation staff assigned to this project and to continue to move it forward. The Committee also discussed that it would be good to keep the Birchwood Dock Association advised of progress on Elm Beach.

2026 Action Plan The Committee went through the projects on the Action Plan (entitled Table 1 in the agenda packet). Nothing further was discussed regarding the Tighe-Schmitz Water Management Projects or the Elm Beach Erosion Control project. Ford advised she would have a report about Ash Beach at the June meeting. Mitchell stated that Music in the Park starts on June 7 and would run through August. Sperl remarked that with regard to dead tree removal in the community, the City had identified 32 trees that need to be taken down, not including the dedicated tree that the Committee had selected for removal as part of a program to allow residents to nominate a tree for removal. She added that the City is seeking bids for the tree removal and that the City would not be able to remove all the trees this year, but the dedicated tree would be one that is taken down.

Budget Summary. The Committee then turned to Table 2, the budget summary. Mitchell advised that he had inquired of city staff about how much money has been spent out of the Special Revenue Fund and learned that no expenditures were identified. The Committee discussed that the cost estimate for the Elm Beach project projected more grant funding than is going to be available, but decided it would hold off revising the figure until more details were developed. Sperl reported on developments with the Lake Links Bike Trail work. She said the City is in the process of ordering street signs and electric speed signs, a fountain, a bike repair station, four benches, and other amenities. She added that the City is talking to contractors about installing concrete pads for the various equipment. Sperl indicated that the City was hopeful the Lake Links work would be completed by the end of August.

Ongoing Projects. Table 3 contains a list of regular maintenance-type projects. Ford said that she will provide information at the next meeting about the best method for cleaning tennis courts.

Bulletin Board and Social Media Posts. The Committee was reminded that if the Committee wanted to post anything on the city bulletin board or on social media, that Councilwoman Sperl should be contacted to do that. Sperl also reported that ferns had sprouted in the garden outside city hall and that if residents had ferns or other native plants to donate, they are welcome to just plant them in the area. She also announced that the brown trees in the garden area were going to be replaced.

Next Meeting. June 16, 2026 Our new contact person at the Washington Conservation District (Ashley Petel) will be invited to attend.

Adjourn. 7:49

Respectfully submitted,

Alan Mitchell
Secretary