

PARKS AND NATURAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE
MEETING June 16, 2026
MINUTES

The June 16, 2026, meeting of the Parks and Natural Resources Committee was called to order in city hall at 6:32 p.m. by Chair Zac Michalk

Attendees: Committee Members Zac Michalk, Mary Sue Simmons, Amy Hulett, and Alan Mitchell. Council members Bridget Sperl and Kathy Weier. Also present were Birchwood residents Brian Kraft, Ellen Maas, Len Pratt, and Barton Winter and Ashley Petel with the Washington Conservation District .

Agenda. The draft agenda was approved unanimously.

Public Forum. Barton Winter asked if anybody had looked at the trees near the hockey rink that he had requested be removed or trimmed. Sperl responded that she had looked at the trees and that they were healthy and would not be taken down but they might be trimmed. Michalk also stated that he had looked at the trees and agreed with Sperl. Winter asked if anybody else on the Committee was going to look at the trees and the response was that no decision in that regard would be made as part of the Public Forum.

Winter then stated that he would like the City to take a look at trees on the city easement near his property to see if they might be taken down. Sperl answered that the City had prepared a list of trees to be taken down and the City would not be considering additional trees at this time. She also added that the City had a grant to take down dead trees in Polly's Park but that the grant money would not be available until winter 2027.

Winter advised the Committee that he had not obtained an estimate for the cost to paint the crown of the hockey rink. Weier said that if he could get an estimate to the City by next month, the matter could come to the Council for consideration at its August meeting.

Minutes. The draft May 21 Minutes were approved unanimously.

Elm Beach Clean Water Plan. Simmons introduced Ashley Petel with the Washington Conservation District who would be taking Lori Tella's place with regard to this project. Simmons stated that she had not had a chance to talk to the neighbors adjacent to Elm Beach and explained that any work by them on their property might be eligible for a grant covering 50% of the cost. Simmons added

that no work would occur on their property unless the owners elected to do so. Maas said that their property along the easement was filled with vegetation and did not contribute to runoff onto the city's property.

Petel said that the Washington Conservation District people were on the site on Friday (June 12) to construct a survey of the easement. She said that the District was looking at a holistic approach to addressing water quality and the easement was just one of many projects that might happen. She added that the District was ready to move to the design stage for Elm Beach and was exploring funding options. Petel clarified that any plans by the adjacent owners would be considered separate projects. She also confirmed that she had replaced Lori Tella and that Rebecca Nestingen, also with the Washington Conservation District, would be the engineer.

Councilwoman Sperl asked who would pay the design costs. Petel said the District usually pays those costs. Petel added that with regard to projects on private property by a landowner, grants are available for half the cost of the project up to \$5000, and smaller projects might also be grant eligible. Councilwoman Weier asked if the City's share of its costs had to be actual expenses or could be covered by volunteer time. Petel said she would check on that and report back.

Pratt inquired whether it was too late to look at a larger area than just Elm Beach to help control runoff. Petel described that the Rice Creek Watershed District did offer grant funding for such broader work. Kraft added that when there is a heavy rain, stormwater is roaring down from nearby areas to the easement and that he had video of such an event. Pratt said that it was important to know where the water is coming from in order to figure out how to cut the flow. Kraft added that control of runoff at the street level was also needed. Pratt asked if the possibility of covering up the open pipe had been explored and emphasized that maintenance of any project was crucial. Simmons stated that she agreed and that maintenance is an important requirement of any grant that might be awarded. Pratt pointed to a map of the easement and asked a number of questions about what was shown and made suggestions for actions that might be taken to improve the easement and manage the flow. (Note: there are two maps that have been prepared for Elm Beach by the Washington Conservation District and the Rice Creek Watershed District, one dated 5/11/26 that was included in the May agenda packet, highlighting the city property, and one dated 5/26/26 that was in the June agenda packet and which more clearly identifies the Kraft and Pratt/Maas property adjacent to the Beach, but

the maps are essentially the same.) Mitchell asked Petel to clarify what the timeframe was for undertaking any particular project on the easement. Petel answered that work might possibly begin this fall but the timing is yet to be determined. At this point the discussion of the Elm Beach project concluded, and Kraft, Pratt, and Maas left the meeting.

Tighe-Schmitz Project. The Committee discussed the status of the Tighe-Schmitz Project. At the request of Council members Weier and Sperl, the Committee decided to attend the July Council meeting and provide an oral report on the status of the work, which is scheduled to begin in July.

Weier added that the City was trying to map the entire storm sewer system in the city and that the work should be completed soon.

Picnic Tables at Tighe-Schmitz Pavilion. Michalk stated that the mayor had asked the Parks Committee to consider whether the picnic tables in Tighe-Schmitz Park should be replaced. The Committee discussed the fact that the tables at the Park are old and worn and very heavy. The Committee decided that the tables at Tighe-Schmitz probably got more use for picnic activities than the two tables at Dellwood Beach and that rather than buy two new picnic tables at this time, to switch the tables between the two locations. Michalk added that the grill at the pavilion was in sad shape and should be replaced, and the Committee decided to ask the staff to buy a new comparable grill for the pavilion and pay for it out of the Committee's budget. The Committee also raised the matter of the need for a second swim buoy at Dellwood Beach and decided to arrange for the City to buy a second buoy and have it installed.

Action Plan. Weier mentioned that the rope on the flag pole at Wildwood Park has disappeared and that a new one will be installed in time for the Fourth of July parade. The Committee expressed appreciation for the volunteers who put up the flags around the city for Flag Day. The flags will remain up through the Fourth of July.

Hullet reported that there was nothing new to report regarding plans at Curt Feistner Memorial Preserve. The Committee discussed that it would continue to maintain the memorial recognition in Wildwood Park and consider improvements at the Preserve on the lake.

The Committee scrolled through the rest of the projects on the Action Plan and determined that there were no updates or changes.

Bulletin Board and Social Media. The Committee decided that it was important to let the public know that work on the Tighe-Schmitz Project would begin in July and decided to post that information on the City's Facebook page now in advance of construction.

Next Meeting. August 21, 2026.

Adjourn. 7:41

Respectfully submitted,

Alan Mitchell
Secretary