

PARKS AND NATURAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE
MEETING August 18, 2026
MINUTES

The August 18, 2026, meeting of the Parks and Natural Resources Committee was called to order in city hall at 6:34 p.m. by Chair Zac Michalk

Attendees: Committee Members Zac Michalk, Mary Sue Simmons, Margaret Ford, and Alan Mitchell. Council member Kathy Weier. Also present was Birchwood resident Barton Winter. Council Member Bridget Sperl arrived at 6:53.

Agenda. The draft agenda was approved unanimously.

Minutes. Chair Michalk suggested one change to the draft June 16 Minutes – In the discussion of the Picnic Tables at page 3 of the draft Minutes, the reference to Dellwood Beach should be changed to Kay Beach. With that one change, the draft Minutes were approved unanimously.

Public Forum. Barton Winter advised the Committee that he had seen an email from the MN Department of Natural Resources regarding the availability of grant funds to address the impact of emerald ash borer on community forests. Councilwoman Weier responded that the City was aware of that and was looking into the matter.

Birch Trees. Chair Michalk summarized the discussion from past meetings about the Birch Trees near the hockey rink and the request by Barton Winter that the City consider taking down the trees because he thought the trees interfered with the hockey rink and the skating rink and the warming house. All Committee members present stated that they had inspected the trees and had concluded that while some trimming would be in order, removal of the trees was not necessary. Mitchell **made a motion**, seconded by Ford, that the Parks Committee does not want the birch trees near the hockey rink to come down and recommends that the trees be trimmed vertically and horizontally at the appropriate time and in accordance with good pruning practices. **The motion carried unanimously.**

Winter responded that he was in total disagreement with the motion and continued to maintain that the trees should come down because they are a threat because limbs could fall during a storm and they made snow removal difficult and generally were just in the way.

Chair Michalk added that the City might consider trimming the arbor vitae on one end of the hockey rink. Mitchell added that the north end of the rink where the

bands bring in their instruments and equipment for the summer concerts could use some cleaning up.

Hockey Rink Painting. Winter described the painting he would like to do on the center crown of the hockey rink to test the ability of the paint to maintain a smooth surface and whether such a surface may extend the period of time ice can be maintained. Winter explained that he had updated the cost estimates that he provided for inclusion in the August agenda packet and the correct costs for a five gallon container of paint was \$86.28 for the undercoat and \$117.42 for the top coat. He stated that he had already bought a five gallon container of the undercoat paint. He also mentioned that the color of the paint was light blue.

Mitchell **moved**, seconded by Simmons, that the Park Committee authorize Barton Winter to paint a portion of the center of the hockey rink as a test area using five gallons of undercoat paint that he had purchased and five gallons of top coat paint that the Committee authorizes the city to purchase from the Committee's budget, and to determine in the spring if the paint has worked to provide a better rink surface, and that the painting be done at a time to insure there was no disruption to the Music in the Park concerts on Sunday evenings, and that Winter could ask the City Council to refund the cost of the paint he purchased if he so desired. **The motion carried unanimously.**

Memorial Donation Program. Councilwoman Sperl addressed whether the Parks Committee might propose some written standards and requirements that the City could apply whenever any person was interested in making a donation of material or money, like a memorial bench, to the City. The Committee determined that such written guidance would be helpful, and should address both how to actually donate the money and how any memorial should be constructed and maintained. Ford agreed to work with the city administrator and report back to the Committee.

Elm Beach Clean Water Plan. Simmons reported that the Elm Beach Project, as discussed at the June meeting, had changed, from a small project to control runoff into the lake from the Beach, as shown in the concept plan in the June agenda packet, to a stormwater runoff project addressing a much larger area. Simmons advised that the Washington Conservation District, which had prepared the concept plan for the smaller project, was no longer able to prepare such a plan for the larger project, due to funding issues. Simmons described two options regarding preparation of a concept plan and other design work. The options are:

1. City Does It. This would involve the City paying the city engineer to do the work.
2. Rice Creek Watershed District Does It. This could be part of a grant from the District, which would cover 50% of the cost of the project. Simmons said Rice Creek is interested in talking with the City about the possibility of grant funding.

Simmons stated that the city engineer had done the planning work in conjunction with a an application for a grant for work regarding runoff into Polly's Park. The Polly's Park Project is mostly a runoff control project, and the Committee pondered whether it might be possible to join the two projects – Polly's Park and Elm Beach. The Committee recognized that the road work in the area of Polly's Park would result in even greater runoff into the Park. Councilwoman Weier stated that if there was no grant for Polly's Park, the project would not go ahead.

The Committee decided that member Simmons and the city engineer would continue to explore options, considering both costs and grant possibilities, and report back to the Committee.

Tighe-Schmitz Park Project. Simmons indicated that a question had arisen over the construction of a rain garden as part of the project. The Committee discussed that this issue should be resolved by the engineer and the construction firm when construction begins. The Committee recognized that construction was expected to start in July, but has not yet begun, and thought that construction would begin the first or second week of September. Councilwoman Weier added that a question had arisen over who pays for the signs to be posted on the construction site but the city engineer will handle the matter.

Lake Links Trail. Councilwoman Sperl reported that work was underway on the Lake Links Trail, that concrete pads for the benches and the water faucet and repair station had been poured, and speed signs were going up. She added that there might be some state money left over when all the Birchwood work is completed, and the City has until December 2027 to determine if other Trail work is appropriate.

Miscellaneous Projects. Chair Michalk reported that a new grill for Tighe-Schmitz Park had arrived and would be installed soon. He added that the ugliest tree the Committee selected for removal, had been taken down, along with other dead ash trees.

Action Plan. Simmons began the discussion of the Action Plan by reporting that the Birch Beach Rain Garden was in need of maintenance. She advised that the Washington Conservation District has developed a rain garden maintenance program for rain gardens on public property and might be an agency the City could hire to maintain Birch Beach and any other rain gardens developed by the City. Chair Michalk said he would talk to the city administrator about completing certain tasks in the Action Plan, including maintenance of the Birch Beach Rain Garden. Mitchell added that the Committee should begin to discuss an Action Plan and budget for 2027, and Michalk responded that he would raise that with the administrator as well.

Newsletter. Michalk asked whether members had any items that should be included in the next Newsletter. Items mentioned include advising residents that e-bikes are not permitted on the City trails, that work at Tighe-Schmitz Park would begin in September, that the City's new webpage is up and running, and that Music in the Park will continue until September 13 because one concert had been postponed.

Next Meeting. September 15, 2026.

Adjourn. 8:03

Respectfully submitted,

Alan Mitchell
Secretary