PARKS AND NATURAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE
MEETING OCTOBER 21, 2025
MINUTES

The October 21, 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, and Alan Mitchell. Council Members Kathy Weier and Bridget Sperl. Absent Committee Member Margaret Ford.

Others: Birchwood resident Barton Winter arrived at 6:37. (Note that Barton Winter arrived after this item was considered but he was informed that the matter he wanted to speak about – the hockey rink netting – had been added to the agenda.)

Agenda. The draft agenda was approved unanimously with the addition of two items. Michalk asked that an update of the Tighe-Schmitz Project be included. Weier requested that a discussion of the Hockey Rink Netting also be added to the agenda. A motion to adopt the agenda with the two additional items was approved unanimously.

Public Forum. No person was present to speak during the public forum.

Minutes. The draft September Minutes were approved unanimously.

Adopt-a-Park Initiative. Hulett stated that White Bear Lake has such a program and that Birchwood might consider seeking volunteers willing to adopt one of our parks. The Committee discussed what issues might need to be addressed in creating a similar program. The following issues were identified:

- The role of the Parks Committee – supervisory, administrative.
- What would be expected of anybody adopting a park – watering plants, general cleanup.
- Who might be interested in adopting a park – somebody who lived close to the park, maybe a Garden Club or other group.
- The length of the commitment – a minimum of one year perhaps.
- Could the City put up a sign at the park identifying the persons – sure.

The Committee decided to put an announcement in the next City Newsletter, which will go out yet this year, describing the program and asking people to respond if they were interested in participating. After determining whether anybody is interested, the Committee will consider again whether to pursue establishing an Adopt-a-Park program.

Tighe-Schmitz Park Project Update. Weier brought up the matter of the Tighe-Schmitz Project. Weier reported that the project is proceeding, the bids came in lower than expected, and that the work will start in the spring. Weier stated the Council is pleased with the progress.

Simmons mentioned that the work to be undertaken in Birchwood as part of the money from the Lake Links Trail appropriation is planned to be completed by the end of 2026.

City Code Chapter 804 (Special Revenue Fund). Mitchell explained the packet of material that he had prepared regarding amendment of Chapter 804 – a draft amendment, a redline version, and an explanation of the proposed changes. He stated that the redline version was an incomplete earlier draft but that the clean copy had the appropriate amendments. Mitchell explained that the amendments were intended to clarify the purposes for which the money in the fund could be spent. He directed attention to section 804.050, the language describing the permitted uses of the Fund, to a new subsection (5), which recognizes that the Council could use the Fund to pay for park projects benefiting the public even if the work did not clearly fit one of the first four categories. Weier mentioned that the definition of the City Park System in section 804.020 did not include Jay Path. The Committee confirmed that Jay Path should be included in the definition. Mitchell added that since the language came from section 607.120.A., that the 607 language should be amended as well. The Committee decided that it should send the material to the City Council so it can consider the proposed amendments at its November meeting, which will be the second Wednesday (November 12) because November 11 is a national holiday.

Draft Budget Memo. The Committee first discussed the October 11 Clean-Up Day and whether there were any projects left to finish. The Committee mentioned that there was some brush at various locations that still needed to be picked up. Members will let Michalk know if there are other matters that need to be addressed and he will advise the city staff of any remaining tasks to be completed. The Committee expressed satisfaction with all the work that had been completed, including tree trimming at the tennis courts, buckthorn pulling, and cleaning up the hockey rink, and expressed appreciation for all the volunteers helping out.

Mitchell brought up the subject of Music in the Park for next summer. He said that he has been contacted by various musicians who would like to perform in Birchwood, including some with Birchwood connections, and that there are twelve Sundays in June, July, and August next summer so if the City increased the budget slightly, it could be possible to have two more evenings of music in 2026. Mitchell explained that the present budget is $3700, which includes $3000 for ten weeks of music at $300 per week and $700 for miscellaneous expenses. Mitchell said that this past year some of the $700 went to carpeting and a canopy. He added that he wasn't aware of any such expenses for next year. The Committee decided that it would include a $4000 item in its proposed budget for Music in the Park, up from the present $3700, to allow for two additional weeks of music. The Committee went on to discuss whether other changes in the concert series might be implemented, such as food trucks, ice cream, and more advertising, and concluded that such issues were things to consider going forward.

Hockey Rink Netting. Simmons began by stating that the neighbors were excited to see the framework for the netting go up. The Committee discussed that it wasn't aware of the final cost of the project, but thought that since hardware from the old baseball backstop in the park that had been taken down was used to frame the netting, that the costs would be less than what had been suggested by the contractor Michalk had talked to earlier. Simmons said that once the final costs are determined, she will talk to the neighbors. Barton Winter stated that he had some concerns about the capability of the construction and questioned whether the structure would be capable of withstanding the impact of the hockey pucks. Winter stated that at a minimum he would like to see the two center posts behind the net imbedded in the ground. Weier and Sperl both responded that the Council discussed this matter at its Council meeting a week ago and that the city engineer thought the structure was adequate and the City will monitor the situation so if there are problems, improvements can be made. Winter was asked to keep the Parks Committee and the Council advised if he sees any problems this winter with the netting when the rink is flooded in a few weeks.

Next Meeting. November 18, 2025

Adjourn. 7:24

Respectfully submitted,

Alan Mitchell
Secretary