



PARKS & RECREATION BOARD MEETING MINUTES
Monday, June 1, 2026, at 4:30 PM
West Hills Social Commons, 500 Dunnell Dr, Owatonna, MN 55060

1. OPENING BUSINESS

Call to Order at 4:32 p.m. by Jon Theil

Members Present: Chair, Jon Thiel, Secretary, Sara Baird, Vice-Chair: Gina McGuire, Tyler Cochran, Carter Klecker, Nancy Ness

Members Absent: None, there is one open seat on the Park Board

Staff Present: Eric Anderson, Jesse Wilker, Mike Klein, Maureen Lyons

Guests Present: Leanne T Alt, Zella Ebeling, Scott Fluegel, Cindy Fowler, Theresa Harsma, Melissa Zimmerman

2. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Motion by Gina McGuire to approve the agenda. Second by Nancy Ness. All members voted aye.

3. APPROVAL OF PRIOR MEETING MINUTES

Motion by Sara Baird to approve the May 4, 2026, Park Board meeting minutes and bring them before the Council. Second by Tyler Cochran. All members voted aye.

4. PERSONS WISHING TO APPEAR

The public forum is intended to afford the public an opportunity to address topics to the Park Board. The public forum will be no longer than 30 minutes in length, and each presenter will have no more than five (5) minutes to speak. Topics of discussion are restricted to local parks and recreation. The Park Board will only listen and not take action on public forum presentations.

4.a. Theresa Harsma shared an excerpt from *How Can I Help* by Douglas W. Tallamy.

4.b. Scott Fluegel, a Master Naturalist, shared his opinion on using neurotoxins and noticing a reduction in the dragonfly population.

4.c. Leann Alt compared the value and positive impact of native pollinators to that of commercial honeybees.

4.d. Cindy Fowler encouraged alternatives to widespread fogging to control mosquitoes.

4.e. Melissa Zimmerman shared concern with using mosquito control methods that subject citizens to hazardous chemicals.

5. NEW BUSINESS

5.a. Park Permit – Prairie Forge Initiative

Motion by Nancy Ness to approve Park Permits as presented. Second by Tyler Cochran. All members voted aye.

6. OLD BUSINESS

6.a. Mosquito Control Discussion

A list of questions from the previous meeting and answers from the Parks Manager was shared with the board. Jesse Wilker and Mike Klein answered additional questions. The board requested clarification on how staff determine when to perform fogging. Staff shared that concerns are received on both sides of the debate and in various ways, including, but not limited to, face-to-face interactions, phone calls, and emails to parks staff, City Council, City administration, and the Parks & Recreation office. Any use of mosquito fogging equipment, whether citywide or project-focused, is logged. Sara Baird requested that application records be forwarded to the Park Board, and that the Questions and Answers document be included in the July meeting packet.

Jon Thiel asked that the discussion be tabled to allow additional data and usage records to be considered before the board makes a recommendation to Council.

6.b. Park Board Annual Work Plan

A preliminary annual work plan for the Park Advisory Board was reviewed, with a few adjustments and additions made. The plan is intended to support agenda planning and reporting throughout the year and to ensure continuity for new and existing board members.

6.c. Event and Park Permit Process

Park Permit details are being emailed to Park Board members in advance of the meeting to allow timely consideration and response to questions or concerns. Board members request that permit details also be included in the meeting packet for their awareness.

7. COMMUNICATION

7.a. Park Maintenance Update

7.b. Recreation Division Update

7.c. Biochar Demonstration Recap

Nancy Ness attended the demonstration by Great River Greening. She shared that extensive preparation went into a short event. She doesn't see a practical reason to use a kiln. The possibility of renting one may arise if a local market for the charred remains develops.

7.d. Regional Park Designation Update

7.e. Park Board Seat Vacancy

7.e. Communication from Park Board Members:

Tyler Cochran asked about the vacant Parks & Recreation Director position, but there is no update. He also encouraged everyone to attend the summer Downtown Thursday events. August 6 is an outreach opportunity for the board to join Parks & Recreation staff at the City's booth/table.

Nancy Ness shared appreciation for the staff during the busy summer season.

8. ADJOURNMENT

Motion to Adjourn: Tyler Cochran, Second: Gina McGuire, All Members voted aye at 6:00 p.m.