

MINUTES - UNAPPROVED
OWATONNA PARKS AND RECREATION
REGULAR PARK BOARD MEETING
March 2, 2026, at 4:30 P.M.

LOCATION: 540 West Hills Circle, Crandall Conference Room 120, Owatonna, MN 55060

OPENING BUSINESS

Call to Order at 4:31 p.m. by Jon Thiel

Executive Members Present: Chair: Jon Thiel, Vice-Chair: Gina McGuire, Secretary: Sara Baird

Board Members Present: Tyler Cochran, Carter Klecker, Nancy Ness,

Members Absent: Nan Silkunas

Staff Present: Greg Kruschke: Community Development Manager, Emma Bransford: Planning Specialist, Eric Anderson: Recreation Manager, Carter Duerkop: Recreation Supervisor, MJ Knudson: Admin Coordinator, Maureen Lyons: Admin Coordinator

City Council Member: None present

Guests Present: None

APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

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

APPROVAL OF JANUARY 5, 2025, MINUTES

Motion by Tyler Cochran to approve park board meeting minutes and bring before the Council. Second by Nancy Ness. All members voted aye. (February Park Board meeting was cancelled.)

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 park and recreation topics. The Park Board will only listen and not take action on public forum presentations. None present

NEW BUSINESS:

Parkland dedication policy update was provided by Greg Kruschke with examples of policies implemented by several other cities. Further discussion occurred, with the matter being tabled by Jon Thiel to be revisited at the next meeting.

OLD BUSINESS: None

COMMUNICATIONS

Park Division and Recreation Division reports were included in the agenda packet.

Recreation Program Annual Report was provided by Carter Duerkop.

Biochar demonstration by Great River Greening: Event is planned for March 18 from 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. at Kaplan's Woods. Registration is through Great River Greening.

Great River Greening Tree Planting: Events are being planned for spring and fall tree planting and disbursement. Additional details will be shared at future meetings.

Parks & Recreation 2025 Story: Eric Anderson presented a summary of annual data and statistics, highlights, program impact to Park Board. P&R Story will be presented to City Council on March 17, 2026.

Emergency Disaster Reimbursement Update: All of the City's reports have been submitted the state. Ed Hoffman has left the City, and MJ will now be the primary point of contact for the reimbursement from the July 2025 windstorm. Parks & Recreation may be reimbursed for staff and equipment for parks clean-up, repair of the dog park fence and replacement of the 'funbrella' frames.

Due to the state's process the Park Board recommends social media communication to let River Springs Water Park patrons know and plan for limited shade at the start of the season.

Communication from Park Board members:

Nancy Ness commented on the beautiful condition of Kaplan's Woods. She noticed that on maps within the park, the "You are here" dot/locators are missing. She asked that location indicators/stickers replacement be a high priority to ensure visitors can find their way in and out of the expansive park. Nancy also asked if an area in the SE portion of Kaplan's Woods that has tall meadow grass could be mowed and picnic tables added. Eric Anderson shared that this area was likely determined as a no mow opportunity to return to natural state and save time and resources. Eric will follow up with Jesse Wilker on these two items.

Jon Thiel inquired about any change/update on the open Director position. He also asked that the Park Board Expectations document be shared with the board to review and consideration. Board members discussed and suggested the creation of a descriptive chart to show which youth sports are hosted by Parks & Recreation vs. sport associations to help parents determine the best option for their child and family.

ADJOURNMENT:

Motion by Tyler Cochran to adjourn. Second by Sara Baird. All members voted aye. Meeting adjourned at 6:55 p.m.

The next Park Board meeting will be April 6, at 4:30 p.m. 540 West Hills Circle, Room 120.