



**Meeting of the Parks and Recreation  
Commission  
Held at the Elk River City Hall  
Wednesday, November 12, 2025**

Members Present: Chair Anderson, Commissioners Goodwin, Stewart, Varty, Niziolek, and Loidolt

Members Absent: Commissioner Fermoye

Staff Present: Assistant City Administrator/Business Services Director Joe Stremcha, Parks and Recreation Manager Jeff Shelby, and Senior Administrative Assistant Dawn Larson

1. CALL MEETING TO ORDER

Pursuant to due call and notice thereof, the meeting was called to order at 06:30 PM.

2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

3. CONSIDER AGENDA

**Moved by Commissioner Loidolt and seconded by Commissioner Niziolek to approve November 12, 2025, agenda. Motion carried 6-0.**

4. CONSIDER MINUTES

4.1 10-08-2025 Parks and Recreation Commission Minutes

**Moved by Commissioner Stewart and seconded by Commissioner Goodwin to approve the October 8, 2025, Parks and Recreation Commission minutes. Motion carried 6-0.**

5. OPEN FORUM

6. ACTION ITEMS

6.1 Perkins Acres - Park Dedication

Mr. Shelby presented his report. Commissioner Niziolek asked to review the map. He said the conceptual trail alignment is on the south instead of the north. He said he isn't sure if they need to clarify when the property is developed to the west the trail will go to the north. Chair Anderson said it is just a conceptual drawing that is not site specific. Commissioner Niziolek said due to the location of wetlands to the south he doesn't believe the trail would go there so he thinks they should mention it would most likely be to the north. He doesn't want a developer to be surprised by that. Mr. Shelby said he believes that it has already been addressed by planning and is stipulated in the language when this was discussed in 2018.

**Moved by Commissioner Niziolek and seconded by Commissioner Loidolt to recommend that park dedication for Perkins Acres be paid in cash for one single family parcel, at the applicable rate at the time of recording and a trail access easement with the final location and width to be determined by City Council and staff. Motion carried 6-0.**

-----

## 6.2 2026 Commission Meeting Dates

Mr. Shelby presented his report. Commissioner Niziolek said if they are going to negotiate changes in dates of the Parks and Recreation meetings then he wants to consider changing the meeting date in October 2026 and 2027 since he won't be able to attend the meetings in their entirety. Mr. Shelby said the change proposed tonight is due to the November 2026 commission meeting falling on a federal holiday and therefore the meeting can't be held that day. Commissioner Niziolek said he is going to propose something different, if a holiday falls on a day when a commission meeting is normally scheduled, they will drop the meeting that month and call a special meeting if there is a need to discuss something. Commissioner Loidolt said that he thinks they should stick with the second Wednesday of the month for the meetings because November would be the only month they would have to entertain that issue. Chair Anderson said they would only have to make this change every seven years.

**Moved by Commissioner Loidolt and seconded by Commissioner Goodwin to accept the regular parks and recreation meetings on the second Wednesday of each month excluding the 2026 calendar which will be moved to Wednesday, November 4 since November 11 is Veterans Day. Motion carried 6-0.**

## 6.3 Bleachers Purchase for Plants & Things Athletic Complex

Mr. Shelby presented his report. Commissioner Niziolek asked if they should look at the budget to stay prudent. Mr. Shelby explained that this money would come out of the \$35,000 annual sponsorship money for naming rights of the complex. Commissioner Niziolek asked if one of the next topics on the agenda will affect this decision. He asked if they could potentially package both issues. He wants to be fiscally responsible and make sure it works out. He asked if they could discuss the safety issues and circle back to this and then proceed to vote. Chair Anderson and Commissioner Goodwin suggested they make the decision now.

**Moved by Commissioner Loidolt and seconded by Commissioner Niziolek, that Park Improvement Funds be used to purchase new additional bleachers for the PT Complex. Motion carried 6-0.**

## 6.4 E-bike and Electric Device Ordinance

Mr. Shelby presented his report. Chair Anderson said he thinks this misses their intent considerably. He said it doesn't include the details they discussed at the last meeting. He thinks they need to come up with a new draft that he would be comfortable passing. Commissioner Loidolt asked if staff wrote the ordinance. Mr. Shelby said yes. Commissioner Stewart said that he thinks they need to come up with a new ordinance draft because the one presented is too broad which makes it not enforceable. He also suggested adding something in the ordinance about playgrounds. Commissioner Goodwin said she is new to the process of creating an ordinance and asked if normally there are consequences written into an ordinance such as a fine. Mr. Shelby and Mr. Stremcha explained that the ordinance can contain whatever they want, being as vague or specific as they want. Chair Anderson suggested they table this topic until the next meeting and he, along with someone else, could work with staff to draft a new version.

Mr. Stremcha suggested they make a recommendation from the commission appointing two representatives to work with staff to come up with a new ordinance and bring it back to the

commission. Councilmember Grupa reminded them that the City Council will be reviewing this as well and will have a lot to add so the Commission should focus on city parks and trails. Chair Anderson said he would like to suggest that he and Commissioner Stewart be on the committee. Councilmember Grupa said he would like to see this done before the first of the year.

**Moved by Commissioner Stewart and seconded by Commissioner Varty to table the proceeding before them for the proposed ordinance for electric powered bicycles and other power assisted vehicles. Motion carried 6-0.**

**Moved by Commissioner Goodwin and seconded by Commissioner Loidolt, that a committee be created consisting of three commissioners, Chair Anderson, Commissioner Stewart, and Commissioner Niziolek to work on an updated draft of the e-bike and electric device ordinance with Parks and Recreation staff. Motion carried 6-0.**

## 7. DISCUSSION ITEMS

### 7.1 Safety at Athletic Complexes

Mr. Shelby presented his report. Mr. Shelby explained that staff did some research and contacted several other cities that have field complexes and what they have done as far as safety precautions. Staff did not find other cities that are taking action to do so other than existing fencing or boulders. St. Paul was the only city staff ran across which had done something and it was in reaction to an event that had taken place.

Commissioner Niziolek said he was at a neighboring city athletic complex within 10 miles of Elk River where vehicles were driving in and around on the soccer fields. He said he could see the potential for something bad to happen if this is allowed. This was not within the City of Elk River. Commissioner Varty asked if the people were dropping kids off or messing around. Commissioner Niziolek said they were dropping kids off.

Commissioner Loidolt said it sounds like a localized incident and that it is being done on a common basis. He also pointed out that they had vandalism out at the PT complex a few years ago by someone driving on the football field and asked Mr. Shelby if there was anything recently. Mr. Shelby said not that he can recall.

Commissioner Loidolt shared he is all for safety but sometimes when you put up barriers you also limit freedom. He said that what St. Paul installed looks highly expensive and well thought out. He asked if we have checked pricing with Plaisted's, etc. or anything. Mr. Shelby said no we haven't.

Commissioner Loidolt shared that he understands the concern for safety but asked if we are going to protect all fields and would we stop at fields or do parks and playgrounds as well? He also appreciates that the PT Complex sponsors want to protect people and are concerned about their safety. Commissioner Stewart asked if we had someone that has a security or safety type of background to look at the facilities to do a boot on the ground type of assessment.

Mr. Shelby said that they would want to apply that to all the field complexes if they were going to do that. He asked if they were going to make any sort of adjustments etc., do they want to do that at just one facility or have someone look at multiple facilities?

Mr. Stremcha said this could be something simple like making a recommendation to have the City of Elk

-----  
River emergency management staff Fire Chief Dickenson and Police Chief Kuhnly, do a generic safety assessment of our public infrastructure.

Chair Anderson said that his recommendation would be to do nothing at this time. He cares about safety as much as anyone, but he said they are talking about potentially millions of dollars. Commissioner Loidolt said he agrees. Commissioner Goodwin said that St. Paul appears to be an outlier. She thinks that based on the feedback gathered from other cities it doesn't appear to be an imminent threat or an emergency right now, so until it becomes a problem, she thinks they could wait on financing anything. Commissioner Goodwin does think an assessment would be valuable. Commissioner Stewart asked Mr. Shelby if the request was based on a specific incident that occurred. Mr. Shelby said no, nothing specific that he is aware of.

Mr. Shelby said they are always mindful of security and protection of anyone that uses the fields, which is why they put together the EAP. They are open to any safety assessments. Commissioner Niziolek said one of the things that makes this special is that the Plants and Things Recreational Complex has a sponsor that is contributing money and if they feel that the expenditure of funds should be made for safety then the commission should listen to them and prudently proceed. He thinks that's what makes this park different from the other parks, there are naming rights associated with it.

Chair Anderson said the PT Complex is similar to the other parks and public safety is the same no matter where they go. Commissioner Varty said having someone come and assess safety should satisfy their request. Chair Anderson said his personal recommendation is to do nothing.

Mr. Shelby said that what he is hearing is to have staff reach out to the City of Elk River emergency services staff to do a boot on the ground assessment starting on the PT Complex and bring that back. The Commissioners agreed.

## 7.2 Park Usage Survey Results

Mr. Shelby presented his report. He shared that Country Crossings Park is the one seeing the most usage and engagement at this time of the three parks in the survey. If they were going to look at managing their funds responsibly and condense the playground structures to just one park in this region, Country Crossings would be the one to keep online. Mr. Shelby said the Country Crossings Park playground is not planned to be removed at this point, but the amenity has aged to the point where it cannot be repaired.

Commissioner Loidolt pointed out that those surveyed reported they thought the amenities at Country Crossings were good. Mr. Shelby explained that there is a difference between what needs to be repaired as it ages and how it appears.

Commissioner Stewart asked what they are going to do with this information now that they have it. He asked if they were going to rank the three parks and do a one-page summary of them ranked. Mr. Shelby said yes, then staff would reexamine the CIP plan and schedule and make recommendations to City Council about where money should be allocated. He said originally the CIP plan included replacing every single playground and that would be a difficult task to accomplish. Mr. Shelby said they need to get on track with what is doable. The original CIP schedule was set against the manufacturers recommended life span of each amenity.

Commissioner Niziolek said that by looking at the numbers he thinks that 33 users a week out of the

-----  
amount of people that live in Elk River is low. Commissioner Goodwin said that she doesn't think that they conveyed the messages right in the survey. She thinks that based on their responses it's hard to tell if they are just walking through the park with their dog or stopping to use the playground. She feels that they should have asked surveyors what they would eliminate instead of what do they want because the city can't afford to maintain them as is.

Commissioner Niziolek said that he thinks that 33 is a really low number when you think about the scope of the community and he doesn't think the city can continue to have these playground amenities in all these smaller parks. He thinks it will be very expensive, and they don't have the funds to support this.

Councilmember Grupa said that the purpose of this survey was to figure out where to start if there is a need to start eliminating playgrounds. He said that based on this survey you would start on the bottom and go the other way.

Commissioner Niziolek said when he was looking at these parks he didn't see anyone in them. He asked what they can legally do with the park properties, such as what they could do to make the parks into places people would want to go to. Mr. Shelby said it depends upon how the park property was acquired by the city. Chair Anderson said they all probably came from park dedication. Commissioner Niziolek asked if they could plant them all with trees and just be done with it or place solar panels on them to power play items for kids.

Mr. Stremcha said they could plant trees, but as far as solar panels he said potentially if they powered something with the purpose of recreation. He said for example, they have solar powered picnic tables. He said the survey feedback is giving the commission the information they need to prioritize what is done in the parks. Commissioner Niziolek said that the maintenance costs are significant as well. He thinks that mowing the parks every week when they aren't used is a waste of funds when they could use those funds elsewhere. He said there is a deeper discussion that needs to be had about what park land can be used for.

Mr. Shelby discussed some of the things that he learned about at conference about park programming. He said that those are things that they will discuss as they move forward with park planning.

Councilmember Grupa said this is part of a bigger conversation. He said people always ask him how many parks the City of Elk River needs. He said that now they are talking about being eliminated because they are too much to upkeep. He said he is still learning the process of how this is all done.

The Commissioners discussed how the process got started and how they ended up here. Chair Anderson agreed there is a lot of discussion to come, and they have already started on the park framework plan.

Commissioner Niziolek said he wants to emphasize that these spaces are not going away and they have to figure out how to use the properties and be financially prudent.

Commissioner Goodwin said the spaces aren't going to change but the way we accommodate the spaces, and the structures may change but there are some creative opportunities in the changes that the community can be a part of. She is hopeful as communities change people will want to be outside and will consider some new ways to innovate these green spaces that are lovely and wonderful.

## 8. PARKS AND RECREATION MANAGER UPDATE

-----

8.1 Parks and Recreation Manager Update

Mr. Shelby presented his report. He also shared there were prescribed burns at both the William H. Houlton Conservation Area and Bailey Point Nature Preserve that Commissioner Stewart assisted with. He added that the Waco St. to Concord St. trail connection is almost done. Chair Anderson said it is an important link in the master trail plan.

9. ANNOUNCEMENTS

10. MOTION TO ADJOURN

**Moved by Commissioner Goodwin and seconded by Commissioner Stewart to adjourn to the Parks and Recreation Commission meeting at 7:40 p.m. Motion carried 6-0.**



\_\_\_\_\_  
Dave Anderson, Chair



\_\_\_\_\_  
Tina Allard, City Clerk