



**Meeting of the Parks and Recreation
Commission
Held at the Elk River City Hall
Wednesday, January 14, 2026**

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

Members Absent: Commissioner Varty

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 Stewart and seconded by Commissioner Fermoyle to approve the January 14, 2026, agenda. Motion carried 6-0.

4. CONSIDER MINUTES

4.1 12-10-2025 Parks and Recreation Commission Meeting Minutes

Moved by Commissioner Niziolek and seconded by Commissioner Goodwin to approve December 10, 2025, Parks and Recreation Commission minutes with the change that anywhere Ridgewood is mentioned they are referring to Ridgewood East. Motion carried 6-0.

5. OPEN FORUM

6. ACTION ITEMS

6.1 Hillside Park - Reroute Proposal

Derek Burchill, 14481 Iodine St. in Ramsey, MN. Mr. Burchill is the Park Steward for Hillside Park. He presented his proposal for the rerouting of section three of Hillside Park due to repairs often needed due to the steep slope, erosion and rider wear and tear. He would like to reroute it by creating a much longer section of trail to add milage. It would serpentine the hill and traverse it which would decrease the wear and tear. He and other volunteers would also add some skill-building features to make it a little more interesting. He would also create a beginner line and an advanced line that would eventually come together. He would have to put a wooden berm at the bottom of the hill for drainage purposes. He has built them before at Hillside and they worked well.

Commissioner Niziolek asked if Mr. Burchill would reclaim the old trail. Mr. Burchill said he doesn't think they will do anything to it other than lay some branches. He said sometimes they have chopped

up old trails to help plants take hold again but sometimes they also just let them go. He shared that the branches would help eliminate the erosion issue.

Chair Anderson asked if this new trail uses some of the original trail. Mr. Burchill explained that some of it will and referenced how the trails overlap according to the map he provided. He explained that sometimes they redo trails two to three times a year. Chair Anderson asked Mr. Burchill what he is looking for from the Commission. Mr. Burchill said that he just needs the go-head to move forward on the project along with some dirt and lumber and borrow the mini skid. He said that he does have some lumber left over from a previous project and the Minnesota Off Road Cyclist group has pledged to contribute supplies. Commissioner Niziolek asked what he needed for lumber. Mr. Burchill said he needs wooden decking and 4 by 4's for support.

Moved by Commissioner Niziolek and seconded by Commissioner Goodwin to recommend that staff proceed with the rerouting of trail section three at Hillside Park in partnership with park volunteers. Motion carried 6-0.

6.2 Playground - Plants and Things Recreation Complex

Mr. Shelby presented his report and power point. He shared that field user groups staff reached out to were not in favor of moving the playground for several reasons including distance from the fields. Mr. Shelby reviewed the estimates with the commission.

Commissioner Goodwin asked about the cost for the equipment to install and uninstall the nets. Mr. Shelby explained that it would be just the rental cost of the scissor lift which would be in the \$700 to \$800 range twice a year.

Mr. Shelby explained that there will be an 80% reimbursement from the original cost so whichever route the commission chooses the expense will fit within the reimbursed amount. He thinks there will be about \$117,000 coming back to the city.

Chair Anderson asked Mr. Shelby to explain why there was failure with the original shade structure. Mr. Shelby said he knows the shade structure did not function the way the contractor anticipated them to function. He said that the poles began tilting inward and there was no way to repair them based on the soil. Engineers explored different solutions and it was determined there was no way to get the shade structures to function the way they were intended.

Chair Anderson confirmed that it was the support structure that failed. He asked if the new netting system would have issues. Mr. Shelby said the netting piece doesn't have to go as high, so it does not involve as much, and the poles do not have to go as deep into the ground. Mr. Shelby said they would get the okay from engineering before anything goes into the ground.

Commissioner Goodwin asked if there is a place for the netting to be stored. Mr. Shelby explained that the nets would be stored at Public Works over the winter months. Commissioner Loidolt asked why that location was picked to move the playground structure. Mr. Shelby said because the ground was level and it would be a centralized location in the future if the framework plan comes to fruition. Commissioner Loidolt asked if there was a timetable of when this would be a viable location or if this is a guesstimate of where they think it should be and if it could need to be moved again.

Mr. Shelby said there are too many factors to confirm a timeline with the framework plan. Commissioner Loidolt said he was a big proponent of the netting when this project started to protect

the kids with or without a playground. He is concerned that when this project was initiated, he specifically asked when the shades would be removed and put back up, and he was told that it would be done yearly. Commissioner Loidolt questioned if the current issues could have been prevented if they were taken down. Mr. Shelby said he is not sure why they were not taken down. He clarified that the new ones are nets vs. shades and should not have the same problem. He also confirmed that he has discussed with parks maintenance that the nets would be put up and taken down each year.

Commissioner Loidolt asked about the possibility of improving the aesthetic versus just having nets. He said he liked the look of the shade structures. Mr. Shelby said the proposals presented tonight were the two options that Mr. Baas was able to get quickly but they could look for more options if that is what the Commission wanted. Commissioner Loidolt asked if they could look at options for color choices. Mr. Stremcha said they are powder coated black according to the quote. The Commissioner's all agreed black was a good option.

Commissioner Loidolt said he talked to Dave Lodermeier, the president of Elk River Youth Baseball and from what he had heard from the user groups moving the playground would be foolish. The parents want to be able to watch their kids play while being at the field. Commissioner Loidolt said it would not be a good idea to move the playground, and he thinks if they take care of the nets, they could get ten years out of them.

Chair Anderson said he likes the Duluth net proposal. Commissioner Niziolek asked when they would pull the nets. Mr. Shelby said the beginning of October.

Commissioner Loidolt asked where the black net was within the Duluth quote. Mr. Stremcha said it's not in that one, but it is in the SMI quote so he assumes that Mr. Baas would have gotten comparable quotes, but staff could confirm that the Duluth quote would also be black.

Chair Anderson asked if the netting would have sides and a top or just a top. Mr. Shelby said he isn't sure, but the quote says cover, so he said it looks like just a top. Commissioner Stewart asked if they could do some more checking and still get them this spring. Mr. Shelby said he is not sure what the lead time is, but they can check. Mr. Stremcha said if the commission wants black nets, then they can make a recommendation to council, and staff can make sure they have two quotes. Commissioner Loidolt said just having a top cover is sufficient for him.

Moved by Commissioner Loidolt and seconded by Commissioner Niziolek to recommend that City Council approve option A adding protective netting to the PT Complex playground to improve playground safety at the PT Complex with black netting. Motion carried 6-0.

7. DISCUSSION ITEMS

7.1 Ridgewood Basketball Court - CIP

Mr. Shelby presented his report. Commissioner Niziolek asked for Mr. Shelby to pull up Sherburne County beacon so they can see the location and proximity of the two venues, Ridgewood East basketball court, and Salk Junior High School basketball court. He said the Salk location has walls, so when you are shooting you don't lose your ball. He thinks that is part of what makes the Salk basketball court a superior amenity.

Commissioner Goodwin mentioned the Facebook post about the kid who slid into the basketball hoop

and broke his arm. She said they need to take into consideration how parks are used in the winter as well as the summer. Commissioner Niziolek said it is imperative that they refer to it as Ridgewood East. Commissioner Goodwin and Commissioner Niziolek explained how the sledding hill works at Ridgewood East and how it slopes into the basketball court. Commissioner Loidolt pointed out that he noticed there wasn't any protection around the basketball pole on the sledding hill as well. Commissioner Goodwin agreed that there needs to be some consideration as far as the safety of the sledding hill.

Chair Anderson said that when they did their last survey, he did not see any actionable data, so he isn't inclined to do another survey to determine what to do in this case. Commissioner Goodwin said Ridgewood East is a destination park for sledding in the wintertime, so she thinks it is more than a neighborhood park. Chair Anderson said they have removed other park amenities without surveys based on staff observations of usage.

Commissioner Stewart said that the nice thing about this one is that they are not spending money to remove this feature so if they are wrong it won't cost them anything. Chair Anderson said they could take the post out and see if there was a response.

Commissioner Niziolek said that he thinks that everyone knows his opinion, so he isn't going to say anything. He explained that he wants to make sure that people understand that he just wants to spend the money wisely. Commissioner Goodwin and Fermoye agreed. Commissioner Goodwin asked how they can do something about the basketball hoop this winter to keep people safe. Chair Anderson asked if they could put some straw bales around the post. Chair Anderson said if the consensus is to remove this from the CIP, then they should make a motion.

Moved by Commissioner Goodwin and seconded by Fermoye to recommend the City Council will remove the Ridgewood East basketball court from the Park Improvement Fund CIP. Motion carried 6-0.

8. PARKS AND RECREATION MANAGER UPDATE

8.1 Parks and Recreation Manager Update

Mr. Shelby presented his report.

9. ANNOUNCEMENTS

10. MOTION TO ADJOURN REGULAR MEETING

Moved by Commissioner Fermoye and seconded by Commissioner Goodwin to adjourn to work session of the Parks and Recreation Commission meeting at 7:38 p.m. Motion carried 6-0.

11. WORK SESSION

11.1 Trail Safety

Mr. Shelby presented his power point about trail safety, starting with the discussion goals of types of signage, locations, needs/want to stripe the trail, etc. He shared that the other Great Northern Trail shareholders have no intention of striping or paint work on the trails. Sherburne County put a sign up on their portion about trail etiquette three or four years ago and will also be putting up speed limit

signs in April.

Chair Anderson and Commissioner Stewart said there are already some very large signs on the Sherburne County portion of the trail at major trail heads and just past the observation deck where the Elk River portion turns over to Sherburne County.

Commissioner Goodwin asked where these signs Mr. Shelby presented tonight will go on the trail. Councilmember Grupa asked if they wanted to take a vote on who wants striping and who doesn't. Commissioner Niziolek said that he uses the trail a lot and most of the issues he encounters are due to people using the whole trail and not choosing a side. He said he has to guess which side they are going to move to when he is riding up behind them on his bike and that a stripe would give a clear understanding of how people can use the trail one side or another.

Commissioner Fermoye said in her experience users on the trails usually say on your left or would communicate in some way. Chair Anderson said he has concerns about the costs. Councilmember Grupa said he doesn't see people following the stripin.

Chair Anderson and Commissioner Niziolek said in the metro most trails are striped. Commissioner Fermoye asked why the other shareholders said no to striping the trail. Mr. Shelby said primarily cost and they also questioned if it would be followed.

Commissioner Loidolt suggested they start with basic signage and see how that goes. He doesn't see spending the money on striping right now. He also said that he thinks this part of the trail is used more by walkers in the nearby neighborhoods than by bikes that use the larger portion of the GNT.

Commissioner Niziolek is concerned about collisions with e-bikes. Commissioner Loidolt and Commission Stewart do not think the striping will prevent the collision. Chair Anderson said he is more worried about walking and getting hit by a bike than when he is on a bike.

Mr. Stremcha said at trail heads you could spray paint bike symbols and directional signs. Commissioner Niziolek said that verbiage should state specifically to stay to the right side and pass on the left. Commissioner Stewart said that we need to educate people, so they are aware. Commissioner Goodwin suggested adding an educational event at Woodland Trails Regional Park in the Spring.

Mr. Shelby explained that this event is already in the works for this year with the police department. They used to do a bike rodeo event in the past, but it hasn't happened in awhile. Mr. Shelby shared that the Elk River Police Department were awarded a grant for this year.

Commissioner Stewart said that Three Rivers Park District has done something like this and it was very popular. Commissioner Goodwin said that she likes Mr. Stremcha's suggestion of painting 6 locations. Commissioner Goodwin said maybe the Police Department could make a mailer about e-bikes being on the rise. Chair Anderson said that now we have the ordinance, there will also be a social media campaign. He said education should be basic such as you can only ride on paved trails, and what you can ride on and what you can't.

Commissioner Stewart referenced bikemn.org as a resource for staff to use. Commissioner Goodwin asked where they would put the stencils on the trails. Chair Anderson said they could discuss where to start. Commissioner Loidolt said he thinks it should be simple or people won't pay attention. Mr. Stremcha pulled up an example of a trail graphic on the screen of a person walking, a bike, an arrow,

and 20 MPH. Commissioner Niziolek said biking from GNT to Woodland Trails is not the safest. He was almost hit by an e-bike while turning off the trail.

Commissioner Niziolek thinks there needs to be a yield sign. Commissioner Goodwin said that she is sorry that it happened to Commissioner Niziolek, but she thinks that signage won't force everyone to follow the rules. Chair Anderson said there is a lot of e-bike usage, but it isn't all the time. Mr. Shelby said he will work with the city communications team and the commission subcommittee on the signage design and the sign locations. Commissioner Stewart asked if they need to follow branding. Mr. Stremcha asked for clarification from the commission if they were talking about just the GNT or all trails. The commissioners said to start with Woodland Trails and see how it goes. Chair Anderson said getting e-moto's off the trails is the main thing. He also said parents need to be a big education piece of this to help the little kids understand. Mr. Shelby said that the police chief was clear to City Council that they will focus on the education piece and not forcefully enforce the ordinance.

12. MOTION TO ADJOURN

Moved by Commissioner Fermoye and seconded by Commissioner Goodwin to adjourn to the Parks and Recreation Commission work session at 7:38 p.m. Motion carried 6-0.



Dave Anderson, Chair



Jolene Richter, Deputy City Clerk