



**Meeting of the Parks and Recreation  
Commission  
Held at the Elk River City Hall  
Wednesday, February 11, 2026**

**Members Present:** Chair Anderson, Commissioners Goodwin, Stewart, Varty, and Niziolek, and Councilmember Grupa

**Members Absent:** Commissioners Loidolt and Fermoyle

**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 Varty to approve the February 11, 2026, agenda. Motion carried 5-0.**

**4. CONSIDER MINUTES**

**4.1 01-14-2026 Parks and Recreation Commission Meeting Minutes**

**Moved by Commissioner Stewart and seconded by Commissioner Goodwin to approve January 14, 2026, Parks and Recreation Commission minutes. Motion carried 5-0.**

**5. OPEN FORUM**

**6. ACTION ITEMS**

**6.1 Park Dedication - Heinen Estates**

Mr. Shelby presented his report and shared a photo of the trail plan in relation to the Heinen Estates parcel. Commissioner Niziolek said he had a question about a small odd-shaped lot on the other side of the street that doesn't presently meet the appropriate parcel size. He asked if someone would ever be given a variance to build there. Chair Anderson asked if it was part of the parcel up for discussion and Commissioner Niziolek said no it was not. Commissioner Niziolek said the reason he is asking is that there is a trail alignment on that side of the road and would someone developing it take even more of the property away. He is curious what the city would do in that situation. Chair Anderson said that they are not going to change the trail map. Commissioner Niziolek said the trail would only be installed if the road were improved, and asked if they want a little bit more of that space in that road, right of way for that trail. Chair Anderson said the only solution would be to flip it to the other side of the road, but they aren't going to do that, so they will wait until the time comes and if it does. Commissioner Niziolek said he just wanted to point it out as an unusual feature in this area that will indirectly affect a trail in the future.

**Moved by Commissioner Niziolek and seconded by Commissioner Goodwin to recommend park dedication for Heinen Estates be paid in cash for one single family parcel, at the applicable rate at the time of recording. Motion carried 5-0.**

## 7. DISCUSSION ITEMS

### 7.1 Annual Standing Commission Agenda Calendar

Mr. Shelby presented his report. Chair Anderson asked if this was a living document. He also asked if the park improvement budget should be listed as a separate item for discussion in June and July. Mr. Stremcha asked if he meant the budget and the CIP. Chair Anderson said one is capital improvements, and one is park improvements. Mr. Stremcha said they are both captured within the 5-year CIP. Mr. Shelby said they can separate them on the list. Mr. Shelby asked for clarification if they were talking about park dedication and park improvement. He said they could spell it out on the agenda.

Chair Anderson said he would like to start the 5-year discussion in May for this year and then once they get up to speed, they could keep it in June. He said right now it is set to be discussed in June and approved in July. He asked if August would be a cushion since it wasn't finally approved until September. Mr. Shelby said yes it would be. Mr. Stremcha added that the CIP documents get approved in November and December. He said there is more time for the CIP than the budget. Chair Anderson said it would be nice to have this agenda. Commissioner Niziolek said he would like to see the results of the grant activities being funded for this year. He said there are grant activities being carried out right now, and it would be nice to highlight them and note the contributing source of funds. Chair Anderson asked where he would like to place that on the agenda. He suggested July so they could get an idea of what they might apply for next year. Chair Anderson suggested moving it up to April and Commissioner Niziolek agreed.

### 7.2 Parks and Recreation Framework Plan

Mr. Shelby presented his report. Mr. Shelby said moving through the current process has been cumbersome. He is not giving a critique of anyone's time or work, he thinks wanting to do it a particular way wasn't giving them the best product at the end of the work sessions. As far as a timeline, they are not where he would prefer them to be. Mr. Shelby said he is looking for permission from the commission to have staff draft documents and then bring them to and from the meetings for feedback and approval. He believes this will allow them to be more productive and efficient. This is not staff wanting to create a document and then have them rubber stamp it. It would still be a document the commission would be involved in.

Chair Anderson said that while he hates spending money on this, he thinks they should hire professionals, since they still have the money in the budget. Commissioner Stewart said he would feel better about spending the money if he knew more about the specific things that they wanted to see from a consultant. Mr. Stremcha said that it would be in the request for proposal and scope of the work requested from any consultants they worked with.

Commissioner Goodwin said that she thinks it would be a more efficient way to do the process, as long as they consider the nuance of this community and prioritize what it means to be a resident of Elk River. She also wants to build a future for what the families would like to see in the parks for the next 20 years. Commissioner Goodwin thinks this is a good way to expedite the process and then collaboratively work on finalizing it and getting it implemented.

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Commissioner Niziolek asked if they could identify a topic or two to have staff work on and then bring it back to the commission to review and then repeat the process each month. He would like to know ahead of time what topics staff would be working on and then, if he or the commission had an innovative thought, they could send that to staff. Mr. Shelby said that he doesn't think they would like to break it down in that detail because of speed and how staff would engage with a consultant. Chair Anderson asked Commissioner Niziolek if he would like the Commission to do it themselves. Commissioner Niziolek asked if staff were going to do any of it. Mr. Shelby said the intention was for staff to build part of the plan and then, at the direction of the commission, to work with a consultant as well.

Chair Anderson said that he would just like to proceed with the request for proposals and get it done. Mr. Stremcha said that he feels staff can do a lot and \$100,000 is a lot to leverage for professional help. Staff can start with a piece and keep adding as needed with community engagement and activities. He believes that staff have a lot of internal resources and leverage available to them to create a better draft of what the commission is looking for. He feels there will still be areas where staff will need to engage with a consultant for more in-depth research and demographic studies. He believes that staff have the bandwidth to get a template built around some of the other plans they have previously had, as well as other communities' examples.

Chair Anderson said creating a plan is a lot of work. Mr. Stremcha said he feels he and Mr. Shelby could spend a couple of months putting together an RFP. Commissioner Stewart asked if the consultants would submit examples as part of the bidding process, so the commission can get a feel for the style and content. Mr. Stremcha said that as part of the RFP process they could add a request for referrals.

Commissioner Niziolek said he would like to see the topics and ideas that staff are working on presented to the commission monthly. Mr. Stremcha said staff would be working on the table of contents over the next couple of months to develop a scope of work for a request for proposal.

Chair Anderson said that he still thinks that a professional should do the project because he doesn't think staff and the commission have the bandwidth to do it. He said that they were very stuck in the details and overthinking everything when the commission was working on it. He thinks that if they decide to proceed with a hybrid version of this, then he thinks the commission should only review the finished document.

Commissioner Goodwin said that if staff added something to the managers' report summarizing what they are working on that would be good enough to move forward. She thinks they need to trust the staff and whoever they hire to work with them. She doesn't want to create more work for staff because she also knows that parks and recreation are moving into a busy season.

Commissioner Goodwin asked what staff needed from the commission. Chair Anderson said that the discussion is the action requested. If the commissioners all agree that a hybrid is a good idea, then that is what they will go with. All the commissioners agreed.

Chair Anderson said he wants staff to take advantage of using AI. Mr. Stremcha stated that the city already has an AI policy.

### 7.3 Trail Signage

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Mr. Shelby presented his report. Mr. Shelby handed out an 11 by 17 size of the trail user's sign. Chair Anderson asked if this version would be revamped to fit the space better by the graphic department. Mr. Shelby confirmed they would clean it up according to the city branding standards. Chair Anderson said the sub-committee worked with Mr. Shelby on putting together this version. He is impressed with the simplicity and yet all-encompassing results.

Chair Anderson referenced the symbols on the bottom of the trail sign and pointed out there isn't a Minnesota department of transportation universal symbol for e-motos, so maybe they should add the words no e-motos on the sign. Commissioner Stewart asked about including the ordinance number. Mr. Shelby confirmed it will be placed on the sign as well, possibly with a QR code link.

Commissioner Niziolek said they don't allow horses on the trails but asked if they needed to make a notation on the sign about it. Chair Anderson said the sign they are reviewing tonight is just for the Great Northern Trail and will be put where they have the most conflicts and complaints first and then figure out what needs to be added or changed. Commissioner Varty asked specifically where they would be putting these signs. Mr. Shelby said they identified seven potential locations, but they will primarily be entry points on the trail.

Chair Anderson shared that starting from the north there would be one at the city limits, one on either side of 221st, one at the Watson Street entrance, and then one at the Woodland Trails Regional Park parking lot. Then on the south end of the trail by Meadowvale and Lafayette Woods. Chair Anderson said Mr. Shelby has these written down from their meeting.

Commissioner Varty said she likes the simplicity of the sign. Chair Anderson said he agrees with Commissioner Niziolek that there should be a separate bullet point for horses. Commissioner Stewart asked if it had to be a separate bullet point or if it should just say no horses or motorized vehicles.

Commissioner Goodwin said it should be separate since the focus is primarily on motorized vehicles and they have a lot less issues with horses. Chair Anderson pointed out that horses are not included in the ordinance. Mr. Shelby pointed that out as well. Commissioner Stewart said he knows they had this conversation before and asked if the city has any language concerning horses. Chair Anderson said yes on their current Woodland Trails signage.

Councilmember Grupa asked if they had a problem with horses on the trails. Commissioner Varty said yes, they have in the past. Councilmember Grupa asked what cleared it up. Chair Anderson said other trail users and signage. Chair Anderson said he isn't sure why it couldn't be added to the sign even though it isn't in the ordinance. Mr. Shelby said from a consistent standpoint if they put that piece on the sign and the ordinance, but horses aren't included in the ordinance, it could lead to some confusion.

Chair Anderson said they have had problems with significant damage to the green trails in the past but not anymore. Chair Anderson said for now they should just leave it on the other signs at Woodland Trails since it isn't really a current issue.

Commissioner Goodwin said she thinks they should just leave this sign alone as far as adding horses and focus on the motorized vehicle issues.

Commissioner Niziolek said it was a significant issue in the past, but it isn't now, but they should keep it in the back of their minds, so the trails are used wisely. He asked if they must have a notation about the exception of the use of motorized vehicles for maintenance purposes. Chair Anderson agreed because

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there are often maintenance vehicles out there.

Mr. Shelby asked for confirmation to add no unauthorized motor vehicles to the sign. Mr. Shelby will revamp the sign with communications staff and bring it back next month for approval. Chair Anderson said to make Attention larger, Trail Users smaller, the bullet point statements larger and also the symbols on the bottom larger.

8. PARKS AND RECREATION MANAGER UPDATE

8.1 Parks and Recreation Manager Update

Mr. Shelby presented his report.

9. ANNOUNCEMENTS

10. MOTION TO ADJOURN MEETING

**Moved by Commissioner Goodwin and seconded by Commissioner Niziolek to adjourn the Parks and Recreation Commission meeting at 7:15pm. Motion carried 5-0.**



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Dave Anderson, Chair



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Jolene Richter, Deputy City Clerk