



# Parks and Recreation Commission

Wednesday, July 9, 2025

6:30 PM

Elk River City Hall

## Regular Meeting & Work Session Agenda

- Regular meeting in Council Chambers
- Work Session meeting in Upper Town Conference Room immediately following regular meeting

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1. CALL MEETING TO ORDER
  2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE
  3. CONSIDER AGENDA
  4. CONSIDER MINUTES
    - 4.1 06-11-2025 Parks and Recreation Commission Meeting Minutes
  5. OPEN FORUM

An opportunity to provide comments and feedback regarding items not on the agenda. Information provided in Open Forum will not be discussed at this meeting; rather, the information will be referred to staff and/or scheduled for discussion at a future meeting.
  6. PRESENTATIONS, AWARDS, AND RECOGNITION
  7. ACTION ITEMS
    - 7.1 Torchlight Theatre Outdoor Performance
    - 7.2 Neighborhood Playground Survey
  8. PARKS AND RECREATION MANAGER UPDATE
    - 8.1 Parks and Recreation Manager Update
  9. ANNOUNCEMENTS
  10. MOTION TO ADJOURN REGULAR MEETING
  11. WORK SESSION

Work Sessions are less formal meetings to encourage dialog. Official action or votes are not typically taken. At the conclusion of a discussion, a simple consensus provides staff direction for execution of the item. This portion of the agenda is audio recorded but not video recorded or broadcast. Work Sessions are open to the public; however, visitors who wish to provide input must be invited by the presiding officer, assume a seat at the discussion table and provide their full name and address for the official record.

    - 11.1 Elk River Parks and Recreation Framework Plan - Table of Contents and Scope of Work
  12. MOTION TO ADJOURN



**Meeting of the Elk River  
Parks and Recreation Commission  
Held at the Elk River City Hall  
June 11, 2025**

Members Present: Chair Dave Anderson, Commissioners Mike Niziolek, Joy Goodwin, Greg Loidolt, Hal Stewart, Jill Varty, Melissa Fermoyle

Members Absent: None

Council Liaison: Councilmember Cory Grupa

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

**1. Call Meeting to Order**

Pursuant to due call and notice thereof, the meeting of the Elk River Parks and Recreation Commission was called to order at 6:30 p.m. by Chair Anderson.

**2. Pledge of Allegiance**

**3. Consider Agenda**

Moved by Commissioner Fermoyle and seconded by Commissioner Varty to approve the June 11, 2025, agenda with the changes of moving 6.4 to the first action item and 10.2 to the first work session item. Motion carried 7-0.

**4. Consider Minutes**

**4.1 Parks and Recreation Commission Meeting Minutes 5-14-2025**

Moved by Commissioner Stewart and seconded by Commissioner Goodwin to approve May 14, 2025, Parks and Recreation Commission Minutes. Motion carried 7-0.

**5. Open Forum**

**6. Action Items**

**6.1 Elk River Trails Master Plan-Name Change**

Mr. Shelby presented his report. Commissioner Goodwin shared that the name change is great and better reflects what they are aiming to do. Commissioner Stewart disagreed and said that he likes the idea of standardization, but the trail plan is based on fixed infrastructure with streets, etc. With the athletic facilities plan, they own the property, but they don't know what it will look like down the road, so they need the flexibility to change things.

Commissioner Varty agreed with Commissioner Stewart. Commissioner Goodwin explained they are changing the name to be more fluid and flexible. She said she understands they are trying to change

the name to match the amount of flexibility they have with the plan. Commissioner Fermoye said she is okay with changing the name. Chair Anderson said that there is always flexibility, no matter what it is called.

Commissioner Niziolek asked how long they have had the trails master plan. Mr. Stremcha thinks that it has been around for about a decade. Commissioner Niziolek suggested that if it has been around for a decade, they will have to relook at it anyway, so they should leave it. He thinks it will cause hiccups in the system if they change the name now.

Commissioner Loidolt reiterated that they are just looking at changing the name to get away from the name of “master” plan. He added that it was part of the reason they changed the Athletic Facilities Master Plan name to Framework Plan. He believes that they need to keep up with the times and support the changes happening in the community. The world is taking out the word “master” in all sorts of aspects, such as “master” bathroom. He pointed out that they would just be changing the name to evolve and keep moving along in 2025. Secretary Larson confirmed that the last time the trails master plan was updated was in 2018.

Chair Anderson reiterated that as part of the master planning process, the trails master plan should be reviewed and updated as well, but it can also be reviewed and updated at any time.

Commissioner Niziolek said that he feels that with the trail plan having been around for such a long time, they shouldn't change the name, or they would have to change all the records. He thinks it's a weird thing to do.

Chair Anderson said that in that case, they should also be changing the name of the master plan name tonight, but they aren't. He said he spent a couple of years and many hours developing the current trails master plan. He says it is useful to the planning department, parks, and developers by giving them a specific location of trails. He said he thinks the name master plan fits very well. He said their only opportunity to complete trails comes with development. He said prior to this plan, they lost the opportunity to gain some trails. He said he thinks it is important.

Commissioner Goodwin asked if this is consistent with what other cities use for names of plans. Mr. Stremcha said it is what is in the plan that matters, staff will reference the title of it no matter what it is called. Commissioner Varty asked if the word master is the issue, then they could just get rid of the word and call it the Elk River Trails Plan. Mr. Stremcha reiterated that regardless of what the plan is called, staff will follow the recommended plan.

Chair Anderson said he has not seen a negative connotation with the word. Commissioner Niziolek asked staff if they believed the word was bad. Mr. Shelby said he did not believe it was for staff to decide and that it was Paul Paige at HKGI who directed them towards using the word framework during the development of the Athletic Facilities Framework plan. Mr. Paige indicated that there were some cities looking at different languages but there was a lack of industry consensus.

Chair Anderson said that he thinks that when they start working on the Parks and Recreation Master Plan that they are all going to agree, like they did with the athletic field plan, that it is a framework plan and needs a lot of flexibility, unlike the trails plan. Commissioner Loidolt said he thinks they should change it. Chair Anderson disagreed. Commissioner Loidolt pointed out that this is the reason

they changed the ball field plan, and that they need to change and evolve. He pointed out that it isn't used in the housing industry anymore.

**Moved by Commissioner Loidolt and seconded by Commissioner Fermoyle to change the name of the Elk River Trails Master Plan to Elk River Trails Framework Plan. Motion carried 3-4. Chair Anderson, Commissioners Niziolek, Varty and Stewart voted no. Motion Failed.**

Commissioner Niziolek is really concerned about changing the name of a document that they have had since 2018. Commissioner Stewart said he understands the negative connotation that comes with the word, but he is concerned that they are employing more flexibility than what they want to give.

**Moved by Commissioner Varty and seconded by Commissioner Fermoyle to change the name of the Elk River Trails Master Plan to Elk River Trails Plan. Motion carried 5-2. Chair Anderson and Commissioners Niziolek opposed.**

## **6.2 Kingdom Estates Fourth Addition-Park Dedication**

Mr. Shelby presented his report.

**Moved by Commissioner Goodwin and seconded by Commissioner Niziolek to approve park dedication for the Kingdom Estates Fourth Addition to be paid in cash for one single family parcel, at the applicable rate at the time of recording and a trail easement be placed on the property along the entire Olson Street side of the parcel. Motion carried 7-0.**

## **6.3 Meadow Hills Simple Plat-Park Dedication**

Mr. Shelby presented his report. Commissioner Niziolek asked for confirmation that Meadowvale Rd. has an increase from 30 feet to 50 feet as part of the road right away on this plat. Commissioner Niziolek said because this is an extremely dangerous corner and traffic moves very quickly and without a shoulder there, it would be dangerous for pedestrians. Chair Anderson confirmed the map shows it as 100 feet. Commissioner Niziolek said he wanted to emphasize the safety of the pedestrians on that road. He wants his thoughts and ideas carried forward with city staff about the safety of pedestrians.

**Moved by Commissioner Niziolek and seconded by Commissioner Varty to approve park dedication for Meadow Hills to be paid in cash, at the applicable rate at the time of recording, for two single family parcels. Motion carried 7-0.**

## **6.4 Oak Water Ridge-Park Dedication**

Mr. Shelby presented his report. Matt Barker from Capstone was present at the meeting for questions. He reiterated that the preliminary plat they are viewing is based on all of the previous commission meeting discussions. Following tonight's meetings' recommendations Capstone will then move forward into the stage of finalizing the plat. Commissioner Niziolek asked if they could pull a map of the blufftop park for review. Mr. Shelby pointed out outlet D on page ten of the attachment included in the packet. Commissioner Niziolek asked to view the elevations, trees, and trail on page 41 of the



attachment in the packet. He asked if Capstone would construct the trail to the edge of the bluff drop. Mr. Barker said their directive on this was to construct the trail up to the park and then beyond that their responsibility is to design the trail in and out of the park. Mr. Barker said that the oak trees on the map are the actual trees that are physically in the park, and they will plan on preserving the trees as much as possible.

Commissioner Niziolek asked if the builder would be filling the ravine. Mr. Barker confirmed that they would. Commissioner Niziolek said he thinks there will be some piping that will run down through the park. Mr. Barker said it would be a storm pipe included in the design to go underneath the trail. He also shared that on the northeast corner of the park there is storm drain in the low depression space to take the water out of the park and into the stormwater system. Mr. Barker reviewed where this location was on the map with the Commissioners.

Commissioner Niziolek asked what the distance is between the trees that are being preserved. Mr. Barker said he is not sure. Commissioner Niziolek is wondering if they could put a traditional playground in the park property with the trees located where they are. Chair Anderson said it would not likely be without some tree removal, and some of the trees there have seen their better days.

Commissioner Stewart asked for the determination of the size and location of the HOA property. Mr. Barker said the size was reduced to below three acres and is shown as outlot E on the preliminary plat, down in the flood plain body that is not considered wetland. Commissioner Niziolek asked if the HOA access removes handicapped accessibility to the river for the community residents.

Mr. Barker said there are multiple places where the city could put a boardwalk and/or other access to the river for the public. Any property that isn't part of the HOA river access could be a crossing. There are still two-thirds of the river that is still available to the public. Mr. Barker explained that the trail that is designed to go through the park could be designed to go down to the river beyond the HOA.

Commissioner Niziolek said the HOA bothers him. He said that part came up right at the end of their discussions on the property. He feels that they are trying to create a community that works together, shares resources, and takes care of each other. He does not feel that having the HOA in the middle of it is something he could approve of. He wants thoughtful consideration of the removal of the HOA piece. Mr. Barker explains that this HOA property location is not the first option they showed, and Capstone gave up their initial HOA plan for the creation of the park on the bluff top, and now this is the result. He thinks that having the bluff top park is the best piece of land along the river, and the developer gave that up. They want to work together and have a great community that interconnects as well.

Chair Anderson said he is still disappointed with the size of the park on the bluff and that his position has not changed since the beginning.

**Moved by Commissioner Loidolt and seconded by Chair Anderson to approve park dedication for Oak Water Ridge, consistent with the following conditions, and consistent with the City Council action on April 7, 2025:**

1. **The developer shall complete the design and installation of all 10-foot-wide trails above the bluff.**



2. The developer will design and engineer a 10-foot-wide trail, beginning with the termination of the upland trail. They shall be provided to the city to support a future construction project.
3. The developer will provide a 2+ acre bluff top park and must provide documentation that there is at least 1-acre of buildable, upland area, within the park.
4. The developer shall dedicate the floodway land below the bluff, to the city for park purposes. An out lot will be reserved for future use by the HOA.
5. The remainder of the park dedication requirements will be satisfied with a cash dedication of \$536,000. This will be pro-rated on a per lot basis and payable with the final plat.
6. Civil plans must identify parallel, off-street, parking areas near the bluff top park.

Motion carried 5-2 Commissioner Niziolek and Chair Anderson opposed.

## 7. Parks and Recreation Manager Update

Mr. Shelby presented his report. Commissioner Niziolek asked if there is any thought by staff about modifications to Lion John Weicht Park as far as helping with park boundaries and visibility for law enforcement. Mr. Shelby said if this happens on a regular basis, staff will work on options. ERPD has been informed and will be increasing their presence there.

## 8. Announcements.

## 9. Motion to Adjourn Regular Meeting

Moved by Commissioner Fermoyle and seconded by Commissioner Goodwin to adjourn the meeting of the Parks and Recreation Commission at 7:26pm. Motion carried 7-0.

## 10. Work Session

### 10.1 Parks and Recreation Master Plan

Commissioner Goodwin left the meeting at 8:35pm. Mr. Shelby presented his report. Mr. Shelby explained this was intended to be an introduction to what the master plan looks like and what the process should look like going forward. He asked the commissioners if they want the next plan to look like the current plan or look different. He pointed out that the current master plan was given out to the commissioners last year, is in this packet, and is also available online. A sheet with different master plan category options has also been included in the packet. It was gathered from 16 plans from different cities around the state.

Secretary Larson will send out a link to four different plans from other cities on Monday that have features staff think may be of interest to the commission. Staff would like feedback by June 30. Commissioner Niziolek is very nervous about this and would like to talk about the financial elements or come up with a financial plan first. He said it is \$100,000 that they are spending. Mr. Stremcha



clarified that this year there is a \$50,000 budget, and next year \$50,000 is budgeted. The money part is more staff time than contracted services. Mr. Stremcha suggested they break down the plan into bite-size, pieces. For example, at the next two meetings, they could discuss the introduction, then the next two meetings discuss trends, then the needs assessment and community engagement, then the framework such as structuring data that was gathered, then crafting the final plan a year from now. Breaking down six chapters into bite size pieces over 12 months. They would be crafting the plan as they go and delegating it to staff. They could use a company such as HKGI to do some fine tuning to craft a 110-page document based on the information provided by the commission and staff. They can see how much can be done in house and then leverage the funding/budget for the plan to be lower. Mr. Stremcha also pointed out that just because money is in the budget doesn't mean they have to spend it.

Commissioner Niziolek said he wants to know how much money they have to spend. He reiterated that they have \$250,000 to spend per year so he feels that the plan should be based off of that amount to spend. Chair Anderson said that right now they still need a plan because the current one is obsolete.

Mr. Stremcha pointed out that funding sources could change in the future, so they need to identify priorities and then as funds become available, they take those items off the list. Chair Anderson said if they take the time to do this it will give them great appreciation for what they have done.

## 10.2 Playground Plan

Mr Shelby Presented his report. He reviewed the playground replacement spreadsheet provided in the packet pointing out the estimated cost of replacement for each playground and then the amount of funding coming from the liquor store fund.

Mr. Shelby shared that the Country Crossing Park playground has already started shrinking due to the need to remove pieces for safety. Staff won't remove the whole thing though since what remains is safe. Staff can evaluate piece by piece. This is the first playground on the replacement schedule. According to the schedule there will be a playground needing to be replaced on almost an annual basis.

Chair Anderson asked if staff are comfortable with the anticipated playground life span of 25 years and if there is the possibility of getting the playgrounds past that number. Mr. Shelby said that while it is a possibility, it isn't guaranteed.

Chair Anderson said this made him think of sustainability. He said with only \$250,000 coming into the park fund, there isn't the ability to replace all these items with the budget laid out in front of them. He said that when they were installing all these amenities back in the day, they didn't realize that they would need to replace all of them. Chair Anderson said they need to think about what playgrounds they should be replacing. He said they should also be looking at all their needs and come up with additional funding sources. He thinks that they need to come up with a fallback list of what playgrounds should be targeted for replacement when they need it based on condition and safety, but he is not sure how to do that. He isn't sure if the community needs 5 playgrounds, 10 playgrounds...at one time they thought the community needed 16 and they can't afford that.

Commissioner Niziolek said they need some information on how many people are using the playgrounds. He views that information as valuable because he thinks it will need to reduce the number of parks with playgrounds. He asked staff if there was an easy or convenient way to monitor the usage of those parks over this summer. Mr. Shelby said he thinks it is not so much to monitor but to engage the public, which is something that was started during the Play My Way campaign. He said that simply asking people what playgrounds and parks they are using and how they are using them is important. This would be part of the park master planning process. He is not sure how we would go about it but doesn't think it is as simple as counting people at the parks. It could be going out into specific neighborhoods and asking the residents.

Commissioner Stewart asked if asking users about their usage of specific pieces of equipment could be added to the survey. If they have to make decisions about all neighborhood parks, should they include questions such as, do the residents want playgrounds with all swings and no jungle gym. He asked if combining two current parks into one is an option. Chair Anderson asked Commissioner Goodwin what she thought. Commissioner Goodwin said she thinks that people are using parks differently now and it is important for the community to understand that they are looking at destination parks more because primary caretakers are going with kids to the parks and not just sending the kids down to the park. She thinks it is important to get a sense of where people are using the parks and what they are using them for. What is their philosophy for using the parks? She feels the commission should cast a vision for these parks because it isn't about if they get rid of some, it's a when, because it is four million dollars to replace the current playgrounds. She said they should ask residents what they want destination parks to look like. She said Play My Way was a good start to surveying people but if they could continue having conversations with the community with that in mind, that they want to create destination parks that have amenities that families want to go to then they can look more strategically at the location of those and plan for the future once the sand dunes get developed and what do parks look like in that direction. Then they can plan with a new strategy in mind.

Commissioner Goodwin asked how the commission should plan for this. She pointed out that things will change again in 25 years. She suggested there are already some destination parks in Elk River such as Orono, Trott Brook, etc, so how do they maximize the amenities in those parks? They need community involvement, and the reality is some of these parks will be eliminated, but what can they do to maximize the amenities in the parks that remain.

Commissioner Varty asked Commissioner Goodwin if only four parks would be enough if they were all different. Commissioner Goodwin said yes, and that Elk River already has that. She and her family go to Woodland Trails Regional Park, Orono, and Trott Brook Park.

Commissioner Niziolek asked what they would do if they were going to just remove playgrounds. He is concerned about how the parks will meet the needs of the residents. He also asked if playgrounds will ever become mobile.

Commissioner Fermoyle asked who would remove the old playground equipment. Mr. Shelby explained that Josh Baas, the Park Maintenance Foreman, and his staff remove it and sometimes there is a company they can donate the equipment to be shipped overseas, or it is disposed of. Mr. Shelby shared that being conscious of cost, staff try to absorb the labor costs etc. as much as possible.



Chair Anderson said that he likes the idea of talking to people and canvassing neighborhoods, but there is nothing like traffic counters. He said that he sees people at Woodland Trails Regional Park a lot, but he doesn't see that many kids at other playgrounds. He asked staff to draw circles on the map in the packet around Orono Park, Lion John Weicht Park, and Trott Brook Park. He pointed out that if they look at Orono, there are 5 playgrounds in that area numbered as 11, 13, 19, 23, and 1 on the park map. He doesn't know how they are going to be able to afford to maintain that many parks in that quadrant of the city like that. He said that his grandkids would drive by 5 parks to get to Orono in the past. Commissioner Varty said every school has a traditional playground and asked if people could go to those if they wanted to. Commissioner Niziolek said that when they built Lion John Weicht Park Playground, they asked the playground designer to survey the playground equipment at the local school. Some of the playgrounds may just have to be pulled out and then see if people get upset.

Commissioner Loidolt said that the small neighborhood amenities and playgrounds are just for the residents in a three to four block area. He asked if there is a way to capture the median age of the people in a neighborhood around where a park is. He said that if a neighborhood has a lot of residents in the 50- to 60-year-old range the neighborhood is going to turn and flip into younger families as they eventually move out. Commissioner Goodwin said that she thinks Sherburne County would probably have that information.

Commissioner Loidolt did point out that they had removed a playground before and no one said anything. Chair Anderson asked if there are any amenities they can offer in those locations besides playgrounds that the neighborhood would want. Commissioner Loidolt suggested, for example, a pickleball court. Mr. Shelby said to be careful with that in neighborhoods because there are starting to be noise complaints about that in other cities.

Councilmember Cory Grupa shared with the commission that when they do close a park and a playground, the City Council does hear about it, so he warned them to keep that in mind.

Commissioner Stewart said they have additional funding that will be needed for future developments coming in. He mentioned that they just talked about Specht Farms as well as the park north of the gravel pit. Commissioner Niziolek said that this leads them into the discussion of the master plan. He shared that he feels they need to have a financial plan and help from the council to know what they can plan for because one of the issues they ran into with the ballfield plan is money. He feels that money will drive what they do, and he thinks that will make this round of master park planning difficult. He thinks they need a financial plan before a master plan. Commissioner Loidolt asked how long the liquor fund has been set at \$250,000. Staff said they were not sure. Chair Anderson said he did not think it was that long ago.

Commissioner Fermoyle asked where the park dedication money goes. Chair Anderson said that it needs to be used for new installations. Commissioner Niziolek said that for example, with the Specht property all the park dedication money will be gone. He thinks they will have to put more money into it.

Councilmember Cory Grupa asked if the park dedication money must be used for new amenities in the development being built. Mr. Stremcha explained that park dedication can be used for any new

park property or amenities that are not currently in the system. Chair Anderson added they don't have to necessarily keep the money in the neighborhood it is coming from.

Chair Anderson shared they had a lot of park dedication money coming in until 2008, and they spent it far too quickly, and then after the economy crashed it stopped coming in. Chair Anderson said now the park dedication is going down to about \$3,000 and it used to be \$7,000. Without park dedication there is only the tax money coming in from Elk River residents and there is not a favorable sentiment to raise taxes, so the other option is money from the liquor store fund to maintain everything.

Commissioner Stewart asked if the commission could get the actual estimated dollar amount from park dedications included in the staff report. Mr. Shelby explained that the number can change though. Chair Anderson said they used to be included but because it can change at the time of final plat, they don't include it anymore. Commissioner Varty asked if they could change the park dedication money from going to only new things to anything. Chair Anderson and Commissioner Niziolek explained that it is state law. Chair Anderson said that someday they will be having a discussion about having too many parks but if parks were taken with park dedication, they can't be sold.

Commissioner Niziolek said they will have to find some innovative ways to use these spaces. Commissioner Stewart said that even if there are limited amenities there will still be maintenance on the property. Mr. Stremcha shared that it may mean more rain and butterfly gardens and nature play areas.

Commissioner Niziolek asked what they could do down the road to make these spaces interesting and unique, such as food trucks or pop-up events. Commissioner Goodwin said it is an interesting idea but asked what their strategic plan is for what they need to deal with right now. Do they feel like they have the know how to decide what parks to keep and what they are going to do with them?

Commissioner Niziolek said that because the plan is going to cost them \$100,000, he thinks they should rely on staff expertise to give them guidance on which playgrounds they are going to close. Commissioner Varty said the city is going to have to put out a public campaign about the budget and that some parks may need to close. It's no different than not having enough money in your household budget.

Commissioner Goodwin explained that she doesn't think it is necessarily a horrible thing to close some because they have other great parks to direct people to. They have many beautiful parks in the city that are different than many cities around us. She understands people will be disappointed and upset and complain but they have other options to direct them to. They don't have the money for everything but can offer other things that can create value in their life.

Mr. Stremcha asked Chair Anderson and the commission how they would feel about a community survey where they asked something like rank your top 10 playground locations in the community with an educational component of there are 16 playground locations over the next 10 years we're planning on making improvements to the top 10 but with intention that the bottom 6 would no longer be upgraded as things are discontinued.

Councilmember Grupa said when he thinks of a destination park, he thinks of Orono and Woodland Trails Regional Park. He is thinking more of a broad survey for community parks. He thinks you may get more feedback from some of the smaller parks.

Commissioner Varty thinks ten is too many and that there should only be like three surveyed at a time or it will get muddled. Mr. Stremcha said they could do it geographically with key regions with only a few parks at a time. Commissioner Niziolek said he would like staff to put something together and bring it back to the next Commission meeting. Commissioner Varty asked if that could be done at the Farmers market.

Secretary Larson commented on feedback she received while working at events during the Play My Way campaign last year. She explained that part of the campaign was explaining to the public that many playgrounds within the city would have to be replaced over the next ten years and that there is not enough funding to support the replacement of all of them. The campaign's main focus was to gather feedback from the public on what playgrounds and amenities they are using and value the most. The city could then focus on the positive aspects of what playgrounds and amenities would be kept. The natural process of elimination would happen on its own based on feedback from the public. She shared that the City of Elk River has an amazing marketing team that could create a public campaign to share information with the community, assisting the commissioners and council to make the best fiscally responsible decisions with the most positive outcome.

Mr. Stremcha said they could break the survey into regional areas to review if that is what the commission would like them to do. They could also break it into destination playgrounds. For example, region one would get a survey in August regarding what they would like in their region. Commissioner Goodwin said she likes it, but it needs to be playground focused. She said they could look at the three playgrounds near Orono first. Mr. Stremcha said they could ask questions about what they want in their geographical area, i.e., neighborhood.

Chair Anderson said that when his kids were little, people thought every neighborhood had to have an open space for kids to play pick-up ball. He thinks that kids are very programmed now and not just going out and playing by themselves. For the money spent on them, he feels that the playgrounds don't get the same amount of use they use to get. Commissioner Stewart asked staff about how much time there is on ordering equipment. He also thinks that the survey is a great idea, but he doesn't want to order equipment if they aren't sure if the community wants to replace a playground such as Country Crossings once it is removed. Mr. Shelby said that equipment for a new playground would probably need to be ordered this fall for next spring.

Chair Anderson shared that if it were up to him, he would keep playgrounds A, B, C, D, E, and F on the park map that Mr. Stremcha and Mr. Shelby drew regions on. He doesn't know what else they will be able to afford to do, even if they ask the public what they would like to do. He thinks there is a big difference between what people say and what they will do. He said there is pain in having to make the hard decisions, and he doesn't know what to do.

Commissioner Niziolek requested that staff come up with a survey and return to the commission for review, and then proceed forward, but hold off on ordering any playgrounds until next year. Chair Anderson asked if a survey would give them honest information.

Mr. Shelby said that they could do an old school mailing as well as some online tools such as Social Pinpoint and other things that he is planning to explore more to see what is available to us. He wants to look at multiple channels.

Mr. Stremcha said that they could go back to the playground that is coming up for replacement, such as Country Crossings, Fresno, and Mississippi Oaks, within the next two years. They are all in the same region, so rather than doing a city-wide survey, they could do a survey just to region one. It would be a targeted specific need. Staff will create a survey and bring it to the commission to discuss it further, with the intention that they will send it out before the end of summer. A specific area, zone one. (see map with drawings from the meeting attached in the minutes)

Mr. Stremcha showed on the park map regions they could break down for surveys and feedback.

## **II. Adjourn Meeting**

**Moved by Commissioner Loidolt and seconded by Commissioner Varty to adjourn the meeting of the Parks and Recreation Commission at 8:52pm. Motion carried 6-0.**

Minutes prepared by Dawn Larson.

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

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



# Request for Action

**To**  
Parks and Recreation Commission

**Item Number**  
7.1

**Meeting Date**  
July 9, 2025

**Prepared By**  
Karen Wingard, Farmer's Market/Event Coordinator

**Item Description**  
Torchlight Theatre Outdoor Performance

**Reviewed by**  
Jeff Shelby  
Joe Stremcha

## Action Requested

Recommend, by motion, the Torchlight Theatre Outdoor Performance at Woodland Hills Regional Park as presented from July 31 to August 3, 2025.

## Background/Discussion

Torchlight Theatre Representative Anita Douglas will present her proposal to hold an outdoor theater performance at Woodland Trails Regional Park from July 31 to August 3, 2025.

## Financial Impact

None.

## Mission/Policy/Goal

Work with citizens to achieve goals.

## Attachments

None

## The Elk River Vision

*A welcoming community with revolutionary and spirited resourcefulness, exceptional service, and community engagement that encourages and inspires prosperity*





# Request for Action

**To**  
Parks and Recreation Commission

**Item Number**  
7.2

**Meeting Date**  
July 9, 2025

**Prepared By**  
Jeff Shelby, Recreation Manager

**Item Description**  
Neighborhood Playground Survey

**Reviewed by**  
Jeff Shelby  
Joe Stremcha

## Action Requested

Recommend, by motion, staff conduct the survey as presented to residents in the park usage area (south of US HWY 10 and west of the Elk River).

## Background/Discussion

In June, the commission discussed beginning the process of evaluating the playground amenities in the city parks. Many of those amenities will be approaching the end of their life expectancy in the next few years and during that discussion, it was decided that staff would compile a survey to potentially send to residents in designated areas so that residents have the opportunity to provide feedback about the replacement and usage of the amenities. The included survey is intended to give residents that opportunity to provide input, as well as to provide staff with a better understanding of how the parks are being utilized.

The neighborhood park areas around the city will be divided up into regions for the purposes of the amenity discussion. Region I (south of US HWY 10 and West of Elk River) includes Country Crossings Park, Fresno Park, and Mississippi Oaks Park.

## Financial Impact

Postage to ensure area residents had direct notice of the survey.

## Mission/Policy/Goal

Work with citizens to achieve goals.

## Attachments

- I. Neighborhood Park Survey - Region I

## The Elk River Vision

*A welcoming community with revolutionary and spirited resourcefulness, exceptional service, and community engagement that encourages and inspires prosperity*



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# Neighborhood Parks Usage Survey

We need your input! The City of Elk River is looking for feedback on the parks in your neighborhood to help us understand how residents use them and what improvements you'd like to see. Your responses are crucial as we plan for the future of Country Crossings Park, Fresno Park, and Mississippi Oaks Park. This survey should take about 5-10 minutes to complete.

---

## Section 1: About You

1. **What is your age group?**
    - Under 18
    - 18-24
    - 25-34
    - 35-44
    - 45-54
    - 55-64
    - 65+
  
  2. **How far do you live from the closest neighborhood park (Country Crossings Park, Fresno Park, or Mississippi Oaks Park)?**
    - Less than 0.5 miles
    - 0.5 - 1 mile
    - 1 - 2 miles
    - More than 2 miles
- 

## Section 2: Park Usage

3. **Which of the following parks have you visited in the past 12 months? (Check all that apply)**
  - Country Crossings Park
  - Fresno Park
  - Mississippi Oaks Park
  - None of the above (If "None," please skip to Question 14)

4. **How often do you visit any of the 3 parks?**

- Daily
- Weekly
- Monthly
- Annually

---

## **Section 3: Park Specific Feedback**

*Please answer the following questions for **each park**. If you haven't visited a particular park, you may select "Don't Know"*

### **Country Crossings Park**

5. **How would you rate the following aspects of Country Crossings Park?**

- **Condition of Amenities (e.g., benches, tables):**
  - Excellent
  - Good
  - Fair
  - Poor
  - Unsure
- **Condition of Playgrounds/Equipment:**
  - Excellent
  - Good
  - Fair
  - Poor
  - Unsure

6. **When you visit Country Crossings Park, what activities do you typically engage in? (Check all that apply)**

- Playing with children
- Picnicking/Gathering with friends/family
- Using playground equipment
- Playing sports (e.g., basketball, soccer)
- Walking a dog
- Relaxing/Reading
- Other (Please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

7. **What improvements would you most like to see at Country Crossings Park? (Check your top 3)**
- More/improved playground equipment
  - More seating/picnic tables
  - Better landscaping/gardens
  - More shade trees
  - New or improved sports facilities (e.g., basketball court, open field)
  - Increased accessibility features (e.g., ramps, accessible swings)
  - Increased trash receptacles
  - Other (Please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

## **Fresno Park**

8. **How would you rate the following aspects of Fresno Park?**
- **Condition of Amenities (e.g., benches, tables):**
    - Excellent
    - Good
    - Fair
    - Poor
    - Unsure
  - **Condition of Playgrounds/Equipment:**
    - Excellent
    - Good
    - Fair
    - Poor
    - Unsure
9. **When you visit Fresno Park, what activities do you typically engage in? (Check all that apply)**
- Playing with children
  - Picnicking/Gathering with friends/family
  - Using playground equipment
  - Playing sports (e.g., basketball, soccer)
  - Walking a dog
  - Relaxing/Reading
  - Other (Please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

10. **What improvements would you most like to see at Fresno Park? (Check your top 3)**

- More/improved playground equipment
- More seating/picnic tables
- Better landscaping/gardens
- More shade trees
- New or improved sports facilities (e.g., basketball court, open field)
- Increased accessibility features (e.g., ramps, accessible swings)
- Increased trash receptacles
- Other (Please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

## **Mississippi Oaks Park**

11. **How would you rate the following aspects of Mississippi Oaks Park?**

- **Condition of Amenities (e.g., benches, tables):**
  - Excellent
  - Good
  - Fair
  - Poor
  - Unsure
- **Condition of Playgrounds/Equipment:**
  - Excellent
  - Good
  - Fair
  - Poor
  - Unsure

12. **When you visit Mississippi Oaks Park, what activities do you typically engage in? (Check all that apply)**

- Playing with children
- Picnicking/Gathering with friends/family
- Using playground equipment
- Playing sports (e.g., basketball, soccer)
- Walking a dog
- Relaxing/Reading
- Other (Please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

13. **What improvements would you most like to see at Mississippi Oaks Park? (Check your top 3)**

- More/improved playground equipment
- More seating/picnic tables
- Better landscaping/gardens
- More shade trees
- New or improved sports facilities (e.g., basketball court, open field)
- Increased accessibility features (e.g., ramps, accessible swings)
- Increased trash receptacles
- Other (Please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

---

## **Section 4: General Feedback**

14. **If you had to pick just one park for a playground improvement, which would it be?**

- Country Crossings Park
- Fresno Park
- Mississippi Oaks Park
- No preference

15. **Are there any features or amenities that are currently missing from our neighborhood parks that you believe are essential?**

16. **Do you have any other comments or suggestions regarding the future development of Elk River's neighborhood parks?**

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Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey! Your input is incredibly valuable as we work to improve our neighborhood parks for everyone in Elk River.



# Memorandum

**To:** Parks and Recreation Commission

**From:** Jeff Shelby, Parks and Recreation Manager

**Date:** July 9, 2025

**Subject:** Parks and Recreation Staff Report

## **Senior Activity Center**

As of June 24, 2025, the Senior Activity Center has 533 members. Our average daily attendance is 71, which is higher than it was last year at this point in the year. This month's program highlights included live music by Diane Zilberberg accompanied by refreshing root beer floats, a scenic boat trip on the Mississippi River, and a fun presentation and trivia session about the Beatles. Our two new front desk volunteers started this month, and they've already been a wonderful help to our team.

## **Story Stroll Kick Off**

The first kickoff event was held on Tuesday, June 17 at Lion John Weicht Park showcasing the bilingual book, *Searching for Habitat*. This free event saw steady attendance and event attendees enjoyed a presentation from Sherburne Soil and Water District on pollinators, made pinecone bird feeds, and enjoyed free popsicles. Great River Regional Library - Elk River staff and volunteers were present to assist with the activities on site.

## **Popsicles with Public Safety**

Orono Park had over 500 kids attend Popsicles with Public Safety on Tuesday, June 17. Kids were able to explore vehicles from Police, Fire, and ERMU while enjoying free popsicles provided by Jonny Pops. Police reserves provided free child ID kits too.

## **Sports/Programs**

We hosted the Twins Playball baseball clinic on Saturday, June 28 at Lion John Weicht Park. This event was free to attend for ages 6-12. We had great participation from the community and 150 registered for the event. A special thank you to our friends at Geared Up Apparel for sponsoring a meal for all participants! Each child received a hotdog, Gatorade, and chips!

Summer programs have been running very smoothly thanks to our Summer Intern Taylor.

The USSSA Top Tier Summer State Fastpitch Softball tournament is this weekend at the PT Complex. We anticipate over 1,500 people at the complex. We then have softball for the next two weekends at the PT Complex, a 2-week break, and then tournaments every weekend through October 5. Field use remains very busy on a daily basis with almost all 17 fields needing to be prepped every day. This can be a concern for fields to be overused and not gaining sufficient rest periods and will be monitored closely. This utilization trend does support the need for additional facilities as detailed in the Athletic Facilities Framework Plan.

### **Summer Concerts**

Our first two summer concerts moved indoors to the field house at the FT Center due to inclement weather. The field house provides a much better indoor environment for the concerts and the feedback from attendees has been very positive. Attendance at the second concert rivaled attendance at the outdoor shows, and the indoor concessions offerings were a great addition to the event.

### **Lion John Weicht Park – Electrical Issue**

We had a minor issue with the lighting inside the servery at the pavilion at Lions on a recent Saturday. The user group alerted staff, and we were able to respond during the event to identify and repair the issue.

### **Friends of the Mississippi Event**

On August 16, FMR is sponsoring a kayak paddle event from Otsego to the Houlton Conservation Area. They are partnering with Twin Cities Kayaking to provide all of the outfitting free of charge to participants. After arriving at Houlton, participants will have lunch, hear from FMR Agricultural Policy Manager Peter LaFontaine on policy protecting the river, and then participate in a hands-on restoration planting to support pollinators and wildlife.



# Request for Action

**To**  
Parks and Recreation Commission

**Item Number**  
11.1

**Meeting Date**  
July 9, 2025

**Prepared By**  
Jeff Shelby, Recreation Manager

**Item Description**  
Elk River Parks and Recreation Framework Plan -  
Table of Contents and Scope of Work

**Reviewed by**  
Jeff Shelby  
Joe Stremcha

## Action Requested

Consider the Table of Contents and discuss the scope of work to develop a Table of Contents for the Elk River Parks and Recreation Plan.

Recommend, by motion, the table of contents for the plan as presented by staff (or amended by the commission).

## Background/Discussion

The commission will help define the scope of work for the project by refining the categories within Elk River Parks and Recreation Framework Plan. Staff provided the following for the commission to consider:

1. Four Tables of Content from the plans staff found comparable to the city.
2. A compilation of feedback from commissioners after reviewing the four plans, loosely organized in a Table of Contents form
3. A suggested Table of Contents for the plan based the feedback received from commissioners.

## Financial Impact

None.

## Mission/Policy/Goal

Meet changing needs - agile. Opportunity to live, work, and play. Support the growth and development of the community.

## Attachments

1. Alexandria Master Plan Table of Contents
2. Bemidji Master Plan Table of Contents
3. Otsego Master Plan Table of Contents
4. Sherburne County Master Plan Table of Contents
5. Research and Feedback Summary Table of Contents
6. Potential Table of Contents - 2026 Parks and Rec Master Plan

## The Elk River Vision

*A welcoming community with revolutionary and spirited resourcefulness, exceptional service, and community engagement that encourages and inspires prosperity*





# TABLE OF CONTENTS

**04**

*Introduction*

**8-15**

*Trends*

**16-27**

*The System Today*

**28-43**

*System Initiatives*

**44-143**

*Park Plans*

**144-166**

*Implementation*

## APPENDIX

*Community Engagement*

## Table of Contents

### Section I – Overview and Planning Process

Overview .....	4
Planning Process .....	4

### Section II – Vision, Mission and Organization Overview

Vision, Mission and Values .....	6
Access to Outdoor Recreation .....	7
Department Background .....	8

### Section III – Public Engagement and Needs Analysis

Public Engagement Survey and Map.....	10
Infrastructure and Operations Technical Analysis .....	15
Draft System Scenario .....	19
Focus Groups and Town Hall Meeting .....	20

### Section IV – Park and Trail Infrastructure Strategy and System

System Strategies .....	23
Future Park System Scenario .....	24
Park Implementation Prioritization .....	45
Future Trail System Scenario .....	47

### Section V – Programming Strategy

Programming Overview .....	60
Programming Strategies .....	62

### Section VI – Maintenance and Operations Strategy and System

Operations Overview.....	63
Operations Analysis .....	63
Operations and Maintenance Strategy.....	67
Park and Trail Maintenance Cost Projections .....	68

### Section VII – Implementation

Infrastructure Funding Analysis .....	69
Infrastructure Cost Projections .....	70
System Plan Implementation Recommendations .....	71
System Development Funding .....	75



# CONTENTS

<b>Chapter 1: Park System Overview + Summary</b>	<b>1</b>
▶ Parks Introduction	2
▶ Intent of the Master Plan	4
▶ How to Use the Plan	4
▶ Guiding Principles	5
▶ Local Context	7
<b>Chapter 2: Values, Trends, and Changing Needs</b>	<b>11</b>
▶ Value of Parks & Recreation	12
▶ Trends in Parks and Recreation	13
▶ Summary of Community Input	17
<b>Chapter 3: System Plan</b>	<b>21</b>
▶ Natural Resources Plan	23
▶ Parks and Facilities Plan	37
▶ Trails and Connectivity Plan	57
▶ Recreation Programming and Marketing Plan	69
<b>Chapter 4: Implementation</b>	<b>77</b>
▶ How to Use this Chapter	78
▶ Priority Actions	78
▶ Funding Options	82
▶ Funding Sources	83
▶ General Capital, Operations, and Maintenance Costs	86
▶ Project Review Process	89

# APPENDICES

<b>Appendix A: Park Maps</b>	<b>A-1</b>
<b>Appendix B: Peer Community Comparison + NRPA Metrics</b>	<b>B-1</b>
<b>Appendix C: Natural Resources Supplemental Information</b>	<b>C-1</b>
<b>Appendix D: Community Engagement Summary</b>	<b>D-1</b>

## **CONTENTS**

<b>01 INTRODUCTION &amp; OVERVIEW</b> .....	<b>5</b>	<b>04 SYSTEM RECOMMENDATIONS</b> .....	<b>69</b>
Plan Purpose and Organization.....	5	Chapter Overview.....	69
Sherburne County Parks And Recreation Background.....	6	Parks and Trails System Summary.....	69
County Context & Demographics.....	7	Parks & Facilities Recommendations.....	72
Previous and Related Planning.....	11	Trail Recommendations.....	84
<b>02 INVENTORY, CONDITIONS, &amp; NEEDS ASSESSMENT</b> .....	<b>19</b>	Marketing and Programming Recommendations.....	86
Chapter Overview.....	19	Natural Resources & Protection/Acquisition Recommendations.....	90
Existing Parks Inventory.....	20	<b>05 IMPLEMENTATION</b> .....	<b>93</b>
Existing Park Facilities.....	24	Chapter Overview.....	93
Park and Trail Use.....	28	Implementation Timeline.....	94
Trends in Recreation.....	32	Staffing.....	95
Park Conditions Assessment.....	40	Policies, Planning, and Operations.....	96
Oak Savanna Park.....	42	Funding.....	97
Grams County Park.....	44	Project Phasing & Cost Estimates.....	98
Island View County Park.....	46	<b>06 APPENDIX</b> .....	<b>101</b>
Bridgeview County Park.....	48		
The Great Northern Trail.....	50		
Public & Stakeholder Input.....	52		
Summary of Needs Assessment.....	65		
<b>03 MISSION, VISION, &amp; GOALS</b> .....	<b>67</b>		
County Parks Mission & Vision.....	67		
County Park System Goals.....	68		

# **Research and Feedback Summary**

## **Table of Contents**

(Keep uniform design throughout) -Sherburne County plan for example.

First page flow chart style recommended with links to each chapter for website design.

### **Introduction and Overview**

- Mission and Goals
- City Facts
- Parks and Recreation Facts and Value
- Plan Purpose and Organization

### **Inventory, Conditions, Needs Assessment (The System Today with links to parks on website)**

- Chapter Overview (Questionnaire on page 162 in Alexandria plan)
- Park Classification System
- Existing Parks Inventory (Role of each park-Sherburne plan)
- Existing Park Facilities
- Park and Trail Use
- SWOT Analysis
- Trends
- Access to Outdoor Recreation
- Public/Community Engagement- Social Pinpoint?
- Focus Groups and Town Hall meetings.
- Gather Park usage data/estimate financial cost per individual per park.

### **Park Plans (Individual Analysis of each property)**

- Chapter Overview
- Map (Alexandria with legend)
- Description/Classification
- Existing Amenities/Park Feature Inventory
- Current Development Topics
- Priorities and Priority Level
- Future Enhancements/Needs Assessment
- Timeline
- Costs

### **System Recommendations/Initiatives**

- Chapter Overview

- Parks and Trails system Summary
- Parks and Facilities Recommendations
- Trails and Connectivity Recommendations
- Recreational Programming and Marketing Recommendations
- Staffing Considerations
- Community Partnerships and Agreements
- Natural Resources Plan (Protection/Acquisition Recommendations) including practices and costs. Partnerships with non-profits to share costs.
- Future Developments, additional park land, dedication funds etc. such as the gravel mine pits. Create a sub document for Developers and City Planners.
- Education and promotion of hunting and fishing opportunities within the Parks and Recreation system including the policies and data that guide them.

### **Implementation Plan**

- Chapter Overview
- Projects Phasing and Cost Estimates (Flow chart page 94 of Sherburne plan)
- Policies, Planning, Operations
- Funding Options
- Plan to become environmentally stable within 10 years.
- Flexibility to change this plan based on need.
- Continue to gather input from the community as needed when projects arise. An example would be project tabs for playground replacement input on our website. (social pinpoint).

### **Maintenance and Operations Strategy and System**

- Operations Overview
- General Capital, Operations, and Maintenance Costs (see Otsego plan)
- Funding Plan for financial sustainability with current funding sources.
- Identify potential additional funding sources.
- Operations and Maintenance Strategy-current funding and predictions for every 2 years after 2035.
- Park and Trail Maintenance Cost Projections

### **Appendix**

- Park Maps
- Peer Comparison/NRPA Metrics?
- Natural Resources Supplemental Information
- Community Engagement Summary

## **Potential Table of Contents – 2026 Parks and Rec Master Plan**

### **Introduction and Overview**

- Overview
- Mission and Values
- Planning Process
- Plan Purpose

### **Inventory and Assessment**

- Chapter Overview
- Parks Inventory
- Park and Trail Use
- Trends
- Public/Community Engagement

### **System Plan**

- Chapter Overview
- Parks and Facilities Plan
- Natural Resource Plan
- Trail System Plan
- Recreation Programming Plan
- Arts and Culture Programming Plan
- Marketing Plan

### **Maintenance and Operations**

- Chapter Overview
- Maintenance and Operations Strategy

### **Implementation**

- Chapter Overview
- Timeline
- Funding Options and Sources
- General Capital, Operations, and Maintenance Costs
- Implementation Recommendations

## **Appendix**

- Park Maps
- Peer Comparison
- Natural Resources Supplemental Information
- Community Engagement Summary