



Inver Grove Heights Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee

Wednesday, March 12, 2025 at 7:00 PM

8150 Barbara Avenue, Inver Grove Heights, MN 55077

AGENDA

1. **Call to Order**
2. **Roll Call**
3. **Presentations**
4. **Announcements**
 - A. Regular Meeting – Wednesday, April 9, 2025 at 7:00 pm
5. **Consent Agenda**

All items on the Consent Agenda are considered routine and have been made available to the Commission at least two days prior to the meeting; the items will be enacted in one motion. There will be no separate discussion of these items unless a Commission member or citizen so requests, in which event the item will be removed from this Agenda and considered in normal sequence.

 - A. Approval of Agenda
 - B. Approve Minutes from February 12, 2025 Meeting
6. **Public Comment**

Public comment provides an opportunity for the public to address the Commission on items that are not on the agenda. Comments will be limited to three (3) minutes per person.
7. **Unfinished Business**

Items that are brought back to the Commission for action from a previous meeting
8. **Regular Agenda**
 - A. Consider Approval of 2025 Parks and Recreation Work Plan
9. **Administrative Presentations**
 - A. Department Happenings
 1. Recreation Superintendent Update
 2. Parks Update Superintendent Update
10. **Commission Comments**
11. **Adjourn**

March 12, 2025 - Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee Agenda

**Inver Grove Heights
Parks and Recreation Advisory Commission
City Hall Police Conference Room - 8150 Barbara Avenue
Wednesday, February 12, 2025 - 7:00 p.m.**

1. CALL TO ORDER:

Chair Cook called the February 12, 2025 Parks and Recreation Advisory Commission Meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

2. ROLL CALL:

Present: Chair Steve Cook; Vice Chair Niki Barker; Commissioners: Bill Skar, Sandy Christensen, Ben Stone, Tracy Mulcahy, Abby Heidenreich

Absent: Willie Krech, Kurt Stangler

Others Present: Parks Superintendent Brian Swoboda, Parks and Recreation Director Adam Lares, Recreation Superintendent Julie Dorshak

3. PRESENTATIONS:

A. Dakota County 2050 Vision Plan - Lil Leatham, Principal Planner

Principal Planner Leatham presented the purpose, goals, and strategies of the draft 2050 Vision Plan, which is an update to the 2030 Park System Plan that was completed in 2008. Many of the goals from the 2030 Plan have been accomplished (e.g., creating Whitetail Woods Regional Park), and there are changing demographic and recreational trends (e.g., more winter recreation due to climate change) that the County aims to address with this update. The vision for the updated plan is "nature protected, community reflected, all are connected."

She highlighted a few of the plan's 14 goals, in particular locating parks to be close to people and seeking partnerships. In the research process, the planning team looked at park service area gaps (using a 10-minute drive time criterion) as well as increasing access to greenways and rivers.

The strategies the planning team presented for discussion are:

1. Identify new search areas to locate new parks and greenways close to people
 - a. Park Search Areas (based on gaps in regional park accessibility)
 - i. Minnesota River
 - ii. Western (Lakeville, Apple Valley, Burnsville)
 - iii. North Mississippi (West St. Paul, South St. Paul, Inver Grove Heights)
 1. Within these three search areas, the team identified 12 candidate sites for further exploration; the most likely outcome is one new site per search area. The three sites identified in Inver Grove Heights are:
 - a. NP 2 - near Heritage Park/Rock Island Swing Bridge
 - b. NP 3 - near Marcott Lakes
 - c. NP 4 - near Pine Bend Bluffs
 - b. Greenway Search Corridors
 - i. In northern/urban areas, routes were identified to help bring greenway trails closer to residents and create shorter loops.
 - ii. In southern areas, routes were identified to establish corridors before anticipated residential development takes place

- iii. Most routes make use of existing city trails; the County would assist via filling gaps at city boundaries for continuity as well as providing funding for restrooms at trailheads and wayfinding signage.
- 2. Expand Greenway Collaborative to partner with cities for more nature-based recreation along greenways
 - a. The County could help fund additional nature-based recreation (fishing piers, walking scale accessible trail loops, nature play areas, overlooks, etc.) in City parks along County greenways
- 3. Provide community trail loops
 - a. The County wants to support walkable communities by bringing residents closer to greenways. Cities would select the highest-priority sites, and the County could provide political/technical support (advocating for trail funding at Legislature, letters of support, feasibility studies, help with grant writing, etc.)

The plan is still being developed, and Principal Planner Leatham asked for comments/feedback by March 7th.

Chair Cook asked how city-county collaboration typically works.

Principal Planner Leatham said that once a greenway is incorporated into the regional vision, the county works with cities on a long-range plan. There is typically a task force that works out the planning and implementation details. Cities play a role in ensuring space within new developments for parks. There is typically cost-sharing on trailhead facilities.

Chair Cook asked about responsibility for maintenance costs.

Principal Planner Leatham said that regional greenways and County parks are maintained by the County. She said that within the City, the County might assist via a cost participation agreement.

Chair Cook asked about ways of reaching people who are not already involved with Parks programs and services.

Principal Planner Leatham said Dakota County parks are currently farther from the population base and farther from underrepresented communities. Therefore, part of the issue is proximity; this is why the County is looking at partnership parks. However, the County is also working on programming to raise awareness and outreach to get feedback via focus groups. She mentioned that welcoming facilities (clean parking lots, restrooms, and weather shelters) serve everybody, but they are especially important for those who are less familiar/comfortable with the parks.

Parks and Recreation Director Lares said the Parks and Recreation Advisory Commission will be an important part of work on this plan.

4. ANNOUNCEMENTS:

- A. Work Session- Wednesday, February 26 at 5:00 p.m.
- B. Regular Meeting - Wednesday, March 12 at 7:00 p.m.

5. CONSENT AGENDA:

- A. Approval of Agenda
- B. Approval of the Minutes from January 8, 2025 Meeting

Motion by Commissioner Skar, second by Commissioner Barker, to approve the January Minutes and the Consent Agenda as presented.

Ayes: 7

Nays: 0 Motion carried.

6. PUBLIC COMMENT:

Bob Murray, 6852 Bovey Trail, said he lives near North Valley Park and is a member of the Eagles Landing Homeowners Association. He said that the dumpster in North Valley Park is being used as a waste transfer station, and he views it as a nuisance. He said that trash frequently blows into the neighborhood when the dumpster is being emptied. He suggested that the dumpster be moved to South Valley (farther from residential neighborhoods), or that a fence be put up around the dumpster and the restroom.

Mike Stack, 6843 Bovey Trail, said that the dumpster is on city property, but that neighbors are responsible for keeping the area clean per their HOA policy. He added that people are dumping personal/commercial trash there and that signage should be added to deter this.

Bob Murray suggested putting a lock on the dumpster, too.

7. UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

There was no unfinished business.

8. REGULAR AGENDA/ADMINISTRATIVE PRESENTATIONS:

A. 2025 Tree Replacement Plan

Parks Superintendent Swoboda updated the Commission on the proposed use of \$225,000 of the Tree Preservation Fund:

1. \$25,000 for planting 50 trees in citywide parks
2. \$40,000 for invasive species control (6 months of goat grazing) in South Valley Park
3. \$150,000 for irrigation of 8 acres in Heritage Village Park
4. \$10,000 for tree/shrub maintenance in citywide parks

The fund balance as of January 2025 is \$679,192.

Chair Cook asked if this balance is higher than it has been in the past.

Parks Superintendent Swoboda said that it is, due to recent development-related tree removals.

The Parks and Recreation Advisory Commission is asked to consider recommending approval of the 2025 Tree Replacement Plan as presented utilizing the Tree Preservation Fund to the City Council. Staff recommends that PRAC recommend approval of the plan to the City Council.

Commissioner Barker asked for more details on the goat grazing.

Parks Superintendent Swoboda said that two fences will be used to contain the goats, one interior electric and one exterior single-band, with lots of signage to alert people.

Commissioner Mulcahy asked whether there will be park closures.

Parks Superintendent Swoboda said certain informal trails will be closed ; people can find alternate routes along fence lines.

Commissioner Christensen asked about whether coyotes are a concern.

Parks Superintendent Swoboda said that the vendor said coyotes are not a concern, though sometimes goats can escape if fencing gets damaged. Parks crew will ensure the goats have water and monitor the perimeter. The vendor will respond to emergencies. He commented that the price of the goats is extremely reasonable for clearing 60-plus acres for six months.

Commissioner Stone said the goats will eat the buckthorn to the ground.

Parks Superintendent Swoboda said it would be educational for the community.

Commissioner Stone asked about selecting species for removal.

Parks Superintendent Swoboda said that the goats target invasives and leave the larger native trees alone. Goat grazing to control invasives is the first step of a potential Natural Resource Management Grant through the County that would help with a future restoration project.

Commissioner Stone asked if trees would be planted in the goat grazing area.

Parks Superintendent Swoboda said no, but 50 trees would be planted throughout the parks.

Commissioner Stone asked about tree species selection.

Parks Superintendent Swoboda said that it will be a diverse mix of native species.

Parks and Recreation Director Lares commented that Parks Superintendent Swoboda is also City Forester.

Motion by Commissioner Stone, second by Commissioner Barker, to recommend the 2025 Tree Replacement Plan for approval to the Council.

Ayes: 7

Nays: 0 Motion carried.

B. Resolution to Authorize and Accept January 1 - December 31, 2024 Donations and Sponsorships to the Parks and Recreation Department

Recreation Superintendent Dorshak presented information about donations received in 2024 totaling \$25,331 (\$6200 in in-kind donations and \$19,000 in monetary donations for youth and family programming).

Chair Cook asked about how this total compared with the 2023 total.

Recreation Superintendent Dorshak said it was in line with 2023's total.

Chair Cook asked if there were any instances of donations not being accepted in the past.

Recreation Superintendent Dorshak said she was unaware of any.

Chair Cook asked if there were any recurring donations.

Recreation Superintendent Dorshak said that communications requesting donations are sent annually to a list of local businesses. Businesses can request that donations be allocated for specific programs or purposes.

Motion by Commissioner Skar, second by Commissioner Mulcahy, to authorize and accept the donations and sponsorships received by the Parks and Recreation Department in 2024.

Ayes: 7

Nays: 0 Motion carried.

C. Department Happenings

1. Parks and Recreation Director Update

Parks and Recreation Director Lares announced that in January, City Council approved roughly \$1.8 million dollars for the Heritage Village Park inclusive playground and splashpad. Flagship and LSI (vendors) have promised installation beginning in August 2025, and completion is anticipated in September 2025.

City Council also authorized \$400,000 for playground replacement at Veterans Memorial Community Center (mid-May 2025 installation; depending on weather, this may be pushed to fall 2025) and Southern Lakes (April 2025 installation).

Commissioner Christensen asked about the color scheme.

Parks and Recreation Director Lares said it was the West Palm color scheme.

Parks and Recreation Director Lares added that the City was able to negotiate a donation from Republic Services and the Pine Bend Landfill of \$500,000 for a replacement of the Rich Valley Athletic Complex playground set (completion date: 2028). This project was previously slated for 2030.

Chair Cook asked about the negotiations process.

Parks and Recreation Director Lares said that the Council and City Administrator advocated for support of the Rich Valley Athletic Complex, given the popularity of the park and events held there. He said that when Pine Bend Landfill was opened, this land was given to the City as a park; therefore, it was a natural fit for a donation.

Chair Cook commended the Council and Parks and Recreation staff for their dedication to improving local parks.

Commissioner Stone asked about whether the landfill could become a park in the future.

Parks and Recreation Director Lares said he was not aware of any discussions towards that end yet, but he said it was certainly possible (pending studies on potential risks of public use).

Chair Cook suggested a name: Seagull Park.

Commissioner Barker asked about a completion date tied to the Rich Valley playground donation.

Parks and Recreation Director Lares said it was 2028, and that the project would be included in the 2025 Work Plan discussions. He said that there would be ongoing collaboration and master planning focused on this portion of the park.

2. Recreation Superintendent Update

Recreation Superintendent Dorshak updated the Commission on the following:

- Veterans Memorial Community Center recently hosted the Girls Hockey Section Final, which reached capacity
- Memberships: 200 sold in January
- Personal training sessions have been selling well (Cyber Monday and additional sales have been successful)
- Preliminary end-of-year estimates for 2024:
 - Revenue was 117.8% above budget estimates (\$516,000)
 - Expenses were under budget (95.5%)
- There have been some staffing challenges and swim team practices cancelled due to illness (Influenza A)
- Ahead of the busy summer season, a wage study is underway for Aquatics staff
- The recent Princess Dance event was successful (70 children and 150 people total in attendance)
- There will be a South Valley park event on Presidents Day making up for January event that was cancelled due to weather
- Programs are running smoothly; 1500 participants enrolled in Winter Season
- Work has started on the summer program brochure

Chair Cook asked if there have been any winter rentals at South Valley.

Recreation Superintendent Dorshak said that there have not been reservations; people just drop by to use the space.

Commissioner Mulcahy asked about capacity for the hockey event.

Recreation Superintendent Dorshak said it was 1,000 people.

3. Parks Update Superintendent Update

Parks Superintendent Swoboda updated the commission on the following:

- Skating rinks are in good shape
- Sledding hills are open
- Crews are trimming trees, repairing picnic tables, building archery target enclosures, doing equipment maintenance, etc.

- Crews are also doing routine maintenance at warming houses (especially evenings, weekends)
- Warm weather allowed Parks staff to pull playground equipment out and remove a sign at Southern Lakes ahead of the new playground installation
- Parks staff have been plowing park trails and parking lots, assisting the Street Department as needed
- An aerator was installed in Lions Park at Gun Club Lake that must be inspected daily

Parks Superintendent Swoboda said that he was busy with the following:

- Collaborating with Recreation Department
- Working with Human Resources on hiring to fill a position that has been empty since November
- Doing yearly reviews for full-time employees
- Creating the 2025 Tree Replacement Plan
- Getting quotes for Groveland ballfield restoration project
- Arranging a demo of a new steam-based weed killer product that would reduce the need for chemicals

Chair Cook asked about the opening date of the archery range.

Parks Superintendent Swoboda said that it will be complete enough for programming to be held as planned in May 2025; he estimated that the elevated platforms will be complete in August 2025.

Parks and Recreation Director Lares said that the archery range project would be brought before City Council for final approval soon.

9. COMMISSION COMMENTS:

Commissioner Barker commented that it is the Snow Moon.

Commissioner Heidenreich commented that she is excited for the new playground installations.

Commissioner Stone commented that he is excited about the goats and the new prospects for weed elimination.

10. ADJOURN:

Motion by Commissioner Christensen, second by Commissioner Barker, to adjourn the meeting at 8:18 p.m.

Ayes: 7

Nays: 0 Motion carried.

Minutes prepared by Recording Secretary Wilfred Clashe



Parks & Recreation Advisory Commission Staff Report

SUBJECT: **Consider Approval of 2025 Parks and Recreation Work Plan**

MEETING DATE: March 12, 2025

ITEM TYPE: Regular Agenda

CONTACT: Adam Lares, Parks & Recreation Director, 651.450.2587

PURPOSE/ACTION REQUESTED

The Parks and Recreation Advisory Commission is asked to consider their 2025 Work Plan for approval.

BACKGROUND

At their February 26 work session, the Parks and Recreation Advisory Commission (PRAC) collaborated with the Parks and Recreation Department to develop and prioritize their annual work plan. This comprehensive plan serves as a strategic roadmap, outlining key initiatives, projects, and priorities for the year ahead. By identifying focus areas and setting clear objectives, PRAC ensures its efforts align with community needs and citywide park and recreation goals. The work plan provides guidance for commission activities, supports long-term planning efforts, and helps enhance recreational opportunities for residents.

FISCAL IMPACT

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends the PRAC approve the 2025 work plan as developed in the February 26, 2025 work session.

ATTACHMENTS

1. PRAC - 2025 Work Plan

2025 Work Plan
Parks and Recreation Advisory Commission
City of Inver Grove Heights

- 1) Creation of subcommittee for Parks and Recreation Systems Plan - Request for Proposal
- 2) Joint meeting with City Council
- 3) Support continuation and completion of active park projects
 - a) Heritage Village Park Phase 5
 - b) Rock Island Swing Bridge Lighting Improvement Project
 - c) South Valley Park Archery Range
 - d) All Approve 2025 Park Capital Improvement Projects
- 4) Advise prioritization and planning for future park projects
 - a) Heritage Village Park Phase 6 NW Area Park Development
 - b) Rich Valley Park – Master Planning Southwest Area of Park
- 5) Northwest Area Park Development
 - a) 4th NWA parkland search and possible land acquisition
- 6) Advise prioritization for VMCC/Grove Improvements
 - a) Brightside Room Renovation
- 7) Review and recommend acceptance of park dedication for new housing development that aligns with city's comprehensive plan
- 8) Create framework and strategies for PRAC and department community engagement efforts and opportunities.