



Inver Grove Heights Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee

Wednesday, September 9, 2026 at 7:00 PM

8150 Barbara Avenue, Inver Grove Heights, MN 55077

AGENDA

1. **Call to Order**
2. **Roll Call**
3. **Presentations**
 - A. Al Vandehoef, Recreation Coordinator - Active Older Adult Programming
4. **Announcements**
 - A. Next Meeting October 14, 2026 at 7:00pm
 - B. Commissioner Appreciation Dinner — Wednesday, September 30 at South Valley Park
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. Approval of Minutes from August 12, 2026 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**
9. **Administrative Presentations**
 - A. Park Superintendent Update
 - B. Recreation Superintendent Update
 - C. Park & Recreation Director Update
10. **Commission Comments**
11. **Adjourn**

September 9, 2026 - Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee Agenda

**Inver Grove Heights
Parks and Recreation Advisory Commission
City Hall Council Chambers - 8150 Barbara Avenue
Wednesday, August 12, 2026 - 7:00 p.m.**

1. CALL TO ORDER:

Chair Cook called the August 12, 2026, Parks and Recreation Advisory Commission Meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

2. ELECTIONS:

Parks and Recreation Director Lares conducted the election for Chair, noting that following the Commission appointments and reappointments in June, elections were needed for the remainder of the year. Commissioner Skar nominated Steve Cook to continue serving as Chair, with Commissioner Christensen seconding the nomination. With no additional nominations, the Commission voted unanimously to reelect Steve Cook as Chair.

Chair Cook thanked the Commissioners for their support and welcomed feedback on how he conducts meetings. He then conducted the election for Vice Chair. Commissioner Skar nominated Commissioner Nikki Barker, with Commissioner Mulcahy seconding the nomination. With no additional nominations, the Commission voted unanimously to elect Commissioner Barker as Vice Chair.

3. ROLL CALL:

Present: Chair Steve Cook; Commissioners: Kurt Stangler, Rachel Clevenger, Tracy Mulcahy, Sandy Christensen, Luisa Torres, William Skar,

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

4. PRESENTATIONS:

A. Olivia Skelton, Communications Specialist - Communication & Marketing Update & FinnlySports Preview

Communications Specialist Olivia Skelton provided a communications and marketing update, noting she joined the Parks and Recreation Department in 2023. Her approach focuses on a digital-first strategy and the use of plain language to help residents easily find, understand, and use information. She also focuses on humanizing the City's brand by highlighting the staff who make Parks and Recreation programs and services possible.

The department reaches the community through a variety of print and digital media, including the recreation brochure, social media, the City website, and other media outlets. Social media engagement is strongest among individuals ages 35 to 44 and is predominantly women. Nearly 30% of those active on the department's social media pages live in Inver Grove Heights.

The department's social media approach is intended to be informative, fun, friendly, and authentic, with content that accurately reflects the Parks and Recreation Department and its work.

Chair Cook asked how social media engagement is tracked and whether the demographic information reflects individuals who simply visit the sites or those who actively engage with content.

Communications Specialist Skelton explained that the analytics are specific to the department's social media platforms, including Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter, and reflect how users engage with the department's profiles. The department is not currently tracking conversions from social media to the City website.

An overview of followers and engagement across the Parks and Recreation social media platforms showed Facebook generating the strongest engagement, followed closely by Instagram, along with a presence on Twitter. Since March of the previous year, Facebook content generated approximately 3 million views. Link clicks from social media direct users to the City website for additional information about programs, events, memberships, and Community Center offerings.

The three highest-performing posts included Music in the Park, an indoor water park promotion, and the grand opening of Heritage Village Park. The Music in the Park post generated approximately 85,000 views, nearly 60,000 viewers, and 39 website link clicks. The water park promotion resulted in more than 500 website visits to view the open swim schedule, while the Heritage Village Park grand opening promotion generated nearly 60,000 views. Tagging, sharing, and saving posts contributed to increased engagement and visibility.

Heritage Village Park has continued to receive significant attention on social media, including posts from local influencers. Although Parks and Recreation decided not to formally collaborate with influencers for the park opening, several independently visited and shared content about the park. Minnesota Fun Mom generated more than 170,000 views across two platforms, and additional influencers and playground vendor Flagship Recreation also shared content. Community feedback has been very positive, particularly regarding the park's shaded areas, parking, restrooms, and overall amenities.

The City's Google Business profile provides information such as hours, directions, contact information, and customer reviews. The current rating increased from 4.4 to 4.5 stars, and more than 76% of searches were conducted on mobile devices. Recent reviews highlighted the indoor playground, cleanliness and maintenance of facilities, and positive interactions with staff. Less positive feedback provides an opportunity to address concerns, rebuild relationships, and encourage future visits.

Parks and Recreation is also transitioning to FinnlySport Recreation Software, a Minneapolis-based platform that will support its programs and offerings. The phased implementation begins with activity registration opening the following day at noon. Members received targeted communications with instructions for setting up accounts, and additional staff were available in the Community Center lobby to assist users with the new platform before registration opened.

Chair Cook commented that he had observed many people receiving assistance with setting up their accounts and appreciated that staff were friendly, welcoming, and supportive throughout the process.

Communications Specialist Skelton agreed, noting that having staff available provides reassurance and encouragement to users as they navigate the new system.

Commissioner Mulcahy asked whether the new registration system has a specific name and how it is being referred to when communicating with the public.

Communications Specialist Skelton explained that the program is called FinnlySport, with the app referred to as FinnlyConnect, while the City generally refers to it as its recreation software. The previous software remains accessible, and links to both platforms are available on a dedicated resource page on the City website to help users navigate between the systems.

Community engagement for the Salem Hills and Ernster Park playgrounds will take place later this fall and will include an online survey promoted through the City website and social media, direct-mail postcards to residents near the parks, and open houses where residents can provide feedback.

Commissioner Mulcahy asked whether social media analytics provide demographic information beyond age and gender.

Communications Specialist Skelton explained that those are the primary high-level metrics included in the reports she currently uses, although additional analytics may be available for further analysis.

Chair Cook asked whether Communications Specialist Skelton would continue working with the bridge lights.

Communications Specialist Skelton confirmed she will continue working with the bridge lights and is working with Parks and Recreation Director Lares to develop a policy for their future use.

Chair Cook complimented Communications Specialist Skelton on her work and visibility in the community and asked how potential social media influencers are identified.

Communications Specialist Skelton explained that some influencers have contacted the City regarding partnerships, while others are identified through social media research. For larger initiatives such as Heritage Village Park, staff may identify popular local accounts and reach out regarding potential collaborations. She noted that Minnesota Fun Mom had previously contacted the City and has independently shared City content.

5. ANNOUNCEMENTS:

A. The September meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, September 9, at 7:00 p.m.

6. CONSENT AGENDA:

A. Approval of Agenda

B. Approval of Meeting Minutes from June 10, 2026

Motion by Commissioner Stangler, Second by Mulcahy to approve the June 10 Minutes and the Consent Agenda.

Ayes: 7

Nays: 0 Motion carried.

7. PUBLIC COMMENT:

No public comment.

8. UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

There was no unfinished business.

9. REGULAR AGENDA:

A. Park Dedication – Hillcrest Ridge Development

Parks and Recreation Director Lares introduced a discussion regarding park dedication associated with a potential development in the northwest area of the City. No action was requested, as the item was intended as a preview before returning to the Commission in September for a recommendation to the Council.

The northwest area has long been identified for additional active parkland. The Comprehensive Plan allows park dedication through land, cash, or a combination of both and provides that neighborhood parks should generally be a minimum of four acres. Although the proposed development does not currently include four acres of parkland, there is a broader plan for the area that will be considered as the development moves forward.

Planning Manager Shay provided background on the City's park dedication requirements and the Commission's role in recommending whether park dedication should be accepted as land, cash, or a combination of both. The recommendation considers the availability of parks, open space, and green space near the proposed development.

Park dedication requirements are based on the type of development. For the proposed single-family residential development, the 2026 park dedication fee is \$3,825 per unit. The applicable fee is based on the rate in effect when the development reaches the final approval stage, so the amount could change if final approval occurs in 2027.

Chair Cook asked when the developer is required to pay the fees.

Planning Manager Shay explained that the current application is for a preliminary plat and preliminary PUD, which is the first step in the approval process. A final plat and final PUD would follow, with park dedication, utility, and other required fees collected before documents are recorded with the County and any site construction begins.

The proposed development is located north of 70th Street near the Angus Avenue intersection and includes 164 single-family homes with approximately 2.3 acres of proposed parkland. The 2040 Comprehensive Plan identifies a neighborhood park search area in this portion of the City, with neighborhood parks typically ranging from four to ten acres.

The site is located east and north of the Canvas development, near the 70th Street and Robert Street/Highway 3 intersection. Other recent development in the surrounding area includes the Yellow Tree Apartments.

Commissioner Skar asked which school district would serve the proposed development.

Planning Manager Shay confirmed it would be Independent School District 199 (ISD 199).

The development would primarily access 70th Street through a future roundabout planned as part of a County road improvement project, with a second connection through the Canvas development. Construction would generally proceed from south to north based on the location of existing infrastructure. All 164 residential lots are proposed as single-family homes.

Angus Avenue would serve as the primary north-south collector road through the development, extending from 70th Street to 65th Street. The Comprehensive Plan identifies a future connection that would eventually continue north toward Robert Trail past Dickman Lake, providing an important transportation connection for the broader area.

A paved trail is proposed along Angus Avenue and through open space areas, connecting through the proposed park and continuing to 65th Street. The existing man-made lake would remain, while other open spaces primarily consist of stormwater areas and existing wetlands. A buffer is also proposed between the development and the existing neighborhood to the east, with a potential unpaved trail still under review.

The proposed 2.3-acre park would be located east of the lake. Nearby parks include Harmon Park Reserve to the northeast and Argenta Hills Park and Overlook Ridge Park to the southwest.

Another development application is also under review immediately north of the proposed development and extending toward Harmon Park Reserve. That proposal currently includes approximately 1.5 acres of parkland that could provide parking and an access point to Harmon Park Reserve. Together, the parkland proposed within the two developments would total approximately 3.8 acres, approaching the four-acre minimum identified for the broader neighborhood park search area.

Chair Cook asked about the likelihood of the adjacent development moving forward, noting concern with accepting approximately 2.3 acres of parkland if the additional development and proposed parkland were delayed or did not occur.

Planning Manager Shay explained that development remains uncertain until construction begins, as financing and all required approvals for roads, utilities, and other improvements must be secured. However, both developers have submitted formal applications and made significant investments in preparing plans and paying application fees, indicating their intent to proceed.

Both projects are at similar stages in the development process and will return to the Commission in September so they can be considered side by side. Although they are independent developments and could proceed on different construction timelines, reviewing them together will allow the Commission to consider the proposed parkland within the broader area.

Single-family developments are required to dedicate 9% of the project area as parkland or provide cash in lieu. After excluding the man-made lake, the required land dedication is approximately 6.22 acres. The proposed 2.3-acre park would satisfy approximately 37% of the requirement. Based on 164 homes and a park dedication fee of \$3,850 per unit, a full cash-in-lieu payment would total approximately \$631,400. With the proposed parkland, the remaining cash-in-lieu payment would be approximately \$392,782.

The Commission was asked to provide initial feedback, with no action required until the item returns in September.

Commissioner Christensen asked whether the developer would build the proposed park.

Planning Manager Shay clarified that the parkland would be dedicated to the City as a public park.

Commissioner Christensen asked whether the City would then be responsible for future maintenance, equipment replacement, and other improvements.

Planning Manager Shay confirmed that the City would operate and maintain the park and be responsible for future capital investments, similar to Overlook Ridge and Argenta Hills Park.

Commissioner Clevenger asked which green spaces shown on the development map comprise the proposed 2.3 acres of parkland.

Planning Manager Shay explained that the proposed 2.3 acres would be dedicated to the City as public parkland. The City would own and maintain the property and be responsible for future improvements. The trails, playground, and other amenities included in the developer's concept are preliminary, with final park amenities and their locations to be determined by Parks and Recreation.

Chair Cook asked where the additional parkland proposed with the adjacent development would be located.

Planning Manager Shay explained that the adjacent development would include approximately 1.5 acres of parkland extending toward Harmon Park Reserve. The two proposed parks would be separated by approximately 14 residential lots, with an estimated walking distance of about 1,000 feet between them.

Chair Cook noted that the two park areas would not be directly connected.

Planning Manager Shay clarified that the two proposed parks would not physically adjoin but would be connected by a ten-foot-wide trail. They would be separated by approximately 1,000 feet and the intersection of 65th Street and Angus Avenue.

Commissioner Skar asked whether neighborhood parks are intended primarily for residents of the surrounding neighborhood and whether increased use by visitors from other areas could create parking or neighborhood concerns.

Parks and Recreation Director Lares explained that all publicly owned parks are available to everyone. While parks are categorized as neighborhood parks, community parks, athletic complexes, or combinations thereof, neighborhood parks are not exclusive to residents of the

surrounding neighborhood. Some neighborhood parks include small parking lots, while others rely on street parking. He also noted that City code requires adequate roadway frontage for park access.

Commissioner Clevenger asked whether the proposed trails would connect with the existing trail within the Canvas development.

Planning Manager Shay explained that the proposed trail system would connect with the existing trail through the Canvas development and continue toward Overlook Ridge Park and Argenta Hills Park, creating broader trail connectivity throughout the area.

Parks and Recreation Director Lares noted that Canvas previously satisfied its park dedication requirement through a cash payment and provides private amenities through its homeowner's association. However, the proposed trail would provide connectivity for Canvas residents and existing and future developments in the surrounding area.

He encouraged the Commission to consider the broader needs of the northwest area, which has historically been identified as needing additional active play opportunities but is challenged by topography and limited flat, open space. The proposed development is also constrained by a large gas line easement that affects roads, utilities, and the overall layout, and the developer believes the current proposal represents approximately the most parkland that can reasonably be provided. The Commission was asked to consider whether the proposed park, despite being less than the four-acre guideline, would adequately serve the development and contribute to the broader park needs of the northwest area.

Planning Manager Shay explained that the Comprehensive Plan identifies a neighborhood park search area north of 70th Street and east of Robert Trail, allowing residents access to parks without crossing major roadways. The goal is to provide a total of four to ten acres of neighborhood parkland throughout the broader area, rather than requiring one development to provide the entire amount. As surrounding properties develop, additional parkland could be dedicated and connected through the trail system.

Commissioner Mulcahy asked why the City could not wait and pursue one larger park since some of the surrounding properties have the same owner.

Planning Manager Shay explained that the City cannot require a property owner to develop multiple parcels at the same time and must consider applications as they are submitted. Staff has worked with the developer on concepts for the broader area to coordinate trails, roads, utilities, and parks. The single-family portion is moving forward now, while property designated for higher-density residential development is expected to develop later when market conditions support apartments or townhomes.

Parks and Recreation Director Lares noted that staff encouraged the developer to consider advancing development of the additional property, but a buyer is not currently available. He also noted that challenging topography in the northwest area can affect trail accessibility, as slopes may exceed ADA accessibility standards even when connections appear feasible during initial planning.

He asked Park Superintendent Swoboda to provide perspective on the operational and maintenance considerations of having multiple smaller parks in the same area, including potential efficiencies and challenges.

Park Superintendent Swoboda explained that Argenta Hills Park and Overlook Ridge Park are small parks located close enough together that maintenance crews can service both from one location without repeatedly loading and moving equipment. A similar approach could potentially be used for the proposed parks, which would be approximately 1,000 feet apart.

Chair Cook asked whether the two proposed parks could offer different amenities rather than duplicating features, allowing them to complement one another and encouraging users to travel between the two locations.

Parks and Recreation Director Lares explained that a similar approach was used with Argenta Hills Park and Overlook Ridge Park, with Argenta Hills generally providing play features for younger children and Overlook Ridge offering amenities for older children, including a larger play structure and half-court basketball. However, the steep trail connection between the parks can limit accessibility.

A similar approach could be considered for the proposed parks, with different amenities provided at each location. The additional parkland could potentially serve as a trailhead for Harmon Park Reserve or provide recreational amenities that complement those offered within the proposed 2.3-acre park. The Commission will need to consider whether the proposed park adequately provides the active play opportunities previously identified as a priority for the northwest area, recognizing that future development and additional parkland are not guaranteed.

Commissioner Stangler asked whether the City could request that the developer reduce the number of residential lots, such as from 164 to 140 homes, to provide additional land for park dedication. He suggested that some of the proposed residential lots could instead be incorporated into the park area.

Planning Manager Shay explained that because the project is a Planned Unit Development (PUD) requesting flexibility from standard lot requirements, the City has greater ability to negotiate for public benefits. Staff has already requested a buffer between the development and the existing neighborhood, additional trail connections, and parkland. A large gas line easement also limits where recreational amenities can be located.

The Commission could recommend additional parkland, with staff preferring to identify the desired acreage and allow the developer to determine how to reconfigure the development. The Commission was encouraged to consider whether the proposed 2.3 acres is sufficient or whether additional acreage should be requested, recognizing that opportunities for parkland may exist in surrounding developments but the timing of those projects is uncertain.

Chair Cook expressed concern that the proposed park and additional parkland to the north would function as two separate smaller parks because they are not physically connected. While recognizing the broader planning approach, he preferred additional time to consider the proposal before making a recommendation.

Commissioner Mulcahy asked whether the proposed unpaved trail would be publicly accessible.

Planning Manager Shay confirmed that it would be located on City-owned property and available for public use if included in the final plan. The trail remains under staff review due to concerns about maintaining an appropriate buffer from existing residences.

Commissioner Stangler indicated he could support reducing the number of proposed homes to provide additional parkland. He also noted that while the man-made lake does not qualify as parkland, it provides open space within the development and could contribute to the overall recreational character of the area.

Planning Manager Shay explained that the existing man-made lake, stormwater areas, pollinator plantings, preserved woodland, and wetlands would provide additional open space surrounding the proposed park. While these areas would not provide active recreation, they would create a greater sense of open space and make the park feel larger than its 2.3 acres.

Commissioner Mulcahy asked whether the lake could be reduced in size to provide additional usable space.

Planning Manager Shay explained that the lake already exists and would be extremely difficult to modify due to regulatory requirements, grading, and stormwater considerations.

Planning Manager Shay explained that the man-made lake has existed since approximately 1975, when it was created by the property owner as part of farming operations. Because it has held water for many years, it is expected to remain, although its man-made status results in different regulatory requirements than a naturally occurring lake.

Parks and Recreation Director Lares clarified that Parks and Recreation would likely not manage the lake, with responsibility more likely falling to Public Works or stormwater management. Any recreational use of the lake would require further consideration and potential policies regarding public access and use.

Planning Manager Shay emphasized that the amenities currently identified for the proposed park are conceptual. Final decisions regarding trails, play equipment, shelters, gathering areas, and other amenities would occur after park dedication and would consider community needs and the City's ability to maintain the facilities.

Director Lares added that although the Commission and Council can provide direction regarding the park, the site's existing topography will limit the ability to create an entirely flat 2.3-acre park. Creating additional flat areas would require significant retaining walls and could result in substantial costs beyond what the developer could reasonably accommodate. The current concept includes two relatively flat areas, and if the park is accepted, the development agreement could establish specific grading expectations for those areas.

Planning Manager Shay noted that, at staff's request, the developer provided cross-sections showing the proposed slopes and elevations to better demonstrate the park's topography. Final grading requirements would be determined as the development moves forward.

Commissioner Mulcahy asked about the proposed access point for Harmon Park Reserve, including whether the developer or City would be responsible for it and what amenities it could include.

Parks and Recreation Director Lares explained that the proposed trailhead associated with the development to the north would be dedicated to the City through land and potentially a combination of cash in lieu. The City would own, design, develop, and maintain the area, with the Parks and Recreation Advisory Commission involved in the design process. The developer would be responsible for completing the final grading according to City requirements within reasonable site and cost limitations.

Planning Manager Shay added that the proposed trailhead would connect directly to Harmon Park Reserve and provide access to its existing amenities.

Parks and Recreation Director Lares explained that the proposed trailhead could extend into portions of Harmon Park Reserve and would be further considered through design discussions and community engagement. Currently, there is no southern access to Harmon Park Reserve, with access provided through Salem Hills Park, where the parking lot was recently expanded by approximately 11 spaces as part of the 2026 capital project. The new trailhead could include parking and potentially amenities such as a shelter, gazebo, or small play area. Additional information regarding the proposed 1.5-acre area will return to the Commission in September.

10. ADMINISTRATIVE PRESENTATIONS

A. Parks Superintendent Update

Parks Superintendent Swoboda updated the Commission on the following:

- Crews have been very busy throughout the summer, with favorable weather allowing them to keep up with maintenance. Mowing slowed somewhat during the warmer, drier conditions but is expected to increase as cooler mornings return.
- Significant work has been completed at the athletic complex, including edging ball fields, removing lips around field edges, cleaning up the fields, and completing irrigation repairs. The fields require additional attention due to heavy use from tournaments nearly every weekend.
- Crews continue weekly painting of soccer, baseball, and football fields, which typically requires one staff member for a full day to a day and a half each week.
- Turf maintenance has included aerating, broadleaf weed control, and a second round of fertilizer application.
- Approximately seven miles of mountain bike trails at Harmon Park are mowed three to four times annually. Crews recently completed mowing the natural trails at Harmon Park and Marianna Ranch.
- Daily shelter cleaning continues at Heritage Village Park, South Valley Park, and Rich Valley Park, with two to three staff members assigned each morning. The splash pad and playground at Heritage Village Park continue to be heavily used, and South Valley Park averages six to eight scheduled picnics each week, sometimes with two per day.
- Playground inspections and minor repairs are ongoing, including replacement of parts on slides and climbers. Crews have also been maintaining landscaping beds, trimming shrubs, and mulching trees throughout the park system.
- The City recently finalized the JPA with Friends of the Mississippi River and Dakota County through the City-County Conservation Collaborative. Restoration work is beginning at Seidl's Lake Park and Harmon Park as part of the five-year restoration effort. The City has already provided its in-kind contribution for both parks, with the remaining five years of funding provided through the program.

Chair Cook asked about a newly cleared area at River Heights Park and whether work was underway.

Superintendent Swoboda said River Heights Park is in year five of its natural resource management plan. As part of the plan, undesirable trees are being removed to make prescribed burns easier. A group of boxelder trees was recently removed, along with a pile of slash that had been in the area.

- The five-year contract with Friends of the Mississippi River for River Heights Park is ending. Staff is considering continuing the partnership through an annual contract for monitoring, neighborhood pollinator studies, and mowing studies. Friends of the Mississippi River also provided general guidance for future maintenance practices, which staff will evaluate in the near future.
- Goats have returned to South Valley Park for the second year and have been moved into their fourth paddock. A conservation crew is working alongside the goats to remove larger buckthorn they cannot reach. Staff is also working with Friends of the Mississippi River on a natural resource management plan for the park, with hopes that additional County funding for the City-County collaboration will become available in 2027 to continue restoration efforts.
- Lake weed harvesting was recently completed at The Island and removed numerous truckloads of weeds. The work has improved fishing access and reduced issues with fishing lines, hooks, and bait becoming caught in vegetation.
- Preparations are underway for fall athletics, including relocating football and soccer fields and converting some baseball fields at neighborhood parks for soccer and football. The field-painting robot has repainted the fields for the fall season.
- The Salem Hills parking lot project is nearing completion. Curbs were recently backfilled, and the second lift of asphalt was installed. Remaining work includes signage and striping, with completion expected within the next week or two.
- Several tournaments remain on the schedule for the fall.
- Staff has received concepts for new playgrounds included in the 2027 CIP, which are expected to be shared with the Commission at the September meeting. A public survey and open houses will provide opportunities for feedback on the proposed playgrounds.

Chair Cook asked whether the inclusive playground and splash pad at Heritage Village Park have resulted in any unexpected maintenance issues or required more staff time than anticipated.

Superintendent Swoboda said two to three employees typically spend two to three hours cleaning the area each morning, depending on conditions. A separate crew handles mowing, trimming, trail cleanup, and trash removal. Crews generally finish by approximately 8:30 a.m. before moving to South Valley Park, while another crew maintains the restrooms at Rich Valley Park.

Chair Cook asked whether issues with water flowing outside the splash pad had been resolved.

Superintendent Swoboda said the vendor has inspected the splash pad and several adjustments have been made, including reducing water pressure and adjusting nozzles. Conditions have improved but are not fully resolved. Staff plans to modify and build up portions of the surfacing to help keep water within the splash pad area.

B. Recreation Superintendent Update

Recreation Superintendent Dorshak updated the Commission on the following:

- Staff is transitioning to new facility software, a project that has been underway since January and is expected to take approximately six to eight weeks to fully implement. The system is being introduced in phases to allow staff and customers time to adjust. Staff has been available in the lobby to assist customers, and the transition has generally been positive. While some customers have questioned the need for the change, the new platform is expected to provide an improved customer experience, better reporting, and enhanced facility rental capabilities. Activity registration is still being refined, and the software provider continues to make improvements.

Commissioner Torres asked how insurance-based memberships will work with the new system.

Superintendent Dorshak explained that existing accounts and memberships have been transferred to the new system. Customers are encouraged to download the app, activate their accounts, verify their contact information, and add payment information if comfortable doing so. Monthly memberships will begin processing through the new system in October. Existing insurance-based memberships and barcodes will continue to work, with insurance information renewed in January. Customers registering for programs will need to update their account and payment information or may receive assistance and make payments at the front desk.

Commissioner Mulcahy asked whether an instructional video could be developed to help customers adjust to the new system.

Superintendent Dorshak said staff has discussed creating instructional resources and has been providing one-on-one assistance, particularly for older adults and customers who are less comfortable with technology. Staff will continue assisting customers with downloading the app, accessing their accounts, and navigating the new system.

- Swim team practices began this week and will continue through March. The lap pool will be used for practices from 3:00 to 6:00 p.m., Monday through Friday.
- The first six weeks of the indoor playground have gone very well, with particularly high attendance during hot and rainy weather. Many families are purchasing combination passes, allowing them to use the indoor playground, have lunch in the lobby area, and then spend the afternoon at the pool.
- Summer programs are beginning to wind down. Food Fest will be held Friday at Rich Valley Athletic Complex and will feature a live band, inflatables, and approximately 12 food trucks.
- The City is partnering with the River Heights Community Band for a performance at Oakwood Park on Sunday at 7:00 p.m.

- The Kids ROCK program will conclude next Friday, marking another end-of-summer activity.
- In 2026, summer registration included 381 programs with more than 2,238 participants.

Chair Cook commented that the facility functions well despite the large number of people moving through it, with activities occurring without significant conflicts.

Superintendent Dorshak noted that the participation numbers include all programming areas, including seniors, youth, fitness, swim lessons, archery, and other programs offered by the City.

- The fall soccer program begins September 9, with 115 participants registered to date. The program continues to grow and has seen strong participation.
- The fall program brochure launches tomorrow, and registration will be available through the FinnlySport app or online. Current members received instructions for accessing the new system, while non-members will need to create a new account. Only membership information transferred from the previous system.

Commissioner Clevenger asked whether the planned food trucks were listed on social media or elsewhere.

Superintendent Dorshak confirmed that they were.

Chair Cook asked how many food trucks were expected.

Superintendent Dorshak said approximately 10 to 12 trucks would participate.

Commissioner Skar commented that he attended the previous Food Truck Festival in July. Despite the hot and smoky conditions, the event was well attended, offered a good variety of food, and was an enjoyable event.

Chair Cook complimented staff on their work and commented that the facility continues to be active and well used, with many people enjoying and participating in the programs and activities.

C. Parks and Recreation Director Update

Parks and Recreation Director Lares thanked the Commissioners who participated in the July park tour and said the tour was beneficial and generated valuable discussion. The tour intentionally focused on parks the Commission does not typically visit because they have not had recent or upcoming projects. He invited Commissioners to provide feedback for consideration when planning future park tours.

Commissioner Christensen appreciated visiting lesser-known parks and noted that she had not previously been familiar with Riverfront Park.

Chair Cook agreed that the tour was informative and appreciated visiting parks he was less familiar with, which provided a broader understanding of the City's park system. He also complimented staff on the planning of the tour.

Director Lares reported that Dakota County recently provided an updated concept plan for a Veterans Memorial Greenway Plaza and trailhead at Rich Valley Park. The concept has been redesigned and realigned to better fit the site and address existing utilities and other constraints. City staff are reviewing the concept and will provide comments to the County before it moves forward.

Once staff and the County are aligned, the concept will be brought to the Parks and Recreation Commission for review and comment, potentially at the October or November meeting or during a work session. The Commission will have an opportunity to provide input before the proposal advances to the City Council. The County is currently anticipating construction in approximately 2028 or 2029, with several steps remaining, including a likely JPA between the City and County.

Commissioner Mulcahy asked when community engagement would begin for the two park projects planned for next year and whether it would occur this fall or next spring.

Director Lares said community engagement is expected to begin in September or October with online surveys, postcard mailers containing QR codes sent directly to nearby residents, and on-site open houses. For Ernster Park, staff will also work with the management companies serving the surrounding properties to identify additional ways to engage residents and communicate project information. A similar outreach approach is being used for Salem Hills Park, with information expected to be available on the City's website and social media beginning in September.

11. COMMISSION COMMENTS:

Chair Cook expressed appreciation for City staff and the work they continue to do. He also appreciated the strong participation from Commissioners and said it made for an enjoyable meeting.

Commissioner Skar shared that his six-year-old participated in several City programs and amenities throughout the summer, including baseball, soccer, the Brightside Room, and Heritage Village Park. He appreciated the variety of opportunities available for children to explore different activities, spend time with friends, and enjoy spaces within their community.

12. ADJOURN:

Motion by Commissioner Stangler second by Skar to adjourn the meeting at 8:24 p.m.

Ayes: 7

Nays: 0 Motion carried.

Minutes prepared by Recording Secretary Tammy Greenlee.