



## **PARKS & RECREATION ADVISORY BOARD MEETING MINUTES**

**June 4, 2025  
Grand Rapids Public Library**

### **Call to Order**

Meeting was called to order at 6:04 p.m.

### **Roll Call**

**Present:** Megan Catcho, Sonja Forte, Marta Johnson, Kelli Jo Peltier, Luke Stier, Aidan Van Doren

**Others:** David Marquardt, Michelle Slykhouse, Victoria Keenan, Christy Brunsell, Laura Cleypool (Grand Rapids Parks Department), Travis Kurtz (John Ball Zoo)

Motion made by Megan Catcho, supported by Luke Stier, to elect Kelli Jo Peltier as temporary chair to run the meeting due to absence of chair and vice chair. Motion carried.

### **Approval of Agenda**

Motion made by Megan Catcho, supported by Luke Stier, to approve the agenda as presented. Motion carried.

### **Approval of Minutes**

Motion made by Luke Stier, supported by Aidan Van Doren, to approve the February 5, 2025 minutes as presented. Motion carried.

### **Comments from Public**

None.

### **Agenda Item(s)**

#### **Mayors' Monarch Pledge**

Travis stated the program supports monarch conservation and is an annual commitment. The pledge program is a way for Grand Rapids to be recognized and get credit for work that is already being done. For this initial year there are 10 action items identified in the application that Grand Rapids will commit to doing. The minimum number is 3 and the maximum is 30. By committing to 10 it is the second level of achievement in the pledge program. Travis stated he is excited to build the relationship between John Ball Zoo and the City to achieve more commitments in the future.

Travis responded to Luke and stated there is a pollinator garden at Highland Park and Briggs Park. Kelli Jo stated a pollinator garden will be planted as part of the museum expansion. Megan stated it is good to think about this type of work as park improvement projects happen in the future.

Aidan asked how metrics are being tracked and how community engagement is being done. Travis stated that for the existing action items, the Habitat Hero program through John Ball Zoo has a monthly newsletter where open and click rates tracked. A survey to better understand plant survival rates for the Habitat Hero program giveaways will be done. There is communication between the City and John Ball Zoo, and a community event will be held.

### **Plaza Roosevelt Park naming**

David stated the Advisory Board was part of the process of getting the recommended park name, Navarro Plaza, to City Commission for approval. City Commission has since rejected the proposed name and asked that the park naming process be brought back to the community.

Victoria provided a summary of the park naming process. Over 90 name suggestions (from the community) were brought to a stakeholder group for review. The top 6 were put forward to a public vote and Navarro Plaza received the most votes. Now, the stakeholder group could decide to take the top 2, 3, or more names back to the public for a vote. The stakeholder committee could also come up with other ideas on how to move forward, while staying within the City's Park Naming Policy guidelines.

### **FY26-30 Budget Discussion**

Laura stated a new full-time park operations position (facility maintenance supervisor) was approved for fiscal year 2026. A couple other things to note is that this will be the first year of repayment of bonds, and the Maintenance of Effort funding is at about a 5% increase. A forestry project is also included in the budget that will help catch up on some of the backlogged work.

Laura gave an update on seasonal hiring and stated that challenges in the past have been overcome. The City is offering more competitive wages and starting the hiring process earlier in the calendar year. Currently, all park operations positions are full, all fitness instructor positions are full, and there is just one aquatics position that still needs to be hired.

### **Meeting format Discussion**

Tabled.

### **Comments from the board/partner reports**

Megan stated return to the river event is happening August 23 and 24. There will be art installations and other activities to celebrate the riverfront.

### **Future agenda items**

- Trails update
- Meeting format discussion
- Community gardens in parks
  - Urban agriculture and Kent County food policy

### **Adjournment**

Meeting adjourned at 6:38 p.m.