



PARKS & RECREATION ADVISORY BOARD MEETING MINUTES

**August 6, 2025
Grand Rapids Public Library**

Call to Order

Meeting was called to order at 6:03 p.m.

Roll Call

Present: Max Gibbs, Luke Stier, Aidan Van Doren, Hannah Mico, Kelli Jo Peltier, Sonja Forte, Stacy Bare, Marta Johnson

Others: Michelle Slykhouse, Christy Brunsell, Laura Cleypool, Karie Enriquez (Grand Rapids Parks Department)

Approval of Agenda

Motion made by Kelli Jo Peltier, supported by Hannah Mico, to approve the agenda as presented. Motion carried.

Approval of Minutes

Motion made by Aidan Van Doren, supported by Kelli Jo Peltier, to approve the June 4, 2025 minutes as presented. Motion carried.

Comments from Public

None.

Agenda Item(s)

Plaza Roosevelt naming

Karie explained the background of the process and that the stakeholder committee decided to take the top two names back to the community for another vote. Community engagement is underway to get as many votes as possible from those in the neighborhood. Voting is open until September 8.

The name with the most votes will be presented to the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board on October 1 for approval. Due to timing of public hearings and City Commission agenda item deadlines, Karie is asking whether the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board would be supportive of both of the proposed park names (Unity Park and Navarro Plaza).

Marta stated there was some confusion and was supposed to be a final meeting with the park naming stakeholder group last time, that didn't end up happening after the votes were tallied. Karie stated the stakeholder group will meet sometime between when the poll closes on September 8 and when the agenda item to set the public hearing is due. Karie also explained some background on the previous stakeholder group process and that the process has been made clearer this round.

Stacy stated the Parks Department should be commended for the community engagement done and park naming process already done once. The process now has to be done again as the City Commission didn't stand up for the work the Parks and Recreation Department already did by following the naming policy.

Motion made by Stacy Bare, supported by Marta Johnson, to approve whichever name ends up with the most votes between Unity Park or Navarro Plaza. Motion carried.

City Strategic Plan and Parks & Recreation Operating Plan update

Laura stated there are some overlapping planning processes happening at the City. The third iteration of the City's strategic plan will be done between now and July 1. There are some strategies and objectives, specifically in the health and environment section, that the Parks and Recreation Department focuses its work on. The engaged and connected community section also has some Parks and Recreation Department focused items.

In parallel to the City's strategic plan, the Parks and Recreation Department has an operations plan that the budget is based on. At the October or December meeting, a Parks and Recreation Master Plan update agenda item will be discussed as that document is also due for an update. An RFP or RFQ will be released in the fall, community engagement done in 2026, City Commission approval end of 2026 and official approval by Michigan Department of Natural Resources no later than April 1, 2027.

Stacy asked whether the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board was able to provide input on pickleball courts. Stacy wants to know how the expansion got approved without being in any of the current plans or being presented to the advisory board and bike polo wasn't involved. Karie stated bike polo facilities are built at Highland Park now.

Laura stated a court and field master plan will be included this time.

Luke stated school properties need to be looked at during the master plan process.

Marta asked whether pools could be in the master plan – for example, some community members wonder why there are only three pools. Laura stated Grand Rapids is “pretty rich” with having three pools due to the population size. Laura stated that it costs \$1.3 million per year to run the pools. Marta asked if the plan process would be the time for people to voice their opinions and provide input on this topic and whether each ward will have specific events. Karie stated yes and there will be intentional community engagement activities and will be neighborhood specific.

Comments from the board/partner reports

Luke asked whether the hours at the pools could be extended - can they be open longer in the evening when parents have time to go with their kids. Marta asked if there is a way to provide families with some water safety information (how many lifeguards are at the pools and what they do, how they watch and keep patrons safe). Sonja stated Baxter Community Center takes summer camp participants to the pool to swim and learn water safety. Water safety is an ongoing topic. Pool hours and season update will be discussed at a future meeting.

Stacy stated Friends of Grand Rapids Parks (FGRP) has been planting and watering trees. A birding event will be held in September. The Ball Perkins trail has 3 miles built and a formal opening will occur after the City completes its portion of the trail. FGRP is hiring a fund development manager and conservation manager for invasive species control program.

Hannah stated starting this weekend is the Tour de Trees event and as part of the cycling there will be a public event upon their return to Grand Rapids. The Urban Forestry Committee partnered with the Tour des Trees organization on a tree planting to be done at a park.

Hannah stated Aman Park has an invasive species, hemlock woolly adelgid, and those trees will be treated. There is also some oak wilt recently identified at Aman Park.

Luke gave a shout out to the Parks Department communications staff.

Future agenda items

- Trails update
- Forestry Operations and Management Plan (December)
- Plaza Roosevelt naming (October)
- Community gardens in parks (October or December)
- Pool hours/update (October or December)

Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 6:54 p.m.