



PARKS COMMISSION

Police/Public Works: 4058 St. Francis Blvd NW

Thursday, May 07, 2026 at 7:00 PM

AGENDA

- 1. CALL TO ORDER**
- 2. ROLL CALL**
- 3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**
 - [A.](#) Park Commission Minutes - February 12, 2026
- 4. APPROVAL OF AGENDA**
- 5. OLD BUSINESS**
 - A. Warming House/Ice Rink

 - B. Anoka County Community Development Block Grant
 - C. Dellwood River Park Update
- 6. NEW BUSINESS**
 - A. Warming House Ship Grant
 - B. Dellwood Trail Wayfinder Ship Grant
- 7. MEMBER REPORTS**
- 8. ADJOURNMENT**

CITY OF ST. FRANCIS
PARKS COMMISSION AGENDA
Police & Public Works - 4058 St. Francis Blvd NW
February 12, 2026
7:00 p.m.

1. CALL TO ORDER

The Parks Commission was called to order at 7:00 pm.

2. ROLL CALL

Members Present: Chairwoman Barb Anderson, Commission Member Daria Shiffer, Commission Member Greg Zutz, and Commission Member Renee Wedan.

Also Present: Councilmember Sarah Udvig, Public Works Director Paul Carpenter, and Public Works Admin Jennifer Gulbrandson.

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

MOTION BY: ZUTZ SECOND: SHIFFER APPROVING THE MEETING MINUTES FROM NOVEMBER 18, 2026.

Ayes: Zutz, Anderson, Shiffer, and Wedan

Nays: None

4. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

MOTION BY: ANDERSON SECOND: ZUTZ APPROVING THE AGENDA.

Ayes: Anderson, Zutz, Shiffer, and Wedan

Nays: None

5. OLD BUSINESS

A. Warming House/Ice Rink Update

Public Works Director Carpenter provided an update on the ice rink project. He noted that the plans are 95% complete but were delayed due to structural issues where the new construction meets the old trussing. The plans will be ready for the DNR and grant applications. Carpenter shared that he attended a Minnesota Recreation Grant webinar and learned that \$5,000,000 is available. He stated that the City can now request \$500,000 instead of the previously anticipated \$350,000, and the Council has approved the budget to match the grant. The timeline requires grant work completion by March, with award notification expected by June. If

awarded, construction would typically begin in October. If the grant is not awarded, the project will be bid out immediately.

Carpenter noted that Councilmember Amy Faanes had discussed the possibility of another organization managing the rink, as the current operator has been running it for approximately 14 to 15 years. He stated this would be discussed further but may not occur in 2026 due to the remodel.

Regarding the lighting, Carpenter confirmed that the design includes dark sky-compliant, directed LED lighting with nine separate lights around the rink. He explained that the lighting specifications are specific due to the pickleball surface requirements. For the removable panels, Carpenter stated that there will be a door at the front of the Warming House and a service opening on the south side to improve snow removal efficiency. The entire front distance of the Warming House will have removable panels that can be taken down during pickleball season.

Carpenter explained that the rink surface will be fiberglass over aluminum and will last many years. He noted that the impervious surface will make flooding easier, similar to flooding the parking lot. Two drains will be installed on each side of the rink and will be discreet. In the event of a storm, the drains will direct water to the north storm sewer. In winter, the drains will be plugged with foam, and in spring, water will drain to the storm sewer.

Carpenter stated that the project will be completed in two phases: the Warming House and rink first, with no parking lot work until after the Minnesota State Highway 47 project is complete. He explained that the highway easement is large due to historical federal requirements for moving missiles through the area.

Zutz asked about the surface material and noted he was not suggesting asphalt but raising it as a possibility. Carpenter responded that concrete will be the first surface bid out as it is the longest-lasting, with asphalt as an alternative. He stated that if the cost difference is \$10,000 to \$15,000, the City will choose the better surface, but if it is \$100,000, the money would be better spent on other projects.

B. Dellwood Park Restoration Project

Carpenter reported on the Dellwood Park restoration project. He attended a preconstruction meeting with Anoka Conservation District (ACD) and MNL, the company that won the bid. Carpenter noted that St. Francis Public Works has cleared a trail through the park, and MNL will pile the ground trees for mulch rather

than requiring the City to haul them out. The trees from the area will be placed on the trail.

Carpenter stated that the project includes an \$86,000 grant from Anoka County. He noted that the Anoka County District has been amazing to work with and very open to projects and maintenance. Carpenter shared that Jared, with ACD, identified ash trees in the area with a removal cost of \$3,300. The City has \$20,000 remaining from an EAB grant, which will be used to clear most of the remaining ash trees at Dellwood. The total grant funding for this project is approximately \$106,000.

Public Works Admin Gulbrandson noted that for each ash tree removed we must replant a non-disease tree species in its place. Carpenter explained that there will be two contracts: one from the City to allow work to begin, and another contract to fulfill the EAB grant requirements after the arborist determines the total number of trees.

Gulbrandson added that the extra \$20,000 from the EAB grant was available because the city provided a significant in-kind match with staff doing watering and other work. Carpenter stated that the DNR directed the city to use the remaining funds rather than return them.

C. Public Art Discussion

Carpenter stated that he is ready to dive into the public art discussion and asked for direction on what the Commission would like the City to research and price. Zutz shared that he had sent links to various public art examples and explained that he was thinking of something similar to the hearts in Loveland, Colorado, where sculptures could be decorated differently in various locations throughout the community. He noted that no two sculptures would be the same, and they could serve as a destination for residents to visit.

Zutz explained that the challenge is funding and ensuring the sculptures can withstand the elements. Carpenter asked for specific location suggestions. Zutz stated that the sculptures should be in very visible locations, such as near Community Park, the grocery store, city hall, or the library, rather than hidden locations. He noted that the sculptures should be conversation pieces that people want to look at and admire.

Zutz suggested that there could be a map at city hall showing the locations of multiple sculptures throughout the community, creating a hunt-like experience.

Wedan shared an example of a town with decorated pigs on sidewalks that were decorated differently and placed randomly. She noted that in winter, some had hats and mittens that people could take if needed.

Shiffer suggested that the sculptures could change from season to season or that the Parks Commission could take care of one sculpture while the school takes care of another, creating a town contest. Carpenter noted that he is always looking for projects to work with the school and has been in several meetings with them. He mentioned that the school wanted to paint the water tower with homeless saints, but the cost was prohibitive after the school district had to cut its budget significantly.

Wedan suggested that a group at the school could help build or manufacture the sculptures. Anderson noted that the art department in Delano created banners for the town that hang on roads, which were created by the high school art department. Shiffer stated that she would prefer to see banners rather than sculptures that could be vandalized.

Carpenter noted that he has a better starting place for the discussion and will research different examples that other cities have done. Anderson suggested that the sculptures could connect with the trails or serve as wayfinders. Carpenter agreed that visibility is important and thanked the Commission for the input.

6. NEW BUSINESS

A. Development Plan Review by Park Commission

Anderson explained that other Park Commissions around the state review plats when they come forward to the planning commission, allowing them to make recommendations. She asked if the Parks Commission would be interested in reviewing plats that have park connections.

Carpenter stated that it is a great idea because more people reviewing something generates more ideas. He noted that he is privy to all development review meetings and mentioned the Dalton project that is starting. He explained that some developments might happen between quarterly meetings, which could be challenging.

Anderson noted that the Parks Commission only meets four times a year, so they may not see all developments. She asked if the Commission would want to stop and look at a plat if informed of an upcoming development. Carpenter explained

that planning commission meetings are open to the public, and all meetings are open unless closed by the city attorney.

Zutz noted that typically, neighbors are informed of developments via a hard copy letter and have an opportunity to address pertinent issues. Carpenter stated that the City has been very good about going out and speaking to businesses, neighbors, or inviting them in.

Anderson asked how many new developments are coming in and what would be a good way to handle reviews. Carpenter stated that active developments include Vista Prairie, Dalton River States, and The Bluffs. He noted that The Bluffs would be a great one to put in front of the Parks Commission due to the area. He explained that he has recommended in the past that the developer keep extra land by the Rum River due to high maintenance costs, and having the Parks Commission review it could help with the discussion.

Carpenter suggested that if the timing works out, he would bring developments to the Parks Commission. Anderson asked if each member should individually request to look at a plat or if the City should notify the Commission. Carpenter stated that he would bring it to the Commission if the timing is right.

Shiffer suggested that the Parks Commission could have a schedule like the planning commission, with monthly meetings that are mostly canceled. Anderson noted that this would avoid wasting people's time. Carpenter stated that he can look into the process.

Zutz noted that the Parks Commission would need to provide input prior to the planning and zoning committee meeting so that recommendations can be brought up at that meeting. Carpenter agreed that this would be ideal because it would generate more ideas.

Anderson stated that if something big comes up, the Commission could add an extra meeting to look at it. Carpenter agreed that this would be easy to arrange. Anderson noted that having more eyes on developments, especially along the river, shows support and helps the Parks Commission be more proactive instead of reactive.

B. Anoka County Community Development Block Grant Update

Carpenter reported that he and Gulbrandson have been working on grant applications. He explained that the Anoka County Community Development Block

Grant (CDBG) is a grant program that City Administrator Thunstrom was familiar with from her previous work at Anoka County. Carpenter and Jeremy Shook attended a webinar and decided to submit two applications.

The first application requests \$188,600 for replacing the Community Park playground, which is 20 years old and on the Capital Improvement Plan. The City will fund \$50,000 from the Park Fund. The new playground will include new swings and a climbing wall.

The second application requests \$76,000 for replacing the trail at Dellwood Park, with an in-kind match of \$10,000, totaling \$86,000. Carpenter explained that block grants cannot be used for maintenance, only replacement or new construction. The City will tear out the old trail and put in a new one.

Carpenter noted that the timeline for the CDBG grant is that applications were submitted last week, with award notification expected by the end of May. If awarded, work would typically begin in October. Carpenter explained that earning more points for the grant requires funding part of the project, which is why the City included \$50,000 from the Park Fund and a \$10,000 in-kind match.

Carpenter stated that the City is looking at nearly \$900,000 in grant funding across 2025, 2026, and 2027. He noted that his goal when he became director was to reach \$1,000,000 in grant funding, and he is now only \$200,000 away. His new goal is \$2,000,000.

Gulbrandson noted that the City is also using SHIP grants this year for the fountain replacement in the new Warming House, which includes bottle fillers for the new ice rink at approximately \$3,000 to \$4,000.

Carpenter stated that the City is discovering that writing more grants earns more points, and he will continue applying for funding. He noted that City Administrator Thunstrom has asked him to look at another grant for Highway 47.

Wedan asked if anyone from the county would come out to see what the City has done and how it was done. Carpenter stated that the City is audited on everything. Gulbrandson noted that the county loves everything the City has done. Carpenter explained that the DNR comes out to review the Emerald Ash program and the DNR outdoor recreation grant that Thunstrom received for Siwek Park. He noted that the DNR requires prevailing wage and Build America, Buy America (BABA)

compliance, which makes it difficult to find American products. However, he stated that the prevailing wage jobs are good for workers.

Wedan asked about the pond runoff area at Siwek Park and why it was not dug deeper to be an actual pond. Carpenter stated that he does not believe the west side of Siwek is a stormwater basin and that the basin is on the other side. He noted that sometimes things do not make sense and that he has been correcting issues since he became director. He stated that he will look into it and that Gulbrandson can check the plans to determine if it is a basin or a wetland. Carpenter explained that if it is a wetland, the City cannot touch it, but if it is a basin, the City can work with it.

Anderson noted that wetlands sometimes pop up and have to be worked around. Carpenter agreed that the City works around wetlands.

Zutz asked if the City is 100% certain that the playground area and parking at Community Park are outside the Highway 47 easement. Carpenter confirmed that the playground is far out of the way and that the parking lot for the Warming House is where it gets close to the easement. He stated that the City will not put a new road down and then tear it up to put a line underneath it.

Zutz asked if the Dellwood River Park trail has to be asphalt and whether a crushed gravel trail would work for maintenance. Carpenter explained that some of the trail has to be ADA accessible, which is why the trail beginning at the road has ADA bumps. He noted that the city is putting a mulch trail through Dellwood and that if the surface were changed to impervious or gravel, there would be complaints from bikers and rollerbladers. Carpenter stated that the Rum River County Park Trail ends about 200 feet away from where Dellwood picks up and that he is committed to connecting trails throughout the community rather than having trails to nowhere.

Zutz asked about ballards at Dellwood. Carpenter stated that he talked to the guys about it, but they use full-size equipment down there and said it would not work. He noted that Public Works uses trail cams to monitor the area and that he will continue to work on the issue.

7. MEMBER REPORTS

A. Winter Activities

Zutz asked if there are other winter activities the City could provide besides ice skating. He suggested utilizing the golf course for cross-country skiing or snowshoeing. He noted that the closest place to cross-country ski is Rum River

North, which is equally used by walkers. He mentioned that Bunker Hill is a better option and asked if there could be cooperation with the county for grooming ski trails.

Carpenter stated that he has been working on an idea for Seelye Brook Park, which has amazing sledding but is owned by Oak Grove. He explained that the City has a running agreement with Oak Grove to maintain the parking lot and trails. Carpenter stated that he wants the sledding hill lit and has been told he cannot do it. However, when the lights went out on the rink, he decided to get a portable light instead of fixing them. He found an amazing light that worked great for the last month and plans to buy a used portable light for approximately \$6,000 to light the sledding hill next year.

Zutz asked if the City could reach an agreement with the golf course to allow snowshoeing on the course. Carpenter noted that the City has recently been clearing storm ponds on the golf course using a mulcher and has generated a new relationship with the golf course operator. He stated that he will have Nate talk to the golf course operator about allowing snowshoeing and will have an answer at the next meeting.

Zutz asked if there could be a cooperative effort with the county for grooming cross-country trails. Carpenter stated that he volunteered for the Anoka County Park system planning through 2050 and is forming relationships with county park directors. He noted that it takes time to get connected, but that he is looking at getting deeper into the relationship.

Carpenter stated that the public works guys would be fighting over grooming trails and that the challenge is getting it started. He suggested starting with the golf course and clearly marking the greens so nobody goes on them, with the course following the perimeter of the golfing holes.

Anderson noted that the golf course is sometimes looking to expand and that the school rents the golf course. She suggested that adding cross-country skiing could give kids another option and that the school used to have skiing as a course.

B. May Meeting Date

Zutz requested to set the May meeting date because he will be leaving for the month on May 8th. He suggested May 3rd or May 7th. Carpenter stated that Public Works can make May 7th work. Wedan noted that she may be in Florida but could

join virtually. Anderson confirmed that May 7th at 7:00 p.m. works for the Commission.

8. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION BY: WEDAN SECOND: SHIFFER TO ADJOURN THE PARKS COMMISSION MEETING.

Ayes: Anderson, Zutz, Shiffer, and Wedan
Nays: None

Chairwoman Anderson adjourned the meeting at 8:00 pm.

Jennifer Wida, City Clerk