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**CITY OF ARDEN HILLS  
PARKS, TRAILS AND RECREATION COMMITTEE MEETING  
TUESDAY, JANUARY 20, 2026, 6:30 PM  
ARDEN HILLS CITY HALL**

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**CALL MEETING TO ORDER**

Committee Chair SJ Julius called the January 20, 2026, meeting of the Parks, Trails, and Recreation Committee to order at 6:34 p.m.

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** SJ Julius, Kate Olson, Derek Hilding, Lacy Loosbrock and Liz Johnson

**OTHERS PRESENT:** Parks and Recreation Manager Jess Skalicky

**ABSENT:** Committee Members Dan Dietz, Nikhath Nazir Ahmed, Ted Chresand, and Council Liaison Emily Rousseau

**1. APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

**MOTION:** Committee Member Johnson moved and Committee Member Hilding seconded a motion to approve the agenda, as amended. The motion carried unanimously among members present.

**Chair Julius** made note of amendments to the agenda. The Council Liaison Update will be removed and she noted there is a typo on the agenda and the next meeting will be held on Tuesday, February 17, 2026.

**2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

**A. December 19, 2025 PTRC Minutes**

**MOTION:** Committee Member Olson moved and Committee Member Johnson seconded a motion to approve the meeting minutes, as written. The motion carried unanimously among members present.

Committee Members noted misspelling errors of Committee Member Rogers' and Committee Member Chresand's names.

**3. REPORT**

**A. Council Liaison Update**

None.

## **B. Parks and Recreation Report**

**Parks and Recreation Manager Skalicky** said she has received some comments for the 2027 parks improvements at Perry, Sampson and Ingerson Parks. If anyone has any additional comments, she asked that they be emailed to her. The scope of the work for the improvements at those three parks will be brought to City Council in February or March.

**Committee Member Olson** asked if a list could be provided so Committee Members aren't sending redundant ideas.

**Parks and Recreation Manager Skalicky** said she doesn't mind sorting through redundant ideas. She wants to make sure all ideas are represented in what she presents to City Council. There is no guarantee that all of the ideas will be approved, but she will ensure they are on the list.

**Parks and Recreation Manager Skalicky** said the Park System Plan is coming along. The final steering committee meeting is coming up. She is excited to start implementing it.

## **C. Trails and Parks Projects Update**

**Parks and Recreation Manager Skalicky** provided the memo from Assistant Public Works Director Miller. The items in bold are new this month. Council directed Staff to include a hard court at Arden Manor Park as part of the 2026 PMP. They would like to see it as an alternate bid item in the 2026 PMP. This means the contractor will bid the full scope of the work that needs to be done and if the results of the bid are not favorable, this item can be removed from the PMP. Staff thinks it could be cost effective for the contractor and the City. When asked what happens if the bids come back and are not favorable, Assistant Director Miller said that is unlikely to happen. However, if it did, this item would be put out for a bid as a separate project. That is true of the Arden Manor Park hard court, as well as, the access trail at Arden Oaks.

**Parks and Recreation Manager Skalicky** said that the parks project for Ingerson, Perry and Sampson could have a cul-de-sac from Fernwood Court to the bottom of the hill at Ingerson.

### **4. UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

None.

### **5. NEW BUSINESS**

#### **A. 2026 PTRC Work Plan Discussion**

**Parks and Recreation Manager Skalicky** said she created a list to begin the conversation. As the Staff Liaison for the group, she is just providing suggestions and the Committee Members should consider and discuss feasible items that this group can support. The work plan can help schedule what is on the schedule throughout the year. In her mind there are two elements to this process. First is identifying core elements that need to be addressed every year. Second is special projects that the PTRC decides they would like to take on. She outlined examples of what was on previous work plans. She said it's important to create specific and measurable goals. Don't just say "manage

invasive species”. What do we want to do? How will we do it? How much? Where? Her suggestion is to decide on 1-5 yearly projects.

**Parks and Recreation Manager Skalicky** provided a template of what the 2026 annual calendar for the work plan could look like. Committee Members can chose any format they like and this is just an example.

**Chair Julius** said we can just do the core elements and we have satisfied our responsibility as Committee Members. We don’t have to stop there. We can sign up for projects that we can hold ourselves accountable for. She opened the floor for conversation. The goal is to get a great working draft out of this meeting that can be finalized in February.

**Parks and Recreation Manager Skalicky** said once it’s approved by the City Council, she will provide it to Public Works to include it in the Parks Maintenance Plan, for the year.

**Committee Member Olson** wanted clarification that it is not too late, at this point. They were told previously that this needed to be approved by October to be included.

**Parks and Recreation Manager Skalicky** said it is not too late.

**Committee Member Johnson** said the Trails Committee has been learning about the trails that are planned for construction through 2030. She knows there are plans to develop a lot of trails in the coming years and she wants to make sure PTRC has input on those. She thinks it’s important to have a committee and a line item committed to that. We should be working with Ramsey County and the neighboring cities. She said we also have some volunteer coordinators with the Lion’s Club and Rotary. She thinks that partnership is very important for the work the PTRC is doing and that needs to continue to be prioritized.

**Parks and Recreation Manager Skalicky** said as Staff and Council are informed of new trails, she will bring it to the PTRC. She asked what the trails group would be doing in addition to giving their feedback.

**Committee Member Johnson** had an example. She said if the Hamline Trail could connect to Crepeau, that would mean that bikes could go from Hamline, up to County Road E, through the existing Bethel system. There is currently no plan to connect those areas. She said it is necessary for someone to illuminate the opportunity. She provided a handout how it could work. We will miss these kinds of opportunities, if we don’t get ahead of them. The Trails team will be looking at future projects and identify how they may be improved.

**Parks and Recreation Manager Skalicky** asked what project would be included in the work plan.

**Committee Member Johnson** said the Trails team would want to be one step ahead of development so we can inform all entities of certain connections that would benefit the greater good.

**Chair Julius** said it sounds like this is a trails advocacy group. We want to know how we can use this platform to advocate for the trails.

**Committee Member Johnson** confirmed. She said there are a lot of different entities including the County and surrounding cities. If we can get our thoughts in, at the front end of design, before anything is decided they may consider our ideas.

**Park and Recreation Manager Skalicky** said the end goal of her questions is to know how PTRC will identify this, along with knowing the steps we can take, in the Work Plan. She agrees that being ahead of the game can help incorporate these ideas into something real.

**Committee Member Johnson** noted that knowing the Public Works schedules for maintenance will be effective in helping us make sure our trails are connected. If we are ahead of the game knowing what sections of trail need to be connected, we can help inform that process.

**Committee Member Loosbrock** said if this trail is happening this year, we may want to put that Hamline trail in there, to see if it's feasible.

**Committee Member Johnson** said she believes it is Bethel property. We would need to know how to connect with someone at Bethel to discuss creating this trail connection.

**Committee Member Hilding** thinks we could have an item that supports people volunteering to do garbage pickup for a couple hours on a weekend. That could be a special project. It wouldn't be an ongoing commitment, but we can meet once a year at a certain park and make a little bit of a difference. He thinks the core elements are all similar. He asked if the new Recreation Annual Report will create a lot of work for the Recreation staff. He is hesitant to add a new task, without thinking through what additional work it will create for Staff.

**Parks and Recreation Manager Skalicky** said it may create more work, but it is a basic, best practice task that a Recreation Department should be doing. It will be done, whether or not it's on the PTRC Work Plan.

**Committee Member Hilding** thinks the parks tour is a good idea.

**Committee Member Olson** said the parks tour is usually done in July. She thinks it's helpful because we usually visit the parks that are scheduled for improvements the following year. She would like to see it be a parks and trails tour. If we're at a park that has a trail connection, we should take a walk down the trail. We could make note of connections. During the tour we can think about how residents use the trails to get to the parks. She said another item that has been a desire for a while is an Earth Day Event. The first year can be inviting people to pick up trash. It is hard to plan because Earth Day is in April and we often still have snow.

**Committee Member Johnson** said she signed up to be a Lions Club volunteer. She will be the connection between the Lions and Arden Hills. The Lions hosts an amazing annual community picnic. She said Rotary has done amazing things at Floral Park, however there aren't any Arden Hills residents in the Rotary. She doesn't think she has the time to be a part of both. She would love to figure out a way to have Arden Hills represented with the Rotary. Both of these organizations do a lot of great work here and she wants to make sure they both feel the appreciation.

**Chair Julius** said we can invite the Lions Club and Rotary to PTRC meetings to explain what they do and advocate for themselves. That's an easy goal and it would inform us on their projects and could inform future work plans. It will help put faces to names and improve the partnerships.

**Committee Member Olson** said she was invited to a Rotary meeting a while ago so she could hear what they are doing and could discuss the best way to partner. That meeting led to Adopt-A-Park.

**Chair Julius** summarized she has heard trails advocacy can be fleshed out a little more. She heard a desire to solidify our partnerships with Lions Club and Rotary. She also heard a community event for trash cleanup in the parks.

**Committee Member Olson** said one of her goals is always a community event. The 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebration may fulfill that community building aspect. In the past we have talked about smaller, easier things that can build up some free community events. She understands that it falls on us. It feels like too much for our committee to do.

**Committee Member Johnson** said she is very passionate about The Luminary on Lake Johanna. This year it will be on February 14. She said anyone who wants to help should speak to her.

**Committee Member Loosbrock** asked if the City advertises it.

**Committee Member Johnson** said there is no City involvement.

**Committee Member Loosbrock** asked if there could be.

**Parks and Recreation Manager Skalicky** said she has brought it up.

**Committee Member Olson** thinks that would be an easy and fun event that the City could become involved in.

**Chair Julius** said if anyone has other ideas, email them to Parks and Recreation Manager Skalicky. She can draft something for the Committee Members to review at the next meeting.

## **B. PTRC Agenda Template Discussion**

**Parks and Recreation Manager Skalicky** said Unfinished Business will remain as a place holder. The committees list should be updated to include only the active committees and anything that has been completed can be removed. Assistant Director Miller always provides an overview on trails that she shares in the agenda packet. She thinks it would be good to make time for a more thorough update about trails from the surrounding communities so Staff can compile it and provide the information to the PTRC. Then PTRC can provide feedback. She thinks that would still fall under the Trails group update. She asked if there any of the Work Groups that have finished their work and can be removed.

**Committee Member Johnson** said the rain gardens group can be removed from the list.

**Parks and Recreation Manager Skalicky** asked if Work Groups should be removed from the agenda if we know there is no update for that agenda item.

**Committee Member Johnson** said anyone who has a work group update should let Staff know at least 24 hours in advance of the meeting.

**Committee Member Hilding** asked if there is an active Natural Habitat group right now. A Former Committee Member used to facilitate that work group.

**Committee Member Olson** said she thinks Committee Member Dietz will continue that work.

**Committee Member Johnson** said with Great River Greening doing so much good work we should have a Natural Habitat Restoration group update. We need to know what they are doing.

**Committee Member Olson** said the Special Event Enrichment group was just her and one other Committee Member whose term has ended. Committee Member Olson said she won't be serving the full year. She is staying on the PTRC until the Park System Plan is completed. Unless anyone wants to take that one on, it should probably be removed.

**Committee Member Johnson** said we need to support what the City is doing 100%. If the City doesn't have the resources to support what we are doing, we need to take that on ourselves.

**Committee Member Olson** said the original intent when the group was created was to start with the events we already have and help enhance them. Someone needs to be looking for opportunities that are free.

**Chair Julius** thinks the committees should tie back to the work plan. She would hesitate to have any item on the list that doesn't have a work plan objective. We can remove anything without an objective. It can be added back later if an actionable work plan becomes clear.

**Parks and Recreation Manager Skalicky** sought clarification that even if a work group is active, does the PTRC want that item removed from the agenda if there is no update.

**Chair Julius** said she is fine either way as long as there is accountability towards whatever we signed up for. She can see summer projects dropping off the agenda during the winter months. She worries we may lose visibility to it if its not on there.

**Committee Member Olson** thinks active groups should stay on the agenda, and the members and simply say "no update".

**Chair Julius** asked if there are any on the list that should be removed.

Discussion ensued about the individual groups. Rain gardens will be removed. The rest of them should remain. If there are no updates over the next couple of meetings, they can be removed at that time. Further discussion ensued regarding the makeup of the 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Committee and the Parks Master Plan steering committee.

### **C. PTRC Charter Discussion**

**Park and Recreation Manager Skalicky** said Council Liaison Rousseau wanted PTRC to look at the charter and see if there are any updates we want to make. This may not be resolved today, and it may be good to have Council Liaison Rousseau here for the conversation. She said the amount of people on the PTRC is more than other cities have on a committee like this. She asked if everyone thinks the maximum is too high. Currently we are allowed 12 members and up to two

youth members, so it could be a total of 14. She has learned that the Charter was changed to add members as residents came forward, wanting to join. She shared a graphic showing the number of members in surrounding cities.

**Committee Member Hilding** said if we want to change anything, we need to make a recommendation to City Council and they will approve or deny. He thinks seven is a reasonable amount, however he doesn't see a down side of having more. He does think fourteen is a lot of people.

**Committee Member Olson** said in the past, the committee has relied on us to do things. She wonders what the other cities in the examples Park and Rec Staff numbers are. If our PTRC is bigger, someone may be passionate about something, they may want to step up and help with Staff's work load. She said if the right people on the committee take some big steps into actionable items, fourteen is fine.

**Chair Julius** asked if having a large committee obligates us to interview and appoint people.

**Parks and Recreation Manager Skalicky** said we have an obligation to interview but not to appoint them.

**Chair Julius** said having a committee so large may create an administrative burden. It is better to set a size that we want to stay at. Then we run the risk of turning away passionate residents who may want to be involved, but we can let them. She thinks having an odd number makes sense, from a quorum perspective.

**Committee Member Hilding** said the first part of the agenda materials outlines that the PTRC is established to review and evaluate the programs. What value do we add? We might want to fine tune the purpose.

**Chair Julius** said people who sign up for this committee are going to tend to want to be involved in more than just reviewing and evaluating the programs. This committee seems to have more action-oriented volunteers. We have to stay in our lane, too. How can we be passionate and also work with the City in a way that is helpful? She asked if anyone had any other thoughts.

**Committee Member Johnson** thought committee members should take some time to consider this and it can be an agenda item at February's meeting.

**Committee Member Hilding** agreed that an odd number is preferable.

Discussion ensued regarding assigning work to volunteers, committees, and commissions. As it is written in the charter, there is no expectation for people to do work. The charter states the commission is to review and evaluate.

#### **D. Adopt-A-Park Draft Presentation**

**Parks and Recreation Manager Skalicky** said the City wants to formalize the process for adopting a park. The city currently has a large group of volunteers from the Rotary who have adopted Floral Park, and the city has a long history of volunteers working in parks and adopting them. She shared the draft brochure for the Adopt A Park program. It covers parks, trails, gardens

and natural areas. She Adopt A Park programs in other cities are simple: groups are asked to commit to picking up trash from a certain park four times a year, for about one hour per visit. There is a Premier Partner option. This would be partnerships like the work we see the Rotary doing at Floral Park. It is meant to be a little more open ended and the work Premier Partners do is above and beyond what most Adopt-A-Park programs consist of. She said the standard Parks and Trails option asks participants to commit to 4-6 visits per year. Gardening and Landscaping asks for a commitment of 2-4 visits per month. Natural Areas asks for a commitment of 2-4 visits per month. She said we will also incorporate other options like Adopt-A-Bench and other smaller things people can do if they can't commit a lot of their time. She is asking PTRC to review the draft and asked if they have any suggestions.

**Committee Member Olson** asked about the standard option. She asked if they will be recognized with a sign.

**Parks and Recreation Manager Skalicky** said yes but after they fulfill a one-year commitment.

**Committee Member Olson** said that may be an important piece for some companies.

**Parks and Recreation Manager Skalicky** said creating signs is relatively inexpensive.

**Committee Member Hilding** asked who the target demographic is. Is it families? Is it companies? Is it civic organizations?

**Parks and Recreation Manager Skalicky** said it is all of those. She knows the Army approached us to find out what the Adopt-A-Park could look like. She also received an inquiry from Domino's asking for volunteer opportunities.

**Committee Member Johnson** said the Army is a great partner. She asked if we have a contact to connect with about this.

**Parks and Recreation Manager Skalicky** said she will see if she can get a direct contact regarding this.

**Committee Member Olson** asked if the final brochures will be delivered to businesses.

**Parks and Recreation Manager Skalicky** said no. We aren't recruiting. We are making it available for residents and businesses who are searching for this type of opportunity.

**Committee Member Johnson** said our local businesses love to give back to their community.

Discussion ensued that staff doesn't have the time to recruit and Staff is unsure if PTRC would be tasked with that effort. PTRC is being asked to review the draft documents and provide feedback on formalizing the process; staff are not recruiting at this point in the process.

**Committee Member Olson** noted there is a photo of a garden and it is unclear what it supposed to be. She thought adding some color into the photo would make it easier to see that it's a garden.

**Committee Member Loosbrock** asked how much crossover maintenance Public Works does. If they're mowing, they may pick up trash that is in the way but they aren't necessarily out there

specifically to pickup trash. Is there list of tasks that they don't do, that would then fall to the participants of this program?

**Parks and Recreation Manager Skalicky** said there is a plan for each park and part of that plan sometimes is minimum maintenance. All of Arden Hills park spaces have a maintenance plan. They may be doing some of the things, including making time for minimum maintenance. If a group wanted to come in and do something new, upon approval, that group would have to maintain whatever task they presented. If that same group decides to discontinue maintenance, the City will not be responsible for maintaining that. Typically, a group that adopts a park would take over some of that minimum maintenance and possibly enhance it by doing a little bit more.

**Chair Julius** said she likes the draft document definitions. She suggested segmenting the content into categories to make everything more readable. She thought outlining a “commitment level” with options from low, medium to high commitment. Separating it by commitment level may be helpful when applicants are deciding what they want to commit to. It might also be helpful to list the parks and the key responsibilities needed at each park. Maybe there's a map of parks and the adopters can be shown on the map.

**Parks and Recreation Manager Skalicky** said this program is not intended to create any additional work for Parks and Recreation Staff. It is not intended to remove anything from the Public Works Maintenance Plan. It is not intended for PTRC to take charge, either. It's meant to engage individuals, groups or businesses who want to do something above and beyond what is currently in place.

**Committee Member Johnson** said when she worked on rain gardens, the City gave people opportunity to do amazing things with the rain gardens. The ownership was on the homeowner. If they decided to stop maintaining it, that rain garden received no further attention. She said the work being done at Floral Park is amazing. The park looks gorgeous. If those volunteers stop doing that, it would be horrific. Residents are used to going through that park and seeing that beauty. We have to have contingency plans. How do we do that? If that group stopped the work in Floral Park tomorrow, what do we do?

**Parks and Recreation Manager Skalicky** said due to staffing levels at the City, we would not be taking on those additional projects.

**Committee Member Johnson** said the next step would be recruitment. Hopefully the groups will want to sign up for 5 years. Her other comment is she believes Boston Scientific paid for the picnic shelter at Cummings Park. She said adding an option for larger entities to donate money towards larger features like that may be helpful.

**Parks and Recreation Manager Skalicky** said the City is aiming to raise a lot of sponsorships for the 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. Monetary donations for parks assets would probably fall under the sponsorship program. She summarized that she heard PTRC say add a list of parks and identify different commitment levels.

**Committee Member Johnson** thought we could request an exit plan.

**Parks and Recreation Manager Skalicky** said that is a good idea for the groups that are doing big projects.

**Chair Julius** said in thinking about the work groups, does Adopt-A-Park fit with the Volunteer Coordinating Work Group. Maybe PTRC is the continuity to be alerted if someone is removing themselves from the program and we can decide how to react to that. She thinks the brochure should be as user friendly as possible. She thinks the draft is a great start but isn't sure if participants can learn what they are signing up for, just by reading what is here. She thought it might be easier to list three tasks a participant must do if they sign up for a certain level. That will help PTRC see that the minimum is being done. Most groups will go above and beyond.

**Committee Member Loosbrock** agrees it needs to outline the bare minimum. Also, the ongoing big projects being sustained by larger groups. We can direct volunteers toward the larger projects. The other parks should have the bare minimum outlined and if there are things the PTRC want to do, those participants can help us complete them.

## 6. REPORTS FROM COMMITTEES

### A. Rain Gardens Work Group Updates

None. This work group has completed its work and will be removed from future agendas.

### B. Natural Habitat Restoration Work Group Update

None.

### C. Special Event Enrichment Work Group Update

None.

### D. Volunteer Coordinating Work Group Update

None.

### E. Trails Work Group Update

**Committee Member Johnson** said this group has met a couple of times. They are working on educating themselves about the Lake Johanna Boulevard Trail project, Rice Creek Commons and the Crepeau Park. They are trying to learn what is coming up and decide how we can advocate for our city to have connecting trails. If we have a contact at Bethel, it would be helpful to know for the Crepeau connection.

## 6. NEXT MEETING

### A. Tuesday, February 17, 2026

## ADJOURNMENT

**Chair Julius adjourned at 7:56 pm.**