

**MINUTES
PARKS & TRAILS COMMISSION MEETING**

March 10, 2026

MEMBERS' PRESENT: Vicky Beckman, Kristine Bommersbach, Mike Cronin, Debra Faver, Tim Faver

MEMBER(S) ABSENT: Tom Anderson

COUNCIL and BOARD REPRESENTATIVE: Emilie Rivera

CITY STAFF & OTHERS: Scott Schroeder

CALL TO ORDER: Bommersbach called the meeting to order at 4:30 PM

AMENDMENTS TO March 10, 2026 AGENDA: None

A motion was made by Beckman and seconded by Cronin to approve the March 10, 2026 agenda. The motion was passed.

APPROVAL OF February 10, 2026 MEETING MINUTES:

A motion was made by T. Faver and seconded by Beckman to approve the February 10, 2026 meeting minutes. The motion was passed.

PUBLIC COMMENT: None

REVIEW OF PARKS AND TRAILS BYLAWS:

The commission discussed clarifying language around applicant review and mayoral consultation in the bylaws to improve transparency and communication.

After much discussion, the commission agreed to keep the revised language as written in the bylaws.

The updated bylaws will be approved at the April meeting.

CIP DISCUSSION:

The commission engaged in a detailed discussion about prioritizing maintenance and capital projects given limited funding and competing needs.

Schroeder indicated the focus should be on safety. Essential maintenance emerged as the top priority for the CIP, especially for parks infrastructure and equipment. Examples include replacing outdated snow removal equipment essential for winter trail and sidewalk maintenance.

Balancing improvements and maintenance funding is critical due to historically low budget allocations for preventative maintenance.

Commissioners discussed establishing a dedicated maintenance budget line alongside capital projects to extend asset life and improve safety.

Rivera mentioned collaborating with the Sustainability Commission to apply for grant opportunities and ask for community input, which could influence funding priorities. She said it would be helpful to have photos of different parks with tennis, pickleball, skate courts. When asking for community input, frame it in a way so people understand what it takes to commit to maintaining the parks, courts and equipment they enjoy using.

Rivera also indicated the budget dollars come from liquor sales. She is on the budget committee and will bring up maintenance plans and sufficient funding to maintain the parks.

The Parks and Trails' current snow removal machine is winter-only and in poor condition; replacement equipment will be year-round and cost approximately \$80,000.

Schroeder will provide photos and more data to facilitate informed discussion and recommendations for the April meeting.

OTHER PARKS AND TRAILS UPDATES:

Lake Boulevard Trail:

Shroeder indicated the trail will be cleaned up late spring to allow passage. Dead trees will be cut down and left onsite to comply with DNR rules. No dead trees will be removed along Lake Boulevard. The DNR has restrictions on what can be maintained. Schroeder will request the ordinance from the planning and zoning department.

Flooded Trails:

Rivera brought up the Norton Avenue trail, as well as other trails that collect water on the trails, requesting they be maintained or graded to eliminate the flooding.

Spring Bike Ride Safety Initiative:

Bommersbach is planning a bike ride event in May to identify and raise awareness of biking safety issues across the city and county.

The goal is focusing on safety observation, aiming to highlight hazardous intersections and trail gaps.

The routes under consideration include loops around Paul Bunyan Park, Irving Avenue and 15th Street corridors.

The ride will help gather input to improve infrastructure and traffic controls, especially at high-risk crossings like Bemidji Avenue.

Nymore Dog Park:

Beckman will coordinate planning and fundraising efforts for the dog park, including securing bids and preparing applications for grants such as the Outdoor Recreation Grant.

RECREATION UPDATES:

The city and Bemidji State University (BSU) are launching a pilot partnership to operate the boathouse building (located in Diamond Point Park) for outdoor equipment rentals and leadership development.

Anna Carlson and Jerry Smith, BSU Environmental Studies and Geography, attended the meeting to discuss BSU running the boathouse Friday through Sunday, 11 AM to 6 PM, from Memorial Day to Labor Day with 3-4 student staff members managing rentals. BSU's boathouse staff will serve as an internship to earn an outdoor leadership certificate. The students will learn outdoor skills and wilderness first aid.

BSU will staff and supervise, using city watercraft equipment for rentals and activities.

The city retains building maintenance and utility responsibilities, supporting the partnership.

The pilot aims to extend BSU's campus outdoor leadership hub into a community-facing summer rental operation.

The Outdoor Leadership Certificate program offers a 16-credit academic certificate focused on wilderness first aid, indigenous environmental perspectives, and outdoor skills,

Future plans include offering community programs like introduction to sailing and kayaking classes, depending on staff availability.

Financial and lease terms include no monetary rent but a revenue-sharing model where the city recoups approximately 30% of rental income, roughly covering city staff costs for operating the facility.

The lease agreement is under legal review by the city and BSU and is expected to be presented to the commission at the April meeting.

Fees will apply to all users including students.

Signage will clarify that kayaks, paddle boats, fishing rods and other watercraft will be at the boathouse location, separate from bike rentals at the tourist information center.

The partnership revives a historic relationship and responds to prior staffing and budget cuts that ended city-run boathouse operations.

Schroeder indicated he is excited to reignite the center and partnership with BSU.

Rivera pointed out that this agreement would remove the ability to rent out the building.

COMMISSIONER UPDATES:

Cronin reported he is on the Loop the Lake Steering Committee and continues to work on emergency action plans and maintenance issues.

ADJOURNMENT:

A motion was made by D. Faver and seconded by Cronin to adjourn the meeting. The motion was passed. The meeting adjourned at 5:55 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Debra Faver
Commission Secretary