

**MINUTES  
PARKS & TRAILS COMMISSION MEETING**

**April 14, 2026**

**MEMBERS' PRESENT:** Tom Anderson, Vicky Beckman, Kristine Bommersbach, Debra Faver, Tim Faver

**MEMBER(S) ABSENT:** Mike Cronin

**COUNCIL and BOARD REPRESENTATIVE:** Emelie Rivera

**CITY STAFF & OTHERS:** Scott Schroeder

**CALL TO ORDER:** Bommersbach called the meeting to order at 4:58 PM

**APPROVAL of April 14, 2026 AGENDA:** None

A motion was made by T. Faver and seconded by Beckman to approve the April 14, 2026, agenda. The motion passed.

**AMMENDMENTS and APPROVAL of March 10, 2026 MEETING MINUTES:**

Rivera requested a change of her name spelling from Emilie to Emelie. Beckman noted an error on Page 4, replacing Nymore Dog Park with North Country Park.

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

**PUBLIC COMMENT:** None.

**AGENDA ITEMS:**

Parks and Trails Commission Vacancy:

Two applicants are currently under consideration with the posting open through April 30th.

The city council is likely to give its final approval in May or June, but because of summer recess, the appointment will begin in September.

The chair, director and commission members will review applicants before council consideration, following bylaws.

Review of Parks and Trails Bylaws:

The commission confirmed the Parks and Trails bylaws with no corrections, setting a precedent for reviewing them every three years to maintain transparency and relevance. D. Faver made a motion to approve the bylaws as written. Anderson seconded the motion. The motion passed.

Schroeder will forward the approved Parks and Trails Bylaws to the city clerk for submission to the city council for ratification.

#### BSU Outdoor Programming Agreement:

A finalized agreement with Bemidji State University (BSU) was reviewed to enable summer outdoor programming and equipment rentals, starting Memorial Day weekend. Schroeder requested the commission to make a recommendation to the city council for approval. T. Faver made a motion to forward to the city council for approval. Beckman seconded the motion. The motion passed.

#### Summary:

- BSU will operate at the city facility rent-free, sharing 30% of rental revenue to the city from watercraft rentals.
- Programming will run primarily on Friday, Saturday, Sunday, and holidays from 11 AM to 7 PM.
- The partnership aims to revive previously high activity levels and broaden public access to outdoor equipment.
- BSU will maintain all equipment (city-owned and BSU-owned).
- The city and BSU jointly manage a mixed inventory, with clear revenue flow and operational roles.
- Schroeder said the space earned roughly \$1,500 in rental fees over two years but expects partnering with BSU will generate more revenue in a single season.
- The partnership is seen as a win-win, preserving public access and stimulating local outdoor recreation without city staffing costs.

#### Capital Improvement Plan (CIP):

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

The distinction between maintenance and capital expenditure was highlighted to provide greater clarity regarding the scope of forthcoming repairs and replacements. Many CIP items are long-delayed maintenance costs, such as replacing inoperable fountains and safety-related repairs. Due to lack of prior maintenance, some items now require replacement as capital expenditures. The accumulation of deferred maintenance has escalated costs, requiring strategic budget requests.

Budget Committee Integration and Transparency was discussed to improve council understanding of needs versus wants.

Clear communication of essential needs and aspirational projects helps council allocate resources effectively.

Schroeder stated that he is able to transfer all relevant information into a spreadsheet to enhance clarity. While certain items may not be addressed within the current budget

year, compiling a comprehensive list of needs will provide the city council with greater insight into outstanding requirements that have not yet been allocated funding.

Also, Schroeder discussed the cost savings in contracting some projects vs. repairing/maintaining in-house. One example is the railing along the sidewalk between the lake and Paul Bunyan Drive. If the city can repaint and repair this vs. contracting it out, there would be a significant savings and provide more funds to replace broken fountains, etc.

Schroeder asked Rivera when the levy was set and Rivera indicated in September. She also supported listing all repair and replacement items, so the council has a better idea of all needs. The commission recognized the importance of articulating justification for each budget item to aid approval.

Schroeder asked commission members to email their wish lists so that additional previously unidentified needs could be discussed at the next meeting.

Schroeder indicated that items not in the approved CIP require council approval prior to purchase or repair.

Balancing improvements and maintenance funding is critical due to historically low budget allocations for preventative maintenance. Emelie's role on the city budget committee is expected to influence deeper budget discussions and possible reprioritization.

Historically, the city tended to operate reactively, fixing issues after failure rather than funding ongoing upkeep. Commissioners discussed establishing a dedicated maintenance budget line alongside capital projects to extend asset life and improve safety.

## **OTHER PARKS AND TRAILS UPDATES:**

### Diamond Point Park Bridge:

T. Faver inquired whether volunteers could clean the area up around the bridge. Schroeder informed the commission that although the bridge and holding pond are in the park, this area is governed by the public works department, so volunteer cleanup could not occur. However, he did commit to informing the public works department of the need to dredge out the pond, so it continues to flow under the bridge.

### Storm Debris Clean-up:

Schroeder said he has been receiving concerns about prioritizing debris and damaged tree removal. He indicated the city is not avoiding cleanup, but it will be a very long time before everything has been removed.

Large volumes of debris remain citywide, with contractors scheduled for removal at high-risk locations.

Safety concerns drive the order of cleanup to reduce liability from potential falling trees in public spaces.

The city aims to balance visible cleanup with essential safety and environmental priorities.

#### Tree Replacement Programs:

Schroeder reported that First National Bank has raised money for residential tree replacement. They will donate the money to Nature's Edge and Hill's Nursery to give away sizeable trees. A first-come, first-serve tree registration will distribute approximately 60 sizable 10-gallon trees to property owners.

Schroeder is developing a plan to limit multiple tree allocations per property owner to ensure equitable distribution.

Rivera discussed the need for tree replacement in cemeteries in the city.

Hill's Nursery donated trees to Greenwood Cemetery, as well as another group donated trees to the Calvary Lutheran Cemetery.

The city is having a seedling giveaway event at the Sanford Center on May 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup>. There are 10,000 seedlings and the offer is up to 70 trees per address.

Grants and partnerships with DNR and local organizations continue to support reforestation goals. Schroeder will keep the commission updated as ongoing information is received.

#### Recreation Events:

Recreation Programming Updates remain limited due to staff transitions and unclear status of programs like Kids in Motion.

Registration tasks are increasingly handled by BSU and Boys and Girls Club partnerships, with some passive city involvement.

Story Time programming continues at Carnegie Library, soon transitioning to Four Pines Library under a Public Arts grant.

The commission requested the city manager to provide a detailed recreation update at the next meeting to clarify offerings and plans.

#### Volleyball Court Discussion:

Schroeder asked the commission if they had heard any requests from the public regarding the city developing sand volleyball courts. The volleyball court at the state

park is underutilized, and there are several private existing volleyball courts in nearby areas.

The commission recognized potential demand; however, considering significant maintenance costs and unpredictable usage trends, they deliberated prioritizing resource efficiency given various competing requirements.

Next Meeting:

Meeting location and scheduling adjustments were agreed to improve accessibility and onsite assessment of parks.

The next meeting is scheduled for May 12 at Diamond Point Park. Schroeder will communicate the exact location once it is defined.

Meeting time adjusted to 5:00 PM to accommodate participant schedules.

**COMMISSIONER UPDATES:**

Bommersbach stated she and Cronin met after the March meeting and created the bike route. A bike ride is being organized with Bike Minnesota and the Bemidji Parks and Trails Commission.

The event is scheduled for May 29, 2026, at 5:30 pm.

The ride will include safety vests.

A bike audit report is planned to identify safe routes and traffic challenges for bikers.

Promotion includes PSA announcements and school district communication platforms like Peach Jar. Flyers will be posted around the city to make awareness to the public.

Rivera mentioned applying for a permit may give the event more publicity, although it is not a requirement.

Bommersbach will work with Bike Minnesota and partners to finalize the community bike ride flyer and promotional messages.

**ADJOURNMENT:**

A motion was made by D. Faver and seconded by Anderson to adjourn the meeting. The motion passed. The meeting adjourned at 6:03 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Debra Faver  
Commission Secretary