

**PARK AND RECREATION COMMISSION  
CITY OF RAMSEY  
ANOKA COUNTY  
STATE OF MINNESOTA**

The Ramsey Park and Recreation Commission conducted a regular meeting on March 12, 2026, at the Ramsey Municipal Center, 7550 Sunwood Drive NW, Ramsey, Minnesota.

Commission Members Present:      Chair Megan Ealain  
   Commissioner Garth Anderson  
   Commissioner Todd Arts  
   Commissioner Shane Bennett

Commission Members Absent:      Vice Chair Nathan Barten  
   Commissioner Dean Olson

Also Present:                              Parks & Assistant Public Works Director Mark Riverblood  
   City Council Liason Eric Peters  
   Parks Lead Andy Blood

**1.      CALL TO ORDER**

Chair Ealain called the Park and Recreation Commission meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

**2.      CITIZEN INPUT**

None.

**3.      APPROVE AGENDA**

Motion by Commissioner Bennett, seconded by Commissioner Anderson, to approve the Park and Recreation Commission meeting agenda as presented.

Motion carried. Voting Yes: Chair Ealain; Commissioners Bennett, Anderson, and Arts. Voting No: None. Absent: Commissioner Barten and Olson.

**4.      APPROVE MINUTES**

**4.01:   Approve Park and Recreation Commission Meeting Minutes**

Motion by Commissioner Bennett, seconded by Commissioner Arts, to approve the following Park and Recreation Commission Regular Meeting Minutes:

- Park and Recreation Commission Meeting Minutes dated February 12, 2026

Motion carried. Voting Yes: Chair Ealain; Commissioners Bennett, Arts, and Anderson. Voting No: None. Absent: Commissioners Barten and Olson.

## **5. COMMISSION BUSINESS**

### **5.01: Playground Replacement Program 2026 – Riverdale Park**

Parks & Assistant Public Works Director Riverblood stated that each year the Commission takes on a playground replacement project, and most recently, they focused on Riverdale Park. He provided background information on the Playground Replacement Program and previously completed projects. He provided more information on Riverdale Park and the features within the park. He provided additional details on the RFPs that were issued, the responses that were received, and the playground choice and alternate that were selected by the Playground Selection Committee. He commented that staff is working on a DNR grant submittal to assist with the cost for poured-in-place surfacing. He explained that staff would submit the grant by March 31<sup>st</sup> and if successful, they would hear back by late spring or early summer and could move forward with the poured-in-place option. He noted that if the grant is not successful, they would review the funds available to determine if they would want to move forward with the option with more poured-in-place surfacing or the lesser cost option.

Parks Lead Andy Blood provided additional information on the benefits of poured-in-place surfacing, including less maintenance needs, less opportunity for weeds to grow, improved aesthetics, and increased accessibility.

Commissioner Bennett asked if there is an estimated lifespan for the poured-in-place material and how that would differ from other materials.

Parks Lead Andy Blood stated that there are two options for the poured-in-place material, noting that the 50/50 blend comes with a five-year warranty and the 100 percent blend comes with a seven-year warranty. He stated that there are treatment plans recommended by the manufacturer that would be done in-house every few years to keep everything in good condition. He stated that he has spoken with other cities that have used the material, and after seven years, with no maintenance, the material is still in good condition. He estimated a lifespan of 15 to 20 years from the material.

Commissioner Bennett recognized the cost savings that would be realized through the use of this project in terms of ongoing maintenance. He asked if there were any estimates of the staff time and costs that would be saved on an annual basis.

Parks Lead Andy Blood replied that he could complete that research.

Commissioner Bennett stated that he does like this material because of the ease of maintenance. He asked for clarification on the funding sources that would be used, which would be a split between the DNR grant and the parks fund. He referenced the mention of the Lawful Gambling

Fund and asked if that would be investigated as a potential funding source if the DNR grant is not secured.

Parks & Assistant Public Works Director Riverblood explained that the Lawful Gambling Fund is the funding source for the Playground Replacement Program and would be the source of the 50/50 grant match. He explained that if more than \$125,000 is given for one project from the Lawful Gambling Fund, that would mean that there would not be a playground replacement in the next year.

Commissioner Bennett commented that this is a great plan and he is excited to see how the project turns out. He recognized that this is a high-traffic park, and this would be a good example of how the material could be a benefit in that busy park.

Chair Ealain asked if there are any environmental concerns from the poured-in-place surfacing, noting the proximity to the river.

Parks Lead Andy Blood replied that he had asked the manufacturer about that, and there were no concerns. He explained that the material is porous and therefore the water should filter through rather than sheeting off.

Parks & Assistant Public Works Director Riverblood commented on the different organizations that recognize and approve this product. He was confident that there were no environmental concerns with the material. He provided additional explanation on the different blends, such as 50/50, noting that the blend includes 50 percent new material and 50 percent recycled material, whereas the 100 percent blend is virgin material and would have a slightly longer lifespan. He noted the additional sealing treatments that can be done to extend the lifespan of the material as well. He noted that staff would provide additional information on the cost savings in terms of maintenance activities.

Commissioner Arts asked about the lifespan of playground equipment.

Parks & Assistant Public Works Director Riverblood commented that vendors provide a lifespan of 15 years, whereas the City typically realizes 20 years before maintenance concerns start to come forward. He noted that the City has moved away from wood decks, as those do not tend to stand the test of time.

Commissioner Arts asked what was used at Central Park.

Parks Lead Andy Blood replied that artificial turf was used and that it has a similar cost. He noted that the turf was chosen for that park because of the tendency for children to use the park with cleats on.

Motion by Commissioner Bennett, seconded by Commissioner Arts, to affirm that Flagship Recreation's proposal to include poured-in-place surfacing is the preferred solution for the Riverdale Park playground replacement, and a recommendation on proceeding will occur later in 2026 when the available funding is known.

Motion carried. Voting Yes: Chair Ealain; Commissioners Bennett, Arts, and Anderson. Voting No: None. Absent: Commissioners Barten and Olson.

## **5.02: Community Center Revisioning and Public Participation Plan**

Parks & Assistant Public Works Director Riverblood stated that a community center has been discussed for decades, over which time the project has been placed in, and taken out of the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) in different years. He stated that the park building proposed for the Waterfront Play area would fulfill many of the services that would be provided by a community center, but also had a high cost. He stated that it made sense to step back and solicit input from the community on what it would desire from a community center/building, as well as the appetite for funding that type of improvement. He provided additional information on the proposed revisioning and public participation plan.

Commissioner Bennett agreed that this has long been discussed and recognized that there is a strong desire for a community partner, which can become increasingly challenging. He stated that over the last several years, there has been a lot of programmatic growth, both public and private. He recognized that many people envision a pool in a community center, but was unsure if that is the amenity people want most, noting the operational cost for that type of amenity. He stated that he likes the idea of the hybrid option in and around the park with the splashpad, as that space would be large enough to fit the needs of a traditional community center. He supported opening up this discussion with the community to find out the amenities they want and the level of funding they would feel comfortable supporting.

Parks & Assistant Public Works Director Riverblood recognized that the decision of a community center may be outside the purview of the Commission, but stated that the program elements would reflect what they could see within a parks building, and the Commission members do represent residents of the community, which is why this is before the Commission.

Commissioner Arts asked what would be received in return for the expenditure of \$50,000 to \$60,000.

Parks & Assistant Public Works Director Riverblood provided additional information on the scope that is specified within the proposal.

Commissioner Arts recognized that the cost will be an important element for any resident in the community. He noted that most residents would support a community center, but that decision would be based on the cost impact as well.

Parks & Assistant Public Works Director Riverblood noted that this process will help to identify the needs versus the wants, which can then help to guide the scope of the project and ultimate cost. He noted that there may not be a desire to replicate amenities that are already available in this community or a neighboring community.

Chair Ealain recognized that there will be a cost to this process, but it will help to guide them in the right direction.

Councilmember Peters asked if the Lawful Gambling Fund could be used towards the cost of this project, using the example of an indoor playground.

Parks & Assistant Public Works Director Riverblood explained that the fund obtains its funding from the sales of pull-tabs in the community, and the only stipulation is that the funds are spent on projects that benefit children. He confirmed that the fund could be used towards an indoor playground. He confirmed that they would also apply for any potential grant funds that could be used towards the project.

Commissioner Bennett asked if the City Council would be discussing this regardless of the recommendation from the Commission.

Parks & Assistant Public Works Director Riverblood confirmed that this item is on a work session agenda for the City Council.

Motion by Commissioner Bennett, seconded by Commissioner Anderson, to recommend that City Council proceed with a Community Center Revisioning and Public Participation Plan and process.

Motion carried. Voting Yes: Chair Ealain; Commissioners Bennett, Anderson, and Arts. Voting No: None. Absent: Commissioners Barten and Olson.

## **6. COMMISSION/STAFF INPUT**

Parks & Assistant Public Works Director Riverblood provided an overview of the winter outdoor skating season, noting that overall the trend continues to decrease.

Commissioner Bennett noted the increased attention on hockey from the Olympics and the high school hockey tournament. He hoped that would continue to grow youth programming and perhaps interest in outdoor skating.

Parks & Assistant Public Works Director Riverblood noted items that will come forward on the April agenda.

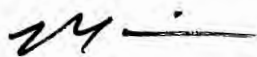
## **7. ADJOURNMENT**

Motion by Commissioner Bennett, seconded by Commissioner Arts, to adjourn the meeting.

Motion carried. Voting Yes: Chair Ealain; Commissioners Bennett, Arts, and Anderson. Voting No: None. Absent: Commissioners Barten and Olson.

The Park and Recreation Commission meeting adjourned at 7:21 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Mark Riverblood  
Parks & Assistant Public Works Director

Drafted by Amanda Staple  
*TimeSaver Off Site Secretarial, Inc.*