

**PARKS ADVISORY COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES**

JANUARY 26, 2026

1. CALL TO ORDER

Vice-Chair Creighton called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

3. ROLL CALL

Committee Members present: Scott Creighton, Kameron Hanson, Kim Noding, Lisa Odens, and Megan Weber. Committee Members absent: Doug Peterson, Jeff Webster. Also present: Streets, Parks, and Fleet Superintendent Norm Michels, Finance Director Deb Wegeleben, and Recreation and Communication Coordinator Corrie Scott.

5. OPEN FORUM

Vice-Chair Creighton opened the open forum at 6:01 p.m. No one came forward. Vice-Chair Creighton closed the open forum at 6:01 p.m.

4. ADOPT AGENDA

Committee Member Odens motioned to approve the agenda as presented. Seconded by Committee Member Noding, unanimous ayes, motion carried.

6. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Committee Member Hanson motioned to accept the November 17, 2025 Parks Advisory Committee minutes as presented. Seconded by Committee Member Weber, unanimous ayes, motion carried.

7. BUSINESS

7A. MITCHELL FARMS PARK SURVEY RESULTS

Scott reviewed that the Mitchell Farms Park survey was mailed along with the monthly water bill to City of Big Lake residents in late December and also published for the general public on Facebook

and the City's website. She reviewed the survey results from 259 individuals with 249 who confirmed they are Big Lake residents.

She stated that with the community's feedback collected, the PAC has an opportunity to make a formal recommendation to Council, requesting for further discussion and a timeline to replace playground equipment at Mitchell Farms Park.

Weber recommended combining the 'likely' and 'very likely' responses when presenting to City Council so that the scale is more straightforward for Council when they review it. Scott stated that she will look into the ability to combine responses on Survey Monkey. Noding stated that she prefers to remove the neutral option in the question about playground equipment. Scott stated that there potentially residents that don't feel strongly one way or the other regarding playground equipment being replaced and that is why a neutral option was included. Noding stated that she would like to know for sure whether an individual wants to equipment or doesn't. Odens interprets the neutral option as not supporting the replacement of playground equipment.

Noding stated that there were numerous people who commented and didn't realize that the City of Big Lake currently has pickleball courts at an existing park and asked if there is a way to promote the pickleball courts more. Scott stated that she is happy to post on social media about the pickleball courts when it gets closer to spring. Odens asked about including messages about pickleball in an upcoming water bill mailing and if that is a large cost. Scott stated that the City's quarterly newsletter has been changed in 2026 to a monthly one-page newsletter that is included in the water bills. She stated that if there is room, this is a great place to include updates on the park system or reminders about park amenities and rules. She stated that it is also posted on the City's website and Facebook and that there is no additional cost because it is already being printed and mailed out each month.

Weber asked if each unit in an apartment building receives a copy of the newsletter in the mail. Wegeleben stated that the water bills only go to the owner of the property and that individual units would not receive a mailed copy. Weber asked if there is a way to get a hard copy posted in the apartment lobbies in Big Lake. Scott stated that there is a copy posted on the City's website and Facebook and printed copies in the lobby at City Hall. Wegeleben stated that staff can request that the apartment complexes post the newsletter, but it is ultimately their choice. Weber stated that especially for the survey, it is a large portion of the City's population that isn't receiving the mailers. Scott stated that the survey results may seem low, but that it can be tough to get people to take a survey, and the results that came back were a decent number of respondents.

Odens recommended that copies of the survey or newsletter could be posted in local businesses on bulletin boards or at local events. Weber recommended having a question in the next survey regarding their type of residence so that we have an idea of who is receiving and taking the survey. Scott stated that the Parks Advisory Committee could assist with spreading the information by bringing print copies to local businesses and sharing the information on social media. She stated

that she plans to bring the upcoming survey and newsletters to the summer farmers market for area residents to take with them.

Hanson stated that the feedback that came in from the Mitchell Farms Park survey was what he had expected with the majority wanting the playground equipment replaced. He asked the PAC what they would like to recommend to City Council regarding amenity replacement. Creighton asked if a motion should be made. Michels stated that a formal motion to recommend that Council has a discussion regarding Mitchell Farms Park would be the first step. He stated that if Council recommends staff look into options for replacing park amenities at Mitchell Farms Park, then there would be further research on additional low cost options.

Creighton stated that Council was given a recommendation from the PAC and it was turned down and he is asking how this motion would be different. Michels clarified that because there is now community feedback through the Mitchell Farms Park survey results, it would warrant a new discussion. Noding stated that CEDA is also looking for grants, so it is important to have Council support on researching options for the park's amenities.

Odens asked if there is currently funding that could be used for Mitchell Farms Park that Council wanted to save as a buffer. Noding confirmed that there is some funding that can be used. Odens asked if there are separate types of funding for maintaining existing parks rather than new park creation. She stated that residents often choose a location when purchasing a home based on the existing parks in the area and she would rather see current parks be maintained rather than those amenities be removed and new parks being created. Wegeleben stated that full playground equipment replacement is not considered general maintenance and that capital funds are used for full playground equipment replacement. She stated that some general fund dollars are transferred to the capital fund and that park dedication funds can also be used for full playground replacement.

Noding asked if the funds that are typically used for full playground equipment was suffering. Wegeleben stated that those funds were being depleted and that staff and City Council are working to make those funding sources more sustainable. She stated that finding some grant funding would help to offset these costs as well. Noding asked if another survey can go out to residents regarding specific amenity options. Michels stated that Council will need to direct staff to look into specific options for amenities before another survey can go out or staff can research Mitchell Farms Park options any further. He stated that once Council makes a recommendation for staff to do further research a survey could go out with more specific amenity options such as a BMX track, basketball hoops, or different styles of playground equipment.

Weber asked if the City Council will see the Mitchell Farms Park survey results formally or if a motion needs to be made. Michels confirmed that a motion is needed for the survey results to be formally presented at a Council Workshop meeting. Hanson asked about the skate park. Michels stated that the skate park discussion is going to the City Council in March. Creighton asked if Mitchell Farms Park will be presented at the same meeting as the skate park. Michels stated that

he is unsure when there will be room on the upcoming City Council Workshop agendas, but that he will try to have it on the March agenda if possible. He stated that City Council is going from two meetings a month to one meeting a month in 2026, so if an item related to City Hall or the Wastewater Treatment Plant come up, that they take priority over Mitchell Farms Park.

Creighton asked if he can attend a City Council meeting to speak about Mitchell Farms Park. Michels stated that residents have an opportunity at every Council meeting to speak at Open Forum, but that Council will not answer questions at that time. Wegeleben stated that Council's focus at upcoming Workshops has been the Wastewater Treatment Plant. Odens asked if this is the first year that the Council meeting schedule has changed and if a special meeting can be called if needed to get caught up on Workshop items. Wegeleben confirmed that this is the first year for the meeting schedule change and that City Council can call a special meeting if needed.

Odens asked if the funding issue has been corrected or if there will continue to be funding concerns in the future. Wegeleben stated that they are looking to the future and are planning for future playground replacements, but that City Council has the ultimate control of funds and what they are spent on. She stated that if in the future the City Council could potentially vote against funding playground replacement, but staff is doing what they can to budget for upcoming playground replacement as needed.

Michels stated that March is the earliest that Mitchell Farms Park would go to City Council and it could take longer depending on other Workshop agenda items. Creighton asked if the skate park and Mitchell Farms Park playground would be funded through the same source. Noding stated that the concept plans for the skate park are necessary for the City to seek grant funding. She stated that CEDA is seeking grant funding for both, but that it isn't guaranteed. Michels stated that CEDA is also seeking grant funding for some of the work that will be done at Shores of Lake Mitchell, Lake Ridge, and Lakeside Park. Noding stated that it will be important to get updated concept plans for Mitchell Farms Park so that CEDA can seek grant funding. Noding stated that Council has two extremely large projects in 2026 including the Wastewater Treatment Plant and Public Safety Facility so that is what is taking priority at Council meetings.

Committee Member Weber motioned to recommend to Council, requesting for further discussion regarding Mitchell Farms Park survey results and a timeline to replace park amenities at Mitchell Farms Park. Seconded by Committee Member Creighton, unanimous ayes, motion carried.

7B. 2026 CHAIR AND VICE-CHAIR POSITIONS

Michels reviewed that in 2025, the Parks Advisory Committee Chair and Vice-Chair positions were held by Doug Peterson and Scott Creighton, respectively. He asked the Committee to: 1) discuss if they would like to either volunteer for one of the positions or nominate another Commissioner; and 2) make a motion to recommend appointments to the Parks Advisory Committee Chair and Vice-Chair positions for 2026.

Odens asked if anyone has heard from Chair Peterson on whether he would like to be the Chair again. Scott stated that she sent Peterson an email and that he hadn't said whether he would like to be the Chair again or not. She stated that he has been the Chair for quite a few years. Creighton stated that he would like to nominate Peterson as Chair. Hanson asked if Creighton would like to be the Vice-Chair again. Creighton stated that he would like to be the Vice-Chair. Odens asked if anyone else is interested in taking one of the roles. Weber stated that she is happy to take either role, but she is happy to keep it as it has been.

Committee Member Creighton motioned to recommend Doug Peterson as Parks Advisory Committee Chair and Scott Creighton as Parks Advisory Committee Vice-Chair for 2026. Seconded by Committee Member Hanson, unanimous ayes, motion carried.

7C. CURRENT BALANCE OF FUNDS UPDATE

Wegeleben reviewed the current city budget pertaining to parks. She stated that there are some proposed developments that may contribute to the Park Dedication Fund in the near future. Weber asked if anything else needs to come out of the CIP fund regarding the parks that were recently approved. Wegeleben stated that nothing else would need to come out of that fund for the three approved parks. Weber stated that the amount that Mitchell Farms Park was quoted for playground replacement wouldn't fully deplete the CIP fund. Wegeleben stated that the skate park would also come from that fund. Odens asked about the potential skate park cost. Wegeleben stated that the cost will likely be around \$350,000 for the skate park. She stated that this could be different if CEDA is able to find grant funding.

Noding asked about baby swings and if they can be included in the recently approved parks. Michels stated that he can't return the swings that are already purchased, but that they can be saved for future replacements. He stated that two of the parks can accommodate a baby swing and he plans to purchase them and install them this spring. Creighton asked about adding picnic tables at Mitchell Farms Park in the meantime. Michels stated that he can add picnic tables this spring. Odens asked about soccer nets. Michels stated that there are soccer nets at Shores of Lake Mitchell, and they were recently replaced.

Noding stated that basketball hoops were a great suggestion in the Mitchell Farms Park survey. Odens stated that if Council directs staff to look into Mitchell Farms Park, it would be an interesting potentially low cost option to include basketball courts. Odens stated that she has seen creative park systems in other communities that seem to be made by the community and city staff. She stated that it would be great to think outside the box for potential parks options for Mitchell Farms Park.

7D. STAFF UPDATES

Scott reviewed the status of various programs and recreation taking place in the community's parks. She stated that the Holiday Lighting Contest had lower involvement this year, but that they plan to extend the voting period and potentially change the prizes for 2027. She stated that she is working on planning for the Music in the Park series and Big Lake Farmers Market summer season including sponsorships, music, food trucks, and vendors. She reviewed that Community Gardens and Park Facility Rental applications are open for the 2026 season, and that Community Gardens are seeing more applications than previous years. She noted that applications are open for the Outstanding Citizen of the Year Award nominations.

Michels reviewed the status of current park projects and maintenance in the community. He stated that he is looking into adding baby swings to the newer playgrounds. He stated that the park equipment for Shores of Lake Mitchell, Lake Ridge, and Lakeside Parks have arrived and are being stored until the spring. He stated that the weather has been helpful for the ice rinks this year.

7E. STRATEGIC PLAN STANDING ITEM

Michels reviewed the Strategic Plan and asked for the PAC to recommend revisions as needed. Scott stated that the Strategic Plan was updated for 2026 and will continue to be updated if changes are needed in the spring and summer months.

Noding asked staff to notify the PAC when the Mitchell Farms Park discussion will go to the City Council. Michels stated that in the summer months he is hoping to bring the ice rinks discussion to a City Council Workshop. Wegeleben stated that the church where the ice rinks are located may be moving to Becker and that could affect when the ice rinks are located.

8. COMMITTEE MEMBERS' REPORTS – None.

9. OTHER – None.

10. ADJOURN

Committee Member Hanson motioned to adjourn the meeting at 7:08 p.m. Seconded by Committee Member Odens, unanimous ayes, meeting adjourned.