

MINUTES

On March 12th, 2025 the Parks and Recreation Board met at 01:30 p.m. at the Parks and Recreation Board Room located at 509 S. Johnson Street Amarillo, TX, 79107 for a Regular Meeting.

VOTING MEMBERS	PRESENT	NO. MEETINGS HELD SINCE APPOINTMENT	NO. OF MEETINGS ATTENDED
Mr. Howard Smith	YES	14	13
Mr. Ronnie Walker	NO	13	11
Mr. Robert Altman	YES	59	55
Ms. Tiffany Podzemny	YES	49	47
Mr. Rodney Hill	YES	13	12
Mr. Thomas Riney	YES	13	12
Mr. Ronny Head	YES	13	13
Mr. Shelby Massey	YES	31	30
Mrs. Skylar Gallop	NO	20	12
Mr. Alan Cox	NO	2	1
Mr. Jeremy Pekar	YES	1	1

STAFF IN ATTENDANCE:

MICHAEL KASHUBA	DIRECTOR OF PARKS AND RECREATION
JAMES STOW	ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OF PARKS AND RECREATION
BECKI DRYER	ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OF PARKS AND RECREATION
GEORGE PRIOLO	GENERAL MANAGER OF GOLF OPERATIONS
AUSTIN FARLEY	AQUATICS SUPERVISOR
BERKELEY HILLIARD	ZOO CURATOR
ERIC ANDERSEN	CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS MANAGER
SAMANTHA THOMPSON	RECORDING SECRETARY

- ITEM 1

Call to Order

Chairman, Ms. Tiffany Podzemny, established a quorum and called the regular scheduled meeting of the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board to order at 1:30 p.m.
- ITEM 2

Public Comments

No comments were made.
- ITEM 3

Discuss and Consider Minutes

A motion was made by Mr. Howard Smith, said motion seconded by Mr. Shelby Massey, voting aye were 8 members, voting no were none, carried to approve meeting minutes from January 15th, 2025.
- ITEM 4A

The Parks and Recreation Board will Discuss or Receive Reports on the Following Current Matters or Projects:

1.

Administration: Mr. Michael Kashuba introduced Mr. Jeremy Pekar, the newly appointed board member filling the position formerly held by Mr. Hobert ‘Gunny’ Brown. Mr. Pekar serves as the Grounds Foreman for Amarillo Independent School District. Mr. Kashuba also reported on recent vandalism incidents, noting that the new fishing dock at John Ward Park, formerly Medical Center Park, had been defaced within 24 hours of installation. Additionally, the Memorial Gazebo sustained significant vandalism, requiring sandblasting to remove graffiti from the stonework. Since April 2024, the Parks Department has recorded approximately 220 work orders related to graffiti and vandalism. The department is actively working with APD and Crime Stoppers to address the issue.

Ms. Becki Dryer provided the board with an update on marketing efforts, highlighting the impressive work of the Marketing Coordinator, Sarah Bartel, who produced 10 videos, 118 flyers, and 505 graphic designs throughout the past year. A recent Facebook post showcasing the successful fishing dock installation before highlighting the subsequent vandalism reached 74,000 people — significantly exceeding engagement from previous posts. Ms. Dryer also updated the board on the transition to Civic Rec, a new registration software set to launch on April 1st. This system is designed to improve customer experience by allowing easier online registration for programs, events, and facility reservations. The new platform is also expected to reduce staff workload by streamlining reservation processes.

2. **Amarillo Zoo:** Ms. Berkely Hilliard provided the board with an update on recent zoo events and activities. She discussed the Valentine's Day events, including Roach Your Ex, where participants could name a cockroach after a past relationship for a small fee, and Feed Your Love, where guests purchased enrichment items and receive a video of animals interacting with the item. She also highlighted the success of Critters and Canvases, a guided painting night that nearly reached capacity. Ms. Hilliard reported that the zoo's Pokémon Day on March 1st was a major success, generating approximately \$9,300 in revenue and drawing over 1,300 guests — surpassing attendance at the popular Boo at the Zoo. Custom trading cards featuring zoo animals were especially popular, and zoo staff is already planning to host similar events. Ms. Hilliard concluded with updates on upcoming activities, including preparations for Easter events, spring break camp, and the arrival of two new bobcats from Fort Worth, one of which will be trained for ambassador programs at schools.
3. **Beautification and Public Arts:** Mr. Michael Kashuba updated the board on Beautification and Public Arts Advisory Board discussions. The board is exploring ways to utilize existing art pads, including a potential partnership with the Hoodoo Mural Festival for temporary mural displays. They are also considering reallocating remaining mural grant funds for alternative projects. Additionally, due to issues with AI-generated artwork on Mural Grant Program applications, the board added a requirement for artists to confirm their work is original and will work with legal staff to refine the definition of "original art."
4. **Athletics:** Mr. James Stow updated the board on athletic activities and facility improvements. Mr. Stow reported that winter volleyball is ongoing at the Civic Center with portable nets, set to conclude this month. Registration is open for spring volleyball and softball, with their seasons starting on April 7 and March 28, respectively. Despite snowy conditions, the season opener softball tournament successfully hosted 23 teams. Umpire training has been successful, with attendance rising from 12 last year to 20 this year. Mr. Stow also addressed field improvements at John Stiff Park, explaining that efforts are underway to improve turf quality, which may temporarily limit practice space. The department is working to balance field maintenance with public access and may implement reservation systems in the future. Additionally, concerns were raised about off-leash dogs and pet waste on athletic fields, prompting discussions about ordinance updates and increased signage to address the issue.
5. **Aquatics:** Ms. Becki Dryer provided the board with an update on aquatics. She reported that group and private swim lessons held in January and February were well-attended. Lifeguard certification courses are being offered monthly to prepare staff for the summer season, and seasonal pool managers are currently undergoing Certified Pool Operator (CPO) and Lifeguard Instructor (LGI) training. Ms. Dryer highlighted recent hiring efforts, noting that 10 job fairs were attended at local high schools, along with a major hiring event at Warford where 33 candidates participated. Currently, 15 lifeguards are fully cleared, with an additional 30 either awaiting interviews or progressing through the hiring process. Cashier positions are nearly filled, with 22 cleared out of the 25 needed, and only 3 program attendant spots remain open. If all candidates successfully complete their certifications and paperwork, staffing levels are expected to be strong. Pools are scheduled to open Memorial Day weekend, with Southeast and Southwest Pools closing in mid-August and Thompson Pool remaining open on weekends until Labor Day. Ms. Dryer also mentioned ongoing aquatic feasibility studies and pressure testing at Southeast Pool to assess future needs and maintenance plans.
6. **Capital Projects:** Mr. James Stow introduced ongoing projects and deferred to Mr. Eric Andersen for detailed updates. Mr. Eric Andersen provided updates on several projects including:
 - Renovations at the Tennis Center, including locker room upgrades and fan installations
 - The John Ward Park (Medical Center) Fishing Pier was installed in one day.
 - New fences at the Admin Office and sidewalk repairs across parks
 - The John Stiff Park South Fence and ADA parking lot at John Stiff North are nearing completion
 - Cricket pitches and Padel courts will be added at John Stiff Park and the Tennis Center, respectively
 - The Mary Hazelrigg Lighting project

- Thompson Inclusive Playground (under construction with a \$2 million budget, including a \$1.75 million grant)
 - Plans for a connector road and ongoing parking lot projects at John Stiff Park.
 - Pleasant Valley playground updates
7. **Golf Operations:** Mr. George Priolo updated the board on price adjustments for deli, snack bar, and beer items, effective February 1st, due to rising costs. Despite initial complaints, these changes have been well-received. February revenue exceeded expectations, despite bad weather. The Comanche building, including the pro shop, snack bar, and bathrooms, was fully renovated, and Ross Rogers underwent a two-year renovation, recently completed. The board was also informed that netting on the northeast side of the golf course was removed due to disrepair and the course redesign in 2011, though some neighbors are upset. Plans to plant trees for protection are underway. The golf course has improved under new superintendent Scott Allen, attracting more golfers, and both Ross and Comanche courses have seen a positive impact. Challenges were reported with purchasing fertilizers and supplies due to delays from transitioning to Workday.
 8. **Park Maintenance:** Park Maintenance is busy reopening restrooms, with most already open except a few with major issues, like the John Stiff restroom requiring jackhammering to repair a galvanized pipe and a broken sewer line at East Park. Splash pads and pools are being prepared to open, including pressure testing and leak detection. They're also working on parking stops at Wonderland and irrigation at Thompson Park. The athletic fields are being painted, with 11 soccer fields completed for ASA and more tracks to be painted for Kids Inc. Additionally, they're handling fertilization, pre-emergence, and post-emergence applications. Maintenance staff is assembling and transporting soccer goals and bleachers, and they also built the signs for John Ward Park.
 9. **Recreation and Special Events:** Ms. Becki Dryer gave the board updates on Recreation and Special Events, noting that January and February faced challenges due to low enrollment in several programs, though they remain hopeful for a better March. Despite cancellations, some programs were successful, including the new Adulting 101 classes, which covered topics like resume building and home maintenance. The Kids Day Out and Spring Break camps also sold out. Special events included a Charlie and the Chocolate Factory interactive movie, the Superhero Bash, and a Princess and the Frog date night, all of which had good attendance. Ms. Dryer also shared that preparations for the 5th of July celebrations are underway, with meetings scheduled with city partners to review the layout, and the requisition for the drone show has been submitted.
 10. **Senior Services:** Ms. Becki Dryer provided the board with updates on Senior Services, highlighting the efforts of Kari Bachman, the Senior Services Coordinator, in fostering engagement among members. Notable activities included a day trip to the National Weather Service, where participants enjoyed a meal and a tour. Ms. Bachman has also encouraged members to lead activities, such as teaching Bid Whist, a card game, and hosting a tutorial on making house products using essential oils. Additionally, a registered nurse from High Plains Senior Care Hospice offers the "Ask an RN" program, where seniors can ask health-related questions, and a digital navigator from the library assists with computer-related queries. The Senior Services team also hosted a Repair Cafe, where 15 volunteers helped repair 27 items brought in by the community, fixing 21 of them. This event engaged the senior community's valuable skills while helping to reduce waste and assist the community.
 11. **Tennis Operations:** Mr. James Stow provided the board with updates on tennis, mentioning that the recent poor weather had impacted outdoor play. The AATA and USTA leagues have started, and Dustin Almond, the manager of the Tennis Center, is working on planning camps, tournaments, and additional leagues while transitioning to new software. Despite February being a slower month, membership and revenue remained steady. With the recent good weather, tennis and pickleball courts have been very busy, with some difficulty finding available space. Mr. Stow also noted that Dustin is organizing a Memorial Day tournament, which is expected to be a major event.
 12. **Warford Activity Center:** Ms. Becki Dryer provided the board with updates on Warford Activity Center, noting that the facility remains consistently busy, particularly from 8:00 AM to 12:00 PM and from 4:00 PM to Close. Warford averages 50 to 60 rentals

per month, sells about 250 memberships per month, and records around 1,700 membership scans monthly. One of the notable events was the Inflatable Fest held in late January, which drew 235 attendees, offering a fun way for kids to stay active during colder weather. Ms. Dryer also highlighted a partnership with Unity Learning Communities, a nonprofit led by Tremaine Brown. The group is running an after-school mentoring program for fifth- and sixth-grade students, using Warford’s various facilities, including the kitchen, gym, multipurpose rooms, and garden. This pilot program is scheduled through May, with hopes to continue in the fall.

ITEM 5 Discuss Sub-Committee Initiatives:

Mr. Michael Kashuba discusses with the board potential subcommittee initiatives for the year. He highlighted the need to review athletic and tennis fees, particularly as pickleball continues to grow in popularity. Since pickleball differs from tennis in game length and structure, Mr. Kashuba suggested revisiting pricing, reservation strategies, and tournament fees to better manage the facility. He also proposed a review of the park ordinance, noting that it is outdated and may require updates, particularly regarding pets in parks. Mr. Kashuba encouraged the board to consider additional areas for review and offered to provide a copy of the ordinance for their reference. The board agreed to revisit these topics in the next meeting.

ITEM 6 Discuss Mountain Bike Trails (Six Pack Outdoors):

Chris Podzemny from Six Pack Outdoors provided updates on the city’s multi-use trail systems. The group maintains over 120 miles of trails across various parks, with key projects including the 9th Street Trails, Rick Klein Trails, and the Schoolyard. Podzemny proposed renewing their five-year sponsorship agreement with the city for trail maintenance and development. The board will review this proposal in a future meeting.

The 9th Street Trails have been expanded to five and a half miles with improved connectivity and new directional loops to reduce trail conflicts. Plans are underway to install trailhead signage and maps at five access points. Podzemny recommended renaming the area “The Trails at 9th,” which received positive feedback from the board. Upcoming projects include fencing around the new parking lot to manage parking issues, installation of additional bridges, and the development of a dirt pump track. Podzemny highlighted a recent grant from Xcel Energy that funded trail expansion and improvements. He proposed that the 9th Street Trails area be designated as an official city park to protect it from potential sale or development. The board acknowledged this recommendation and noted that further steps would require City Council approval. Security concerns at the Schoolyard were addressed by installing Wi-Fi and surveillance cameras, which effectively reduced vandalism and illegal dumping.

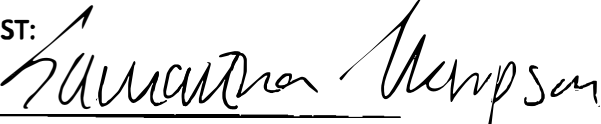
The High Plains Hustle, a mountain bike race expecting 80-100 participants, is scheduled in the coming weeks. Additionally, a volunteer cleanup day with the Parks Department is planned. The board expressed gratitude to Six Pack Outdoors for their contributions and ongoing efforts to maintain and improve Amarillo’s trail systems.

ITEM 7 Discuss Items for Future Agendas:

- Paramount Park Update
- Sub-Committee Initiatives
- Six Pack Outdoors Sponsorship Agreement
- Athletics/Tennis Fees

ITEM 8 Adjournment

There being no further business the meeting was adjourned at 3:27 p.m. This meeting was recorded, and all comments are on file with the City Parks and Recreation Department.

ATTEST: 
Ms. Samantha Thompson, Board Secretary


Ms. Tiffany Podzemny, Board Chair