

MINUTES

On April 9th, 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	15	14
Mr. Ronnie Walker	YES	14	12
Mr. Robert Altman	YES	60	56
Ms. Tiffany Podzemny	NO	50	47
Mr. Rodney Hill	YES	14	13
Mr. Thomas Riney	YES	14	13
Mr. Ronny Head	YES	14	14
Mr. Shelby Massey	YES	32	31
Mrs. Skylar Gallop	YES	21	13
Mr. Alan Cox	YES	3	2
Mr. Jeremy Pekar	YES	2	2

STAFF IN ATTENDANCE:

JAMES STOW	ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OF PARKS AND RECREATION
BECKI DRYER	ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OF PARKS AND RECREATION
GEORGE PRIOLO	GENERAL MANAGER OF GOLF OPERATIONS
BERKELEY HILLIARD	ZOO CURATOR
CINDY PEREZ	BEAUTIFICATION AND PUBLIC ARTS COORDINATOR
LANDON MILLER	WARFORD ACTIVITY CENTER SUPERVISOR
ERIC ANDERSEN	CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS MANAGER
SAMANTHA THOMPSON	RECORDING SECRETARY

ITEM 1

Call to Order

Chairman, Mr. Robert Altman, 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. Ronny Head, voting aye were 10 members, voting no were none, carried to approve meeting minutes from March 12th, 2025.

ITEM 4A

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

1. Administration: Ms. Becki Dryer updated the board on debt-funded projects recently approved and those pending City Council consideration. Debt-funding for the following projects was approved at the April 8th City Council Meeting: Lighting at John Stiff Park, Thompson Park and Memorial Park, Parking Lots at Rick Klein and John Stiff Parks, Pump Stations at the golf courses and maintenance equipment. The lighting project has received full approval and can now move forward. The other projects will be presented for final approval at a future City Council meeting. These projects fall within the department’s regular annual budgeting process. Approximately \$1 million of the department’s \$2 million ENI (Economic and Infrastructure) budget has been committed to this round of debt funding. This funding strategy enables the city to initiate \$12.5 to \$13 million worth of projects simultaneously, with repayment occurring over time—an approach that significantly accelerates progress compared to funding projects individually over several years.

Ms. Dryer also shared details about the Eastridge Plan, a community outreach initiative aimed at guiding the development of a future park in the East Ridge area. A community survey will be distributed, and an in-person event is scheduled for April 24th at Eastridge School Park. Residents will be invited to share input and vote on desired park features through interactive display boards.

Additionally, the Parks Department has successfully launched a new registration software platform. A link to the new system was shared via email, and board

members were encouraged to create accounts to receive notifications and stay informed about upcoming programs and events.

2. **Amarillo Zoo:** Ms. Berkeley Hilliard gave the board an update on recent activity at the Amarillo Zoo. The zoo is preparing for its busy season, with spring field trips underway and summer camps set to begin soon. Notably, the zoo recently accepted several rescued animals from a large-scale fur and urine farm operation in Ohio. From this rescue, the zoo took in six foxes and two skunks. These animals had endured poor conditions, including being de-scented without anesthesia.

The foxes include a mix of colors, such as one silver fox and several red foxes, all under the age of three. They will help fill the exhibit left vacant by the recent loss of the zoo's last original red fox. Additionally, two bobcats were recently acquired. One will be trained for educational purposes, though it has not yet been introduced to the public yet. The Amarillo Zoo is also preparing for its upcoming Easter event, scheduled for April 19th from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

3. **Beautification and Public Arts:** Ms. Cindy Perez provided an update on Art Pad installations in the parks. She presented concept art for a display case featuring plexiglass for vandalism protection and solar panels to illuminate the display. Discussions are underway with the city welding program to develop a prototype. Ms. Perez also announced a Tree Giveaway event scheduled for Friday April 11th at Rick Klein Sports Complex, where approximately 800 trees—including Kentucky Coffee Trees and Scotch Pines donated by K&R Tree Farm—will be distributed to the community.
4. **Athletics:** Mr. James Stow informed the board that spring softball season is underway, though recent weather has caused some game cancellations. All major user groups—ASA, Kids Inc., and Texas Panhandle Sports Youth Foundation—are active. Preparations are in place for the upcoming Joe Taco Tournament, which will utilize multiple park complexes across the city. Mr. Stow also addressed the new fencing at John Stiff Park, noting positive feedback overall. The fencing helps reduce vandalism and unauthorized use, particularly on the south fields, which will undergo significant maintenance and reseeding this summer.
5. **Aquatics:** Ms. Becki Dryer informed the board that Park maintenance staff are actively preparing pools for the summer season. A leak was discovered at Southeast Pool, with repairs underway in the deep end. A feasibility study on long-term pool infrastructure is currently out to bid. Staffing is in a strong position, with 36 lifeguards cleared, 9 in processing, and 11 interviewing—surpassing the 50-lifeguard minimum required to open. All cashier and manager positions are filled. Pool party reservations began April 1st, with several already booked. Pool passes will go on sale in mid-April using a new key fob system. Opening day is scheduled for Saturday of Memorial Day weekend, earlier than usual due to successful hiring efforts.
6. **Capital Projects:** Mr. Eric Andersen presented an update on Capital Projects. Several projects across the city are in progress or nearing completion. These include sidewalk repairs, new fencing behind the Parks Admin building, and enclosures for autonomous mowers at JSM North. The Mary Hazelrigg lighting project is almost complete, and the JSM South fence is done. At JSM North, ADA parking lot work is expected to wrap up soon. Padel courts at the tennis center are breaking ground this week. At Warford, plans are underway for a dehumidifier and heater installation. The inclusive playground at Thompson Park has begun construction, and the Pleasant Valley playground will be entirely replaced. Upcoming work includes resurfacing the gym floor at Warford Activity Center. In addition, new pump stations for all four golf courses were approved as part of recent debt funding. Board members emphasized the importance of publicly showcasing completed projects to highlight responsible use of taxpayer funds.
7. **Golf Operations:** Mr. George Priolo provided an update on golf operations. He noted that although aging pump stations at the golf courses are costly to maintain, the newly approved replacements—previously planned to be phased in over several years—will now be installed all at once, offering long-term savings and improved reliability. Golf activity remains strong despite challenging weather. March rounds were up by 525, mostly due to increased play at Comanche Trail Golf Course, which helped ease pressure on Ross Rogers Golf Course. Year-to-date, rounds are up by 2,200, and revenue is up \$172,000 compared to last year, with a \$45,000 increase in

March alone—despite no fee increases outside snack bar adjustments. The city has hosted 10 high school and district tournaments, 4 outside events, and is preparing for major upcoming tournaments. These include the Senior Partnership, the Dos Equis Open, and the Michelob Ultra Men's City Championship. The issue of stray golf balls from Ross Rogers Golf Course impacting nearby properties has remained quiet recently. A proposed solution to plant trees as a buffer was halted due to restrictions related to overhead power lines. Maintenance efforts are in full swing, including top dressing and aerifying greens across both courses. Comanche's Arrowhead and Tomahawk courses have been completed, with work now underway at Ross Rogers and Mustang. Mr. Priolo also shared the national Drive, Chip, and Putt program will hold a local qualifier at Comanche Trail Golf Course.

8. **Park Maintenance:** Mr. James Stow provided an update on park maintenance, which includes athletic field preparation, pool and splash pad setup, irrigation repairs, and facility maintenance. Staff are actively preparing for the busy Easter weekend. Irrigation repairs have seen significant progress with the help of contractors, and the department has made notable strides toward catching up on deferred maintenance. Contracts now include full-service mowing, fertilization, spraying, and irrigation, along with electrical and forestry services. Amarillo Arborlogical's forestry contract has helped remove dead trees from all parks, and the focus is now shifting to trimming and tree maintenance. The new software has improved accountability and service verification, streamlining operations and ensuring better maintenance coverage. Lastly, four park maintenance employees were recognized in the city newsletter as members of the Quarter Century Club for 25 years of service. Their long-term dedication is seen as a testament to the department's positive culture.
9. **Recreation and Special Events:** Ms. Dryer reported a successful Spring Break Camp at the Warford Activity Center, which sold out with 64 participants. Activities included fishing, park cleanup, and field trips facilitated by Ms. Cindy Perez. The Adulting 101 series continues April 15th with a session on auto maintenance, featuring presenters from Amarillo College and State Farm Insurance. A new 3D printing class launched successfully, teaching kids both the coding and technical aspects of 3D printing. An upcoming special event, the Flashlight Egg Hunt, is scheduled for April 11th at Memorial Park. It's a free event with 160 children pre-registered. Ms. Dryer also announced a potential partnership with Bushland ISD, which is moving to a four-day school week. Parks and Recreation is working on an interlocal agreement to offer a Kids Day Out program on Fridays during the school year. If successful, the program could be expanded to other districts. The initiative aims to employ high school students as camp counselors while providing needed childcare for working families.
10. **Senior Services:** Ms. Becki Dryer shared that a self-defense workshop was held on March 27th, with 16–20 participants. The event was well received. Senior Services Coordinator, Ms. Kari Bachman, has been invited to speak at both the Elder Care Conference this week and the Older Americans Month conference in May. A grant from the Bivens Foundation is being used to fund two new positions: one focused on outreach in the North Heights area, and another to assist with senior lunch services during the summer. The department is working with AmeriCorps to fill these roles. Ongoing senior programs at Warford Activity Center continue to thrive, including cards, dominoes, monthly gatherings, and day trips.
11. **Tennis Operations:** Mr. James Stow reported that tennis and pickleball activities are ramping up with the busy season approaching. Interest in pickleball leagues is growing, with local businesses like Pantex reaching out. A Memorial Day youth tennis tournament is planned. Mr. Stow noted the complexity of tennis tournament systems (UTR, PATS points, USTA) but said progress is being made. Pickleball continues to be in high demand, and there is an ongoing need for additional courts. The Tennis Center has undergone improvements including new flooring, updated restrooms, and fresh paint, significantly enhancing the facility.
12. **Warford Activity Center:** Ms. Becki Dryer reported that on March 14th, Warford Activity Center served as a comfort station during the high wind event, staying open overnight to assist residents without power. The center continues to stay busy, averaging 14–16 reservations per week. Warford played a major role in assisting with the transition to new registration software, requiring staff to help many members transfer their accounts. The gym floor, which sees approximately 3,000 users each month, is scheduled for resurfacing. Positive community feedback was also shared,

including praise for the cleanliness of the facility and the friendliness and professionalism of the staff.

ITEM 5 Present, Discuss, and Consider Action on the Warford Handbook:

Ms. Becki Dryer presented updates to the Warford Activity Center Handbook Key changes include:

- Gym & Multipurpose Room: Only personal listening devices are now allowed to prevent inappropriate music from being played on speakers.
- Open Gym Policy: Organized practices with 5+ participants must reserve gym space. Training sessions during open gym are allowed with 4 or fewer participants, but the use of cones/equipment is restricted to keep space accessible for general members.
- Lap Swimming Etiquette: New guidelines added to address friction between recreational and fitness swimmers, including rules on split lanes and appropriate swim behavior.
- Cardio & Weight Room: Users must be 14 years or older. Personal listening devices policy also reiterated here.
- Locker Rooms: A quarterly locker clean-out policy has been added. Staff can also request the removal of items if something is suspected or detected (e.g., odor).
- Punch Pass Clarification: Now limited to members of a single household to preserve accurate emergency contact and registration data. A household is defined as up to 8 people living at the same address.

Following discussion, a motion was made by Mr. Shelby Massey, said motion was seconded by Ms. Skylar Gallop, voting aye were 10 members, voting no were none, carried to approve.

ITEM 6 Present, Discuss, and Consider Installation of Artificial Turf at Softball Complexes:

Mr. James Stow presented a proposal to install artificial turf on the infields at the Southeast, Southwest (John Stiff), and Martin Road softball complexes. The proposal addresses ongoing challenges related to weather-related game cancellations, high field maintenance demands, and lost economic development opportunities due to limited tournament play.

The estimated cost to turf both the infields and outfields at all three complexes is approximately \$14.3 million. The infields-only option, which is the staff's recommendation, is estimated at \$4.25 million total:

- John Stiff Complex – \$1.6 million
- Southeast Complex – \$1.7 million
- Martin Road Complex – \$950,000

This project could be eligible for debt funding at an estimated \$500,000 per year over a 10-year period.

Mr. Shelby Massey made a motion to recommend that the infields at all three complexes be replaced with artificial turf using debt funding. Ms. Skylar Gallop seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously, with 10 members voting in favor and none opposed.

ITEM 7 Discuss Paramount Park:

Mr. Chad Dietz with Parkhill gave the board a presentation on proposed improvements to Paramount Park. The initiative is a collaborative effort between Outdoor Amarillo, Parkhill, and the City of Amarillo, with the goal of revitalizing neighborhood parks—starting with Paramount Park—as part of Outdoor Amarillo's first capital campaign.

Parkhill contributed a \$45,000 pro bono community investment grant to Outdoor Amarillo to support the design phase of the project. Over the past year, they have conducted a master planning process, including public engagement through an onsite event, where residents provided feedback on desired and undesired park features. Key community priorities included upgrades to tennis and basketball courts, new pickleball courts, updated playground equipment with shade structures, exercise stations, additional seating, trail improvements, and enhancements to park signage and identity.

The proposed master plan emphasizes phased development based on available funding, with an emphasis on not increasing future maintenance burdens for the city. The concept plan will return to the Strategic Planning Committee for further financial discussion before being finalized.

Outdoor Amarillo will lead the private fundraising effort for the project. The organization emphasized that the improvements will not require city funding and are based on community-driven priorities. The board expressed strong support for the initiative, recognizing it as a potential blueprint for future neighborhood park revitalizations across the city.

ITEM 8 Discuss Sub-Committee Initiatives:

The Board discussed updates and new directions for subcommittee initiatives. The Strategic Planning Committee will continue reviewing athletic fee tendencies and will now include the Paramount Park project in its scope. Regarding outreach, members discussed the potential need for a marketing committee or other means of supporting staff efforts. It was agreed that the Outreach Committee would first explore this topic further and return with suggestions at a future Park Board meeting.

ITEM 9 Discuss Items for Future Agendas:


- Marketing
- Safety Protocols for adult sports leagues

ITEM 10 Adjournment

There being no further business the meeting was adjourned at 3:08 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