

STATE OF TEXAS
COUNTIES OF POTTER & RANDALL
CITY OF AMARILLO

MINUTES

On December 3rd, 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	22	21
Mr. Ronnie Walker	YES	22	19
Mr. Robert Altman	YES	68	63
Ms. Tiffany Podzemny	YES	58	53
Mr. Rodney Hill	YES	22	19
Mr. Thomas Riney	YES	22	20
Mr. Ronny Head	NO	22	21
Mr. Shelby Massey	YES	39	36
Mrs. Skylar Gallop	YES	28	17
Mr. Alan Cox	YES	11	9
Mr. Jeremy Pekar	NO	10	5

STAFF IN ATTENDANCE:

DONNY HOOPER	ASSISTANT CITY MANAGER
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	AQUATIC SUPERVISOR
BERKELEY HILLIARD	ZOO CURATOR
CINDY PEREZ	BEAUTIFICATION/ARTS
SARA BARTEL	MARKETING COORDINATOR
ERIC ANDERSON	CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS
ASHLEY GUERRERO	RECORDING SECRETARY

ITEM 1

Call to Order

Chairman, Mrs. Tiffany Podzemny established a quorum and called the regular scheduled meeting of the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board to order at 1:31p.m.

ITEM 2

Public Comments

Mr. Tom Cole spoke on Item 4 of the agenda, emphasizing the importance of stewardship in the proposed project, suggesting that it should benefit animals, staff, facilities, and citizens. He highlighted the need for responsible care, stating that if one is responsible for something, it should be properly maintained for the benefit of all, including both older and younger people. Mr. Cole concluded by emphasizing trust, stating that it ultimately comes down to who can be trusted to effectively handle the project.

ITEM 3

Discuss and Consider Minutes

A motion was made by Mr. Shelby Massey said motion seconded by Mrs. Skylar Gallop, voting aye were 9 members, voting no were none, carried to approve meeting minutes from November 12th, 2025.

ITEM 4

Present, Discuss, and Consider a Recommendation Regarding the Zoo Lease

Mrs. Stephanie Brady, appointed by the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) to the Wildlife Rehabilitation Council, provides expertise on statewide wildlife care and rehabilitation standards. She holds active permits with TPWD, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), and the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA).

Mrs. Brady provided an overview of her vision for the Amarillo Zoo, which, if the council moves forward with the proposal, will be rebranded as the Amarillo Zoo and Sanctuary. She outlined a projected initial annual budget of \$1 million, funded through city subsidies, existing revenue, and donor support. The plan includes reducing the city subsidy by \$50,000 each year over the next six years until the zoo is fully nonprofit funded. The nonprofit would operate debt-free, with a focus on financial discipline

similar to Wild West Wildlife. Staff retention plans include hiring some current zoo employees and adding new staff with expertise in exotic animal care. Employee wages would start at \$15 per hour, without any employee benefits the first few years. Mrs. Brady discussed planned zoo facility upgrades, including expanding the admissions booth, renovating animal exhibits, installing a security system, and enhancing visitor engagement with themed regions and educational programming.

The board expressed concerns about the feasibility of fundraising, the potential impact on employee benefits, and the risk of increased admission fees if revenue falls short. Board members stressed the importance of clear financial planning, broad donor outreach, and community engagement. The board recommended that city council proceed with the proposal. The board recommends the city council ensures and evaluate a proposed lease agreement with Wild West Wildlife for operation of the Amarillo Zoo, including an evaluation of future budgeting, fundraising capacity, and operational capabilities. Thomas Riney made the motion, and it was seconded by Mr. Bob Altman. This motion was passed with 9 votes in favor and none opposed.

ITEM 5

Present Discuss, and Consider a Recommendation Regarding the Wonderland Lease

Mr. Michael Kashuba informed the Board that the proposed lease for Wonderland Amusement Park is set at \$10,000 annually, with the first two years waived to allow for immediate capital improvements. This proposal contrasts with previous revenues of \$96,000 in 2022, with a projected decline to \$70,000 by 2025. The Board recommended that the City Council proceed with negotiating the new lease at the reduced rate to ensure Wonderland remains operational. Mr. Thomas Riney made a motion, which was seconded by Mr. Rodney Hill. The motion passed with 7 votes in favor and none opposed.

ITEM 6

Present Discuss, and Consider a Recommendation for the John Stiff Memorial Park Development Plan

Mr. Michael Kashuba introduced a proposed development plan for a 30-acre undeveloped parcel north of the park, designed to create a family-friendly commercial space combining dining, retail, civic spaces, and outdoor recreation. The plan includes retail lease rates ranging from \$18 to \$24 per square foot, with food and beverage spaces commanding \$30 to \$40 per square foot. The design focuses on pedestrian-friendly layouts with parking hidden behind buildings to promote walkable, social spaces. The development will proceed in three phases: first, sites along 45th Street; second, the central civic area; and third, the outdoor commercial buffer. Proposed amenities include amphitheaters, fitness retail, pickleball courts, and outdoor dining, supporting both events and everyday use. The revenue model may include long-term leases with percentage rent, subject to council direction. The Board expressed a preference for local business involvement over national chains and discussed mixed-use development, including multifamily housing, as a potential long-term expansion. The Park Board recommended approving the development plan with JSM, with the condition that all profits generated remain within the Parks Department and not be allocated to the General Fund. The motion was made by Mr. Shelby Massey, seconded by Mr. Thomas Riney, and passed with 7 votes in favor and none opposed.

ITEM 7

Regular Meeting Items

7.A.

1. **Administration-** Mrs. Becki Dryer reported on the successful Christmas tree lighting event held this past weekend. The event had a strong turnout, with approximately 300 people attending. The Sundown Lane Elementary choir performed for 30 minutes, followed by a countdown to light the tree led by Mayor Cole Stanley. In addition to the tree lighting, there were various craft stations, opportunities for photos with Santa, and a free screening of the Polar Express movie. Overall, the event was festive, well-attended, and enjoyed by the community.

The Board acknowledged Mrs. Tiffany Podzemny's final meeting and expressed appreciation for her dedicated service since January 2020. The Board is grateful for her continued commitment and support throughout her tenure. It was noted that a new chair would be appointed in January, following the City Council's decisions on board membership scheduled for December 9.

2. **Aquatics-** Mr. Michael Kashuba updated the Board that the Southwest and Southeast pools will be discussed at the upcoming council meeting. Mrs. Becki Dryer also reported that the Warford pool will be closed from December 9th to 19th for maintenance, including repainting the pool deck.
3. **Capital Projects-** Mr. Michael Kashuba updated the Board that the parking lots at John Stiff are now fully finished. At Rick Klein Park, the team is preparing to begin the next phase of development, having already poured two areas with plans to complete two more before addressing the drive approach. The lighting project at John Stiff Park is progressing well, with several areas already in use. The next lighting project will begin at Thompson Park once the John Stiff project is completed. Following that, the lighting project will move on to Memorial Park.

Mr. James Stow provided an update on the Wild Horse Golf Course pump station, which is currently being installed as the second of four planned stations. The third station, for Arrowhead, has been delivered and is expected to be installed in the coming weeks, following some necessary building modifications. Mustangs is up and running, with the building completed. The Wild Horse pump station is expected to be fully operational by Thursday or Friday, marking the halfway point of the project. The team will then move on to Arrowhead, followed by Tomahawk, which presents more challenges due to the need for a larger, new building.

4. **Golf Operations-** Mr. George Priolo reported that October and November were strong months for the golf courses, with rounds played increasing by over 2,200 compared to the same period last year. Revenues were up approximately \$152,000 year-to-date. October saw an increase of 888 rounds, generating an additional \$63,000, while November experienced 1,320 more rounds, contributing \$89,000 in higher revenue. Year-to-date revenue reached around \$760,000, marking a strong start for December. The "Explore the Four" gift card program, launched on December 1, is priced at \$130 and is expected to drive seasonal revenue, along with discounted winter green fees to maintain round play. Additionally, Eskimo pricing will be in effect through January 31st. Maintenance efforts include significant tree trimming at Ross Golf Course, targeting several holes over the next two months to enhance both course aesthetics and playability. Mr. Priolo also noted that the Comanche Gold course will be closed on December 17th and possibly for two to three days afterward for maintenance.

ITEM 8 Discuss Items for Future Agendas

ITEM 9 Adjournment

There being no further business the meeting was adjourned at 3:56p.m. This meeting was recorded, and all comments are on file with the City Parks and Recreation Department.

ATTEST:

Ms. Ashley Guerrero, Board Secretary

Ms. Tiffany Podzemny, Board Chair



Ms. Ashley Guerrero, Board Secretary



Mr. Robert Altman, Board Vice Chair