



PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION MEETING

AGENDA SECTION	NEW BUSINESS
MEETING DATE	SEPTEMBER 23, 2026

ITEM:	Enrichment and Athletics Programming Update		
Presenting Item: Katie Holznagel, Recreation Program Coordinator			
DEPARTMENT: Park and Recreation		BY/DATE: Katie Holznagel/ September 21, 2026	
CORE CITY STRATEGIES: <i>(please indicate areas that apply by adding an "X" in front of the selected text below)</i>			
☒ Community that Grows with Purpose and Equity		☒ Engaged, Effective and Forward-Thinking	
☐ High Quality Public Spaces		☐ Resilient and Prosperous Economy	
☒ Safe, Accessible and Built for Everyone		☒ Inclusive and Connected Community	

BACKGROUND

The Parks and Recreation Department offered a wide range of youth and adult enrichment and athletic programming throughout the summer, including team sports, theater, dance, exercise, technology, arts, half-day camps at local parks and Murzyn Hall, and youth trips. The season was supported by 20 seasonal staff, four contracted instructors, three facility supervisors, and volunteer and paid coaches. The department also partnered with the Columbia Heights School District to provide lunches for students participating in the half-day camps.

YOUTH ATHLETICS

The department offered youth softball and baseball leagues, along with multiple sports camps and workshops designed to enhance athletic opportunities and create potential full-day options for participants already enrolled in the half-day camps. Quite a few sports camps had lower-than-anticipated registration. As the needs and interests related to sports programming in Columbia Heights continue to evolve, staff will continue evaluating pricing, scheduling, and the timing of program publication and marketing. RAPID Basketball, however, was a great success, with nearly full rosters across both age groups. The program combines basketball skill development with discussions and guest speakers focused on real-life skills and topics beyond the sport itself. Parents and participants find great value in the program and speak very highly of its coaches and content.

PARK PROGRAMS AND HALF-DAY CAMPS

Summer park programs included Glitter Bugs for ages 4 through kindergarten at Ramsdell Park, Dyno-Hites for first through third grade at Huset Park, SPARKS for fourth and fifth grade at Murzyn Hall, and TNT for sixth through eighth grade at Murzyn Hall. Most program rosters were full during both sessions. Glitter Bugs had availability during Session I but reached full enrollment for Session II.

Younger participants enjoyed special theme weeks, visits from the Fire and Police Departments, crafts, sports, water days, and playground time. Older participants were sometimes more difficult to engage in group games and activities. Staff responded by offering activity stations that allowed participants to choose activities based

on their interests. This is something the department will continue to research and improve upon as participants' needs and interests change.

THEATER, ENRICHMENT, DANCE, AND TECHNOLOGY

Moonshoe Theater served students in third through eighth grade. With a full roster of 19 students, participants prepared a production of *Alice in Wonderland* in less than four weeks. Staff created the sets, props, and costumes while helping participants develop their characters and performance skills. Mill Street Theater served students in eighth through twelfth grade and reached its capacity of 22 students, requiring the addition of understudy positions so more students could participate. The group prepared *The Curse of the Cobra's Kiss*. Both productions were performed at the Columbia Heights School District's Performing Arts Center. Participants demonstrated significant commitment throughout the four-week rehearsal period while building friendships and connections. The students worked very well together and put on an amazing show. The group included one graduating senior, while the remaining participants expressed that they could not wait until next summer.

Puppet Wagon provided a small-group creative experience in which students helped write stories and perform at Huset Park and Ramsdell Park. They also performed at the City's Monarch Festival and will return for Truck or Treat, where Recreation staff will assist with day-of-event needs. Additional summer enrichment offerings included beginner and advanced Dungeons & Dragons, Creative Movement Dance, Musical Theater Dance, an Anoka County 4-H engineering and activities sampler, Tech Academy, and Teen Art: Creative Journaling. Dungeons & Dragons continues to grow as an enrichment offering, providing a creative alternative to traditional recreation programs. Tech Academy classes were offered on Fridays for students in fourth through eighth grade as an effort to create additional full-day programming options. Classes included robotics, engineering, and game building. Only one class was canceled because of low enrollment, while the remaining classes were held and received positive feedback.

HYLANDER CENTER STAFFING

The department hired one new Facility Supervisor for the Hylander Center and an additional substitute staff member to provide extra coverage when needed.

NEW YOUTH SOCCER PARTNERSHIP

In early August, Recreation staff met with representatives of the Northern Twin Cities soccer league, involving New Brighton, Arden Hills, Fridley, Mounds View, Shoreview, and Spring Lake Park, to discuss Columbia Heights joining the league. The previous soccer partnership with Immaculate Conception School and one St. Charles team was valuable, but participants were often playing against the same one or two teams each weekend. The new league provides a greater variety of opponents and communities. The Northern Twin Cities soccer league agreed to allow Columbia Heights to participate going forward, with the opportunity to add more than one team per grade level next season. With approximately a week and a half to organize teams, staff contacted previous soccer coaches, families, and participants. Staff was excited to form one team at each grade level, with 14 participants on each team, and then worked to secure coaches. Teams practice twice per week and play on Saturdays. The first games were held September 12 and provided a positive start to the new partnership.

LOOKING AHEAD

We are a small but mighty team that cares about building a welcoming and happy place for all. We will continue developing programming that meets families and residents where they are, from structured classes and sports to affordable drop-in opportunities and community-wide events. The fall brochure is filled with a variety of sports, enrichment classes, and events for all ages. Staff will continue evaluating registration trends,

pricing, scheduling, marketing timelines, partnerships, and other factors as future seasons are planned. After hearing feedback that information about summer opportunities is sometimes shared too late, staff is working to include summer offerings in earlier seasonal brochures whenever possible. Overall, the summer provided a broad range of recreation experiences for youth, adults, and families, supported by returning and new staff, instructors, coaches, volunteers, and community partners.

Requested Action/ Discussion Topics / Key Questions
No action needed. For review and discussion only.

ATTACHMENT(S)

None