



**PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION MEETING**

<b>AGENDA SECTION</b>	OLD BUSINESS
<b>MEETING DATE</b>	MAY 27TH, 2026

<b>ITEM:</b>	Sullivan Lake Park Improvements & Huset Park Soccer Field Project Update		
<i>Presenting Item:</i> John W. Stutzman, Parks and Recreation Director			
<b>DEPARTMENT:</b>	Park and Recreation	<b>BY/DATE:</b>	John W. Stutzman/ May 21st, 2026
<b>CORE CITY STRATEGIES:</b> <i>(please indicate areas that apply by adding an "X" in front of the selected text below)</i>			
<input type="checkbox"/> Community that Grows with Purpose and Equity		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Engaged, Effective and Forward-Thinking	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> High Quality Public Spaces		<input type="checkbox"/> Resilient and Prosperous Economy	
<input type="checkbox"/> Safe, Accessible and Built for Everyone		<input type="checkbox"/> Inclusive and Connected Community	

**BACKGROUND**

In January 2026, Recreation Director Keith Windschitl retired. Following a recruitment process, John was hired as the City’s Parks and Recreation Director and began his role on April 27, 2026. He brings 19 years of experience in parks and recreation, including work in programming, facility management, staff development, and strategic planning in both large and small communities. He also holds bachelor’s and master’s degrees in the field, along with relevant professional certifications and volunteer experience.

As John begins in this role, leadership of several active park projects and planning efforts are being transitioned to the Parks and Recreation Department for ongoing coordination and implementation. These efforts, initiated over the past two years through prior Council direction and staff work, include improvements at Sullivan Lake Park, including replacement of the existing lift station and development of a new playground, and the development of a soccer field at Huset Park.

**PROJECT UPDATES**

**Sullivan Lake Park: Playground and Lift Station**

The City is continuing to work on improvement projects at Sullivan Lake Park, including replacement of the existing lift station and installation of a new playground. ISG is providing design and engineering support for both components.

The lift station work will continue under the leadership of Public Works and Engineering and will be completed in phases to accommodate equipment lead times, while allowing the playground project to proceed independently.

John has meet with ISG and has been working with City staff to get up to speed on the playground project, confirm the intended outcomes, and ensure the design direction aligns with available resources and priorities. This also includes reviewing how the playground equipment selection process will be handled and identifying the appropriate timing and approach for community input.

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Currently, he is working to ensure project goals are clearly defined and that the design is feasible before moving further into the design phase and community input on proposed structures. At the same time, staff's immediate focus is to develop a clear update for residents so they understand the project status, next steps, and when they can expect to be engaged.

The following public statement was released regarding this project:

The City of Columbia Heights is providing an update on the Sullivan Lake Park project, focusing on the playground and related infrastructure. We appreciate the community's patience as we work through planning and design to deliver a park that reflects community input and uses public resources responsibly.

The park includes multiple, interconnected project components, including playground improvements and necessary utility infrastructure updates. While these elements serve different functions, they require coordination, and City staff are working to determine the best sequence and advance each piece to ensure the long-term success, safety, and sustainability of the park, as well as alignment among design, budget, and community priorities. The goal is to finalize a park plan that reflects community input and provides accessible, inclusive play opportunities, shaded seating areas, and natural features that serve a wide range of ages and abilities, while moving the project forward efficiently.

Additional updates and detailed playground design concepts will be shared with the public as they are developed, and further opportunities for feedback will be provided. The City of Columbia Heights remains committed to completing the Sullivan Lake Park playground in late 2026 or early 2027, while ensuring the final outcome is safe, well-designed, and responsive to community priorities.

#### **Huset Park: Soccer Field Development**

In 2025, at the direction of the City Council, staff evaluated potential locations and gathered community input for a future soccer field, resulting in the selection of Huset West as the preferred site. A preliminary layout was developed, along with an estimated project cost of \$590,000.

The City is now moving into project delivery. Engineering is currently preparing a Request for Proposals (RFP) for engineering, design, and construction oversight services, with John supporting the Engineering Department in this effort. Once a consultant is selected and design work is completed, the project will move into contractor bidding and construction planning.

#### **ATTACHMENT(S)**

None