Meeting Minutes
New Prague Park Board
Tuesday, September 9th, 2025
6:00 PM

1. Call Meeting to Order

The regular meeting was called to order at City Hall at 6:00 PM by Chair Joe Barten.

Members present: Joe Barten, Maggie Bass, Christine Wolf, Brian Paulson, Jessica Dohm.

Members absent: Matt Becka, Shannon Sticha

Staff present: Ken Ondich – Planning / Community Development Director, Evan Gariepy – Planner, Matt Rynda – Director of Public Works.

2. Public Invited to Be Heard on Matters Not on the Agenda

No comments were given.

3. Approval of Regular Agenda

Dohm requested to add a discussion of Central Plaza to Miscellaneous.

A motion was made by Barten, seconded by Wolf, to approve the regular agenda with the addition of a discussion regarding Central Plaza in Miscellaneous. Motion carried (5-0).

4. Approve Previous Meeting Minutes

a. August 12th, 2025 Regular Meeting

Dohm stated that many of her comments in the August 12th, 2025, regular meeting minutes were attributed to Shannon Stitcha. Planning / Community Development Director Ondich and Planner Gariepy stated that this will be fixed.

A motion was made by Paulson, seconded by Dohm, to approve the August 12th, 2025, regular meeting minutes after it is revised to fix Dohm's comments. Bass and Wolf abstained. Motion carried (3-0-2)

5. Review Financial Reports

Planning / Community Development Director Ondich presented the financial reports as information.

A motion was made by Barten, seconded by Paulson, to approve the financial report. Motion carried (5-0).

6. 2026 Budget and 2026-2030 Project Plan

Planning / Community Development Director Ondich discussed the results of the City Council budget meeting. City Council directed the Park Board to reduce its 2026 Budget from $110,000 to $45,000. Ondich presented an updated 2026 Budget Plan if the Park Board wants to continue with the projects rather than move them back to another year. Ondich discussed how increased developments will provide more funding, but that it is not guaranteed.

Barten inquired why City Council wants the Park Budget decreased. Bass stated that the majority of the City Council wanted the reduction. Dohm asked if there can be an easier way of displaying funds and totals. Ondich stated that the grant funds will be separated going forwards.

Paulson suggested saving the Park Equipment Fund 230 and cutting the projects funded by that. Dohm agreed and stated that the splash pad project is not backed enough and supports pausing the splash pad feasibility study.

Ondich requested that Park Board members rank the items on the 2026 listing in order of priority. Dohm ranked concrete in hockey rink/pickleball 1, Memorial Park sign replacement 2, City Center 3, Splash pad feasibility study 4, and Memorial Park sprinkler system 5.

Bass asked Director of Public Works Rynda his opinions on the Budget Plan options. Rynda stated that the concrete at the hockey rink is his highest priority. He then stated that the sprinkler system at Memorial Park is also high priority to him, as it is costly to reseed them as it dies during dry spells. Rynda stated he supports pushing it back but wants it to occur eventually. Dohm inquired about low cost sprinklers, and discussed with Rynda how it will cost more in the long term.

Bass supported taking the splash pad feasibility study off the 2026 Plan.

Wolf ranked concrete in hockey rink/pickleball 1, City Center 2, Memorial Park sign replacement 3, Memorial Park sprinkler system 4, stating that the costs for both Memorial Park projects may be able to be reduced, and the Splash pad feasibility study 5.

Rynda stated that reseeding and overtime watering of the Memorial Park Field during a dry spell 3 years ago was $3,000-4,000. Dohm inquired if the Memorial Park Fields generate income, and Ondich and Rynda stated that they make very little. Rynda brought up how the upcoming addition of dug-outs to the Memorial Park Fields will encourage more tournaments and thus generate more income.

Barten supported pushing back the Memorial Park Field Sprinkler System to a future year, but keeping it at a high priority. He inquired about the concrete hockey rink, and asked if there will be lines painted for playing pickleball. Rynda stated that there will be some costs for putting in netting and painting it, but that that can likely be done in-house.

Barten supported the Memorial Park replacement sign, and still supports the Splash Pad feasibility study and believes it's a community priority. He supports pushing it back in support of the City Center, but does not want it removed completely. Paulson asked what is planned for 2027, as items pushed back from 2026 may delay 2027 projects. Ondich presented the 2027 Budget Plan and stated that none are high priority items. It was agreed that there will be future discussion of long term planning.

A motion was made by Paulson, seconded by Dohm, to remove the Memorial Park sprinkler system and Splash Pad feasibility study from the 2026 Plan and push them to the 2027 Plan, and leave the remaining items as shown. Motion carried (5-0).

7. Park Survey Results

Planner Gariepy presented the park survey results as information. Ondich discussed that there will be more public input in developing the Park Plan, especially of underrepresented age groups (55+) and regarding winter sports. The Park Board requested to see all the responses to the survey. Gariepy stated he will email out the Excel file of the responses to the Board.

8. Miscellaneous

a. **Crossings to Southside Park** – Ondich discussed that a 1-week traffic study, as requested by Paulson, did not show significant speeding and had low vehicle traffic at the intersection of 1st Ave SW and 5th St SW by Southside Park . Police Chief Tim Applen was consulted by Staff, and he did not see a need for additional traffic control at the intersection. Ondich discussed a FHWA study that MnDOT typically references that shows there is not a decrease in crash rates at marked crossings, and indicated that there are other higher priority areas for road crossings. Paulson stated that the traffic counter should be marked as City owned to reduce confusion of residents who see it. There was discussion of the cost and benefits of a crosswalk with flashing pedestrian signs, and Rynda stated they are $20,000. There was additional discussion of a small sign or painted stripe on the sidewalk on 1st Ave SW or restricted parking on that street for increased visibility. Rynda stated that, if he was to mark 1st Ave SW, he would have to mark every intersection he receives complaints for. Paulson stated that he is no longer concerned with the intersection following the traffic study results.

b. **Dog Park Discussion Follow Up** – Ondich stated that dog license requirements are being advertised, including laminated posters at the dog park and in the monthly City newsletter. Ondich stated that using the online permitting system for dog licenses may cost $3,000-4,000 annually and not worthwhile. Dohm stated that vets not pushing for dog licenses may greatly reduce how many people get licenses. She supports making it an online system with no physical tagging. Bass stated that having a dog chipped makes her inclined to not get them tagged, and Wolf stated that the police rely on dog licenses to identify dogs. Ondich stated that a quote for doing online dog licensing can be obtained with the current permitting system. Paulson inquired why dog licensing is utilized, and Ondich stated it is for rabies tracking and emergency identification of dogs by the police. Paulson stated he is in support of a completely digital registration system just to use the dog park. The Board discussed having it be an automatically renewing cost to utilize the dog park. Barten stated that removing the dog license is a larger question, and Ondich stated staff will investigate this alongside online dog licensing systems. Dohm expressed not supporting the dog park costing money. Paulson stated hearing that the dog park is unusable due to being a “mud pit.”

c. **City Center Site Update** – Ondich presented the latest iteration of the pond design for the City Center Site. He stated that the City is working with Bolton & Menk to get the pond paid for by utilizing former grant funds from the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED,) alongside road connections and lighting. Ondich stated that he met with Den Gardener, the Director of Forward New Prague Foundation, and that there will be further discussion on the October agenda. Barten stated that he met with Gardener as well, and that POPS may not be available for use until 2027. Barten suggested that staff discuss event hosting with the School Districts, as well as potentially opening it up to multiple non-profits for events hosting and management. Ondich stated that POPS has not begun construction yet, and that they are exploring other methods of establishing a building foundation. Paulson proposed hiring a group for management of event hosting and is in support of less City management. Barten asked the process of establishing the current pond design, and Ondich stated that SEH Inc tried to maximize water filtration and water drainage, and it does not extend to the northern lot of the property. Barten expressed concern with the proposed size of POPS and the pond, particularly with the pond size limiting other uses of the City Center Site. He stated that the pond could be extended further south where the possible playground is currently slated and shrink the pond in the Northeast corner for increased recreation and park area. Barten stated he does not support the current design and thinks that the funding could be utilized better for connecting the City Center Site to Main Street. Ondich stated he will see if the City Engineer Chris Knutson of SEH Inc can attend the next Park Board meeting. Paulson stated he is also not in support of the current plan, and proposed the City utilizes more of the surrounding area.

d. **Central Plaza** – Dohm inquired if rearranging the furniture and umbrellas at Central Plaza for better usability and aesthetics is possible. She stated that she visited a few months ago during the summer and the umbrellas did not provide shade. Rynda stated that the umbrellas were placed in May and covered half of the tables, and that he was against the umbrellas. Rynda stated the tables were placed where the committee asked, and that the umbrellas can be moved but it would be impractical and not beneficial due to the sun’s movement in the sky. Dohm stated that she feels the furniture is poorly placed and arranged and asked if the placement can be reconsidered. Rynda stated that the committee was led by a landscape architect, and that it can be rearranged. Paulson stated that he hopes the planted young trees provide shade in the long-term, and Rynda said that they should provide planned shade in 5-10 years. Dohm and Barten discussed the material of the furniture, and Barten stated that maintenance free equipment has been prioritized over comfort. Barten stated that, for future parks, comfort and user experience should be more heavily considered. Dohm asked if repainting the furniture to cool it down is possible, and Bass stated she doesn't think that changing the space would be beneficial. Ondich stated that he will inquire with the landscape architect.

9. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 7:49 pm by order of Chair Barten.

Respectfully Submitted,

Evan Gariepy
Planner