

**Meeting Minutes  
New Prague Park Board  
Tuesday, August 12th, 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 were Brian Paulson, Joe Barten, Matt Becka, and Jessica Dohm. Absent was Maggie Bass and Christine Wolf. Staff present was Ken Ondich – Planning / Community Development Director, Evan Gariepy – Planner, and Matt Rynda – Director of Public Works.

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

Maggie D'Silva, no address provided, spoke regarding the dog park not getting mowed. She had attended the prior Park Board meeting in July, and stated she was glad that the dog park had gotten 3/4ths mowed. She expressed disappointment that it wasn't fully mowed and that the cut grass didn't get picked up. She also expressed feeling like the community as a whole is disappointed in the dog park, and wants to see follow-through on it. She wants the dog park mowed at least biweekly during the summer.

Jessica Dohm, Park Board Member, spoke on behalf of her daughter who did not attend. She stated that the metal line for volleyball nets at Memorial Park are fraying and dangerous and should be looked at and fixed. Her daughter also believes that the height settings of the nets are too tall, and do not accommodate youth very well.

**3. Approval of Regular Agenda**

A motion was made by Becka, seconded by Sticha, to approve the regular agenda. Motion carried (5-0).

**4. Approve Previous Meeting Minutes  
July 8th, 2025 Regular Meeting**

A motion was made by Barten, seconded by Paulson, to approve the July 8th, 2025, regular meeting minutes. Motion carried (5-0).

**5. Review Financial Reports**

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

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

## **6. 2026 Budget and 2026-2030 Project Plan**

Planning / Community Development Director Ondich introduced Public Works Director Rynda to speak regarding plans for mowing the dog park. Rynda spoke on how he and the Supervisor of the Parks Department, Jim Calliguri, visited other city's dog parks and consulted with a dog park committee for planning it. The intent was for a wildlife dog park that resembles Cleary Lake and best fits the city. Rynda discussed that the dog park is intended to be low maintenance, and that this is necessitated by the Parks Department being understaffed.

Rynda discussed that they only planned to cut the dog park grass down 2 times a year, solely to reduce noxious weeds. He stated that the park department does not currently have equipment to mow it due to standing water. He proposed adding more benches, which potentially will be provided by a Boy Scout who wants to donate five benches according to where the City wants, and adding shaded areas. Rynda expressed that he receives positive feedback about the dog park but acknowledges that it is not perfect.

Rynda stated that mowing the dog park would cost approximately \$6,500 a year. He emphasized that this, especially as it pertains to having the personnel to conduct it, is currently not feasible.

Sticha asked if there would be some middle ground to the dog park being mowed more than twice a year, but less than biweekly. Rynda stated that this could be possible if something else was mowed less and tended to less. Barten asked what a reasonable middle ground would be for this, and proposed cutting to 6 inches, 6 times a year, without renting equipment but instead mowing when it is dry enough. Barten also expressed support for the Park Department having more employees.

Ondich encouraged leaving part of the dog park still more natural and unmown, at least until the drainage issues are addressed. Becka encouraged getting more funding through marketing for dog licenses and requesting donations to help with mowing. Sticha and Ondich discussed how New Prague veterinarians no longer promote dog licenses, contributing to the decrease in dog license sales.

Paulson questioned why the dog park is so large and suggested it could be smaller like Jordan's and thus cut far easier. He supported mowing part of it more often and leaving parts unmown. He also discussed how, as discussed in the last Park Board meeting, the gate to the dog park should be made larger to allow for a larger mower. Rynda discussed that a smaller mower is used due to how wet the area is. Rynda stated that the park is large as it's also for families to walk, and that Jordan has issues with a small dog park. Sticha also supported the large size of the dog park, and expressed agreement for having a portion of it mowed and portion unmown.

Rynda stated that it can be mown every other week at a minimum. Barten addressed how the dog park was planned during drought years, so that the drainage issue was not known

ahead of time. He stated that the capital project budget could be put forward to help the dog park if needed by staff, such as through adding another access gate to the park for a larger mower.

Paulson and Ondich discussed how the boulevard between County Road 29 and Olivia St is mowed by the city, even though by ordinance it should be done by the property owners. Paulson suggested that the boulevard not be mowed by the city in exchange for the dog park getting mowed.

Sticha addressed the hose at the dog park and asked that it is replaced for a threaded one for people to wash their dogs as they leave. She also discussed how there is a muddy section by the faucet, especially without a hose and nozzle that can be used. Rynda stated that they can get a threaded hose and nozzle for the faucet.

The Park Board encouraged staff to increase mowing.

A motion was made by Paulson, seconded by Barten, to request that staff bring forth reconsideration of prior mowing areas, particularly those that are private, in favor of instead mowing the public dog park, alongside consideration of the potential for needing more resources to support the upcoming increase in public land that must be mowed, such as in the form of the new Police Station and City Center sites. Motion carried (5-0).

Rynda discussed the potential sprinkler system for Memorial Park's softball fields. He stated that the current proposal is a more expensive system that reduces the time it takes to water, and to reduce the amount of work and replacing of equipment that is required. Rynda emphasized how cheaper systems need frequent replacing of sprinkler heads, but stated that it could be replaced with a cheaper system and encouraged looking for a middle-priced sprinkler system as a compromise. Rynda also stated that the operation costs for irrigation changes yearly according to the rain. He stated that it would be a "smart system" that would not water the field following rain but would not be able to look at predicted forecasts.

Barten expressed support in the proposed expensive sprinkler system, and asked if the area south of the playground at Memorial Park can also be irrigated. Rynda stated that he can get a cost estimate for adding irrigation to this area, and that it currently is frequently reseeded.

Ondich stated that the splash pad feasibility study was added to the 2026 budget. He also discussed the \$90,000 electronic sign proposed for Memorial Park, not recommending it. Ondich stated that he requested a new quote for a smaller sign. Barten proposed asking for funding from other routes, such as from the Golf Club and the Park Ballroom, for a \$50,000 sign. Sticha expressed interest in a wooden, non-electronic sign as she believes that the digital sign will not be harmonious with the park. Becka inquired why the sign is being replaced, and Rynda stated that the current sign is rotting. Paulson agreed with Sticha, and proposed a small non-rotating electronic sign that is only utilized for events.

Rynda stated that staff agrees with the idea for a wooden sign. There was discussion and positive support in support of a similar, potentially slightly larger, wooden-appearing sign replacing the current one.

Paulson asked whether the splash pad feasibility study was supposed to be removed, and it was discussed that it is being kept on the budget. The pond design of POPS was discussed, and will continue to be worked on. Ondich stated that the City Council meeting on Monday will determine if the budget must be amended.

Sticha expressed surprise on the 2028 tennis court and pickleball court lighting proposed budget being \$222,000 and mentioned that the courts are school owned. Ondich stated that half of this cost is the labor of installing them. Paulson questioned why the school isn't paying for and installing this despite the school's surplus budget. Ondich stated that, if the hockey rink is paved, pickleball nets could be installed there and then the city forgoes lighting the school's tennis and pickleball courts. Ondich stated paving and modifying the hockey rink would be more cost effective, and Rynda supported it as well. It was agreed, with no objections, that the court lighting for the school courts will be removed from the 2028 budget but pickleball courts will still be discussed and considered.

Barten asked if staff could provide a copy of the concept plan from the small area plan study in the packet for next month's meeting.

## **7. POPS Additional Funding Request**

Ondich presented the email from Den Gardner on behalf of the Forward New Prague Foundation, requesting an additional \$100,000 for POPS from the city. Barten stated that Gardner reached out to him directly in addition to reaching out to Ondich, but Barten did not discuss it with Gardner prior to the Park Board meeting. Ondich stated that staff does not recommend providing the funds to POPS as it will take away funding from other projects, and that he thinks there will be more unforeseen costs that the city will be asked for.

Sticha asked if POPS had grant funding while fundraising, or if it was all private. Ondich stated that POPS has gotten grant money for parts of the facility. The necessity of the pond around POPS was discussed. Barten asked if the small area plans could be discussed at the next Park Board meeting, and Ondich stated that it will be included in the next packet. Ondich stated that the former small cities redevelopment grant funds are being looked at to fund the construction of the pond.

Barten addressed what Gardner states that must be changed with the building plans if POPS does not receive the extra funds. Barten expressed that the facility should have audio and video equipment, and Ondich stated that the Forward New Prague Foundation is applying for a grant for this with assistance from the City as they had applied

previously. Paulson stated that he believes that what POPS stated must change can be changed back to the original plans in the future. General discussion occurred regarding other funding routes for POPS, including more fundraising, asking the Chamber of Commerce, and staff assisting with grant writing. Dohm stated that a grant through the Rotary may be possible, though a long process, but she will inquire about it. There is general discussion about the Park Board re-evaluating the 5-year budget in the future, following a good faith effort to obtain grant funding, to potentially fund the audio/visual equipment.

A motion was made by Barten, seconded by Sticha, to not approve the funding request of an additional \$100,000 for the POPS based upon the City's prior contributions and the requested items being aesthetic and optional in nature, as well as being potential future additions to the project that are not currently required for POPS. Motion carried (5-0).

## **8. Miscellaneous**

- a. Dog Park Discussion Follow Up** – Discussed in depth during the 2026 Budget and 2026-2030 Project Plan. Ondich pointed out how dog license numbers are down, but will be advertised. Sticha asked why they cannot be purchased online, and Ondich stated it is due to limitations of the current permitting software licenses that the city owns. Sticha suggested a QR code at the dog park for a dog permit. Becka suggested putting it at the top of the city newsletter, and emphasizing what they fund. Barten asked if amending City Code for allowing multi-year dog licenses is possible, and Ondich stated it will be discussed with staff. Sticha suggested a subscription system for dog licenses, and Ondich stated this will also be looked into. Sticha also suggested that dogs just must be collared with their name and address rather than with their dog license tag number.
- b. City Center Site Update** – Ondich stated that the POPS groundbreaking ceremony occurred and that the permits were approved.
- c. Settlers Park Prairie Restoration Update** – Ondich discussed how the first maintenance mowing of Settlers Park occurred on Thursday the previous week, and that the prairie restoration is going very well according to the contractors. He discussed that additional future maintenance must be considered after the contract with RES is up. Paulson expressed disapproval in prairie restoration, and instead supports Big Woods restoration efforts. Ondich discussed that the current drafting of the Unified Development Code includes tree preservation / restoration efforts and discourages clearcutting of lots and developments. Barten suggested a 20-year plan of establishing this prairie development then looking into native tree restoration in the park, and potentially amending the park maintenance budget for the future to accommodate this planting.

- d. Flock Cameras in Parks Update** – Ondich presented the video presentation and demo of the camera at Memorial Park. He stated that the cameras have already identified two people who vandalized park restrooms last week. Barten asked if the cameras can be in one static position rather than in the moving guardian mode, and Ondich stated he will ask Police Chief Tim Applen. Barten asked if the Park Board is capable of vetoing the flock cameras in the parks if so decided in the future, and Ondich confirmed this could be a recommendation of the Park Board but the City Council has the final authority. Paulson supported CCTV over the flock cameras. Becka asked if cameras being placed in parks can go through the Park Board if they are brought up again, rather than just through City Council as a police initiative.
- e. Zipline Update** – Ondich stated that the Memorial Park zipline was replaced and reopened.
- f. Miscellaneous** – Paulson stated that a citizen told him that the crosswalk on 5<sup>th</sup> St SW just north of Southside Park is improperly marked and asked for a crosswalk sign and repainting of the crosswalk. Staff will conduct a traffic study.

## **9. Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 8:12pm by order of Chair Barten.

Respectfully Submitted,



Evan Gariepy  
Planner