

CITY OF ST. ANTHONY
PARKS AND ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION MEETING
SEPTEMBER 8, 2025
7:00 p.m.

I. CALL TO ORDER.

Chairperson Fee called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

II. ROLL CALL.

Commissioners Present: Chair Lily Fee, Commissioners Yaacoub Hark, Kristen Peterson, Jessica Swiontek, and Natalie Synhavsky.

Absent: None.

Also Present: Assistant City Manager Ashley Morello, Silverwood Program Supervisor Alyssa Baguss, Citizens for Sustainability Representative Dan Kunitz, Sustainability Coordinator Minette Saulog, Finance Director Deborah Maloney, and Student Liaison CeCe Cram.

III. APPROVAL OF THE SEPTEMBER 8, 2025, PARKS AND ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION MEETING AGENDA.

Motion by Commissioner Swiontek, seconded by Commissioner Peterson, to approve the September 8, 2025, Parks and Environmental Commission agenda.

Motion carried unanimously.

IV. APPROVAL OF THE JUNE 2, 2025, REGULAR PARKS AND ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES.

Chair Fee noted on page 2, line 23 should be part instead of park.

Motion by Commissioner Swiontek, seconded by Commissioner Hark, to approve June 2, 2025, Regular Parks and Environmental Commission Meeting Minutes as presented.

Motion carried unanimously.

V. PRESENTATIONS.

A. Silverwood Park Updates.

Silverwood Program Supervisor Alyssa Baguss reviewed the PowerPoint. Silverwood's 16th annual art and nature festival will be held Saturday, September 13, 2025, from 12:00 – 4:00 p.m.

Two exhibitions will be on display with an Opening Reception to be held September 11, 2025, from 6:00 – 8:00 p.m.

Sarah Nguyen – No Mud, No Lotus

Kristin Maija Peterson – Small Universes Everywhere

The Big Picnic held on July 30th had over 600 people in attendance. This was held in partnership with St. Anthony Community Services. Ms. Baguss reviewed the Art and Ecology Club held on Tuesdays, 3:50 to 5:00 p.m., from September 16 to December 16, 2025. The Great Sculpture Costume Crawl will be held Saturday, November 1, 2025, from 1:00 to 3:00 p.m. So, You Think You Can Craft will be held on October 2, 2025, from 6:00 to 8:00 p.m. at Silverwood Park. The Ongoing Wellness Programs at Silverwood Park include Weekly Sunset Yoga, Monthly Gentle Yoga Flow, SPARK for Individuals Living with Memory Loss and Their Care Partners, and Mindful Creations with NAMI Minnesota. On Sunday, October 19th, from 9:30 – 11:30 a.m., the Fall Sound Meditation with Waking Nomad will be held. Silverwood Park returns as a host site for the Bell Museum's Statewide Star Party 2025 on Thursday, September 18, 2025, from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.

Winter Hours for the Silverwood Park Café will be 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Every first Monday of the month from 5:00 – 7:00 p.m. is a Rental Open House for Silverwood Rental Facilities.

B. Citizens for Sustainability Updates.

Citizens for Sustainability Co-chair Dan Kunitz reviewed a PowerPoint presentation that included VillageFest, Tax Credits Ending This Year, and fall lawn and garden tips for Winter Wildlife.

Plug-in hybrid and electric vehicle credits expire on September 30, 2025. Renewable energy installation & home efficiency upgrade credits expire on December 31, 2025. Visit www.homes.rewiringamerica.org/save for more information.

Many insects hibernate inside hollow plant stems or under leaf litter. Birds rely on leftover seeds from coneflowers, sunflowers, and grasses when other food is scarce. How you can help:

Leave plant stalks

Pile leaves in your garden to insulate the soil and offer cover.

Wait to clean up until spring temperatures are consistently above 50 degrees F.

Residents are invited to join CFS at the next meeting on October 4, 2025, at 10:00 a.m. in Room CS9 in City Hall/Community Services. There will be a book discussion on November 10 at St. Anthony Library. The Clean Energy Research Teams' Seed Grant applications are due October 1.

VI. GENERAL BUSINESS.

A. Parks CIP Presentation.

Finance Director Maloney reviewed a PowerPoint titled Parks Capital Improvement Plan & Financial Overview. She presented the Planning & Budgeting for Parks & Environmental Operations and Capital Improvements, 2026 Budget Calendar, including the Park Improvement Fund, PEC items, and overall park and Environmental Spending.

Chair Fee asked about the 2025 Park Improvements and the Future Requests and Costs. She asked if the fund requests would be included in the levy for 2026. She asked which requests would be moving forward. Ms. Morello stated the preliminary levy is getting set for September 9, 2025, and the City Council will determine if any of the additional items go into the budget or not. The prioritizations suggested by the PEC will be submitted to the City Council for consideration. Ms. Maloney stated the parks' levy at this time is an increase over last year's levy. The General Fund is meant to be one year of spending. The Capital Funds are meant to have a levy that gradually accounts for costs, so it stays stable over the years. They can accumulate a fund balance, which allows for larger projects in the future. If there is an excess General Fund balance, the Council decides what the priorities are. The Park Fund is a Capital Fund.

Commissioner Synhavsky asked if the spending this year will be like 2026. Ms. Maloney stated this is the plan at this time, and she is still meeting with departments about plans and prioritizing needs.

B. Dog Park Exploration.

Assistant Manager Morello reviewed the topic of exploring the feasibility of a dog park in St. Anthony Village, which was an agenda item at the Parks & Environmental Commission meetings in the Fall of 2022 and Winter of 2024, and had been discussed historically as far back as 2014. It was also discussed at the Parks Summit in March of this year, which included attendees from both Commissions, the City Council, the School District, the Sports Boosters, and the Staff. While a dog park has been the subject of public interest, the geographic restraints and development of the City, as well as anticipated staff demand, are challenges that impact the feasibility of establishing a dog park within the City. This meeting will build upon previous discussions in response to the community's desire for a dog park. As part of the Parks and Environmental Commission 2025 Work Plan, the Commission is being asked to identify the best location for a dog park with the least adverse impacts.

The Dog Park has not been implemented in the past due to Space Availability, Geographic Boundaries, Cost, and Staffing. Ms. Morello provided the Best Practices Summary:

Size – Recommended minimum size for dog parks varies considerably among cities, but is generally between ½ acre and one acre.

Buffer from Residential – A few cities provide definitive distances from residences, varying from 50 to 200 feet. All strive to minimize conflicts and include guidelines: making sure noise and activity levels are no more than those of other park uses, the importance of screening or visual buffers, and having minimal impact on residences.

1
2 Parking – Recommendations include that parking should be readily accessible and near the
3 site, of sufficient/adequate size, and convenient. There were no standards for size, but it
4 stressed the importance of parking when locating a dog park.

5
6 Conflict Avoidance – Guidelines include avoiding play areas and other recreational amenities,
7 high-use areas, natural areas and water sources, wildlife trails, community gardens, and
8 historic sites.

9
10 Ms. Morello reviewed Staffing needed for a Dog Park.

11
12 Daily/Every Other Day Tasks: 5-6 hours a week.

- 13 • Pet waste pickup and bag refill.
- 14 • Trash and waste disposal monitoring/emptying.
- 15 • Visual inspection of fence, gates, latches, and park cleanliness.
- 16 • Walking the park for spot-cleaning and other issues.

17
18 Monthly Tasks: 8-12 hours per month.

- 19 • Fence and latch repairs.
- 20 • Minor grading, filing of worn paths and holes.
- 21 • Park condition reporting and documentation.

22
23 Seasonal/Quarterly Tasks: 20-30+ hours per quarter.

- 24 • Hauling in and spreading mulch.
- 25 • Repairs to the trail or damage from hauling equipment.
- 26 • Odor management/additional waste clean-up in warmer months.
- 27 • Snow removal from access paths and gates (if open year-round).

28
29 Three potential options were presented, including Central Park, Emerald Park, and Silver
30 Point Park. Several alternative locations for green space outside of the City's three main parks
31 have been suggested in the past. This alternative is not feasible:

- 32 • Site incompatibility (site not owned by the city, site does not provide level ground for
33 a dog park).
- 34 • Noise considerations due to proximity to neighbors.
- 35 • City-wide vs. neighborhood park.
- 36 • Staff maintenance demand would be even greater with an additional site.

37
38 No location in the City has ideal conditions to reflect dog park best practices. Silver Point
39 Park could have the least adverse impacts with strategic modifications. Staff does not
40 recommend adding a dog park to Silver Point Park as it is. Modifying existing services would
41 be needed in order to accommodate. The existing amenities at Silver Point Park include a
42 fully accessible playground added in 2024, the Half basketball court repaved in 2024,
43 Sidewalk and trail repairs made in 2024, Ice rinks (hockey and pleasure rinks), and two
44 ballfields. Dog Park Challenges at Silver Point Park include:

- Two Ball Fields – Result in high volumes of parking and traffic. The parking lot and neighborhood are not designed to accommodate.
- Ball Field #2 Flooding – Silver Point Park was designed as a retention pond. Often it cannot be used.
- Ice Rinks – Discussion of sustainability with warmer winters.
- Modification Options – Could replace either the ball field #2 or the ice rinks with a dog park.

Ms. Morello presented the Silver Point Park Opportunities.

Ball Field #2 Pros

- Reduces ball field activities and the associated parking and traffic congestion.
- Reduces ball field maintenance.

Ball Field #2 Cons

- The area will experience washouts from heavy rain events.
- Proximity to accessible playground.
- Trail/path infrastructure needed to be accessed.

Ice Rink Pros

- Reduce the quantity of ice rinks maintained by the City.

Ice Rink Cons

- Proximity to residential back yards.
- The ice rink is a popular amenity for the neighborhood.

A preliminary estimate for anticipated construction costs of a dog park is just over \$192,000. It is not currently in the CIP for Parks. There are competing priorities for the City budget.

The Commission is requested to provide a recommendation to the City Council on whether Staff should move forward with pursuing a Dog Park and, if so, which location.

Also provided for Commission consideration are a Cover Memo, Recommendations and Guidelines for Dog Park, Site Selection Updated, and Dog Parks Best Practices.

Chair Fee asked about the staffing requirement for the maintenance of a dog park and asked if that can be compared to ice rink maintenance. Ms. Morello stated that those costs are not available this evening, but ice rink maintenance is seasonal, and dog park maintenance would be year-round. Chair Fee asked if odor is one of the issues and if there is a solution. There are 4 houses to the west of the ice rink area. Staff maintenance would assist with that.

Commissioner Hark asked about the ball field option to provide a trail for maintenance. He asked how the ball field maintenance is accessed now? Ms. Morello stated they don't require larger trucks for maintenance.

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Commissioner Peterson asked what the proposed acreage is for the two sites at Silver Point Park. Ms. Morello stated that it is not known until the details are researched for the park planning. The ice rink location would be a bit smaller than the ballfield, at approximately ½ acre. They are within the recommended size. Commissioner Peterson referred to the drainage purpose of that area and asked if there is an overflow or if it is intended for infiltration. She is concerned about dog waste and nutrient pollution. Ms. Saulog stated that they took a tour of Silver Point Park, and they observed that there is no mechanical drainage system. This would need to be confirmed by engineering. There is an ecological restoration program occurring in that park along with native plantings. It appears to be more of an infiltration system.

Commissioner Peterson stated that with heavy rain events, the mulch is moving from where it was placed. In the best practices, they recommended the residential buffer. She asked how far off the ice rink and ballfield would be from the recommended buffer. Ms. Morello stated the buffer from the ballfield would be farther than the ice rink buffer. Commissioner Peterson asked about the waste hauler cost for dog waste. Ms. Morello stated that it would occur 2-3 times per week. Ms. Saulog stated pickups would need to be negotiated with Aspen Hauling. There are trash cans, but no dumpsters in the park.

Commissioner Synhavsky asked if there is an estimate of the annual cost of maintenance of a dog park. Ms. Morello stated they did not research the cost of routine maintenance. If the ballfield is taken away, would the boosters need to find another field? There will be continued discussions on the current use of the parks. Commissioner Synhavsky stated she has a dog waste concern.

Commissioner Peterson asked if there has been any exploration of partnering with a nearby City for a shared dog park. Ms. Morello stated that there have not been any direct conversations with neighboring cities. An option is for St. Anthony residents to go to neighboring city dog parks.

Commissioner Synhavsky stated there are 4 dog parks within 4 miles of St. Anthony. She had a map of the locations.

Commissioner Peterson asked about parking logistics, and we are talking about losing both the ballfield and ice rink? Could the dog park be added without additional parking? Ms. Morello stated there are 20 parking spaces in the lot currently, and engineering would need to determine if more spaces were needed. We would expect the parking demand would be less for a dog park.

Student Liaison Cram stated she would be interested to find out who uses which ice rinks. She asked if the rinks were for recreational use. Commissioner Swiontek stated that everyone she talks to is requesting a dog park.

Commissioner Synhavsky stated there is a boot hockey team and a broomball group that play at Silver Point Park.

Commissioner Hark stated he asked if this rink is an amenity for the neighborhood. Do we know which rink is used the most? Ms. Morello stated that the ice rinks are viewed as a

1 neighborhood amenity. They have usage numbers for the ice rinks in the City. Central Park is
2 close to Silver Point Park.

3
4 Commissioner Synhavsky stated the ice rink at Central Park is more challenging as users need
5 to skate up a hill to get to it. It is not the most practical location for an ice rink. She believes it
6 would be a loss for the community to replace the ice rink with a dog park at Silver Point Park.

7
8 Chair Lee asked Commissioner Swiontek to name the other dog parks in the area.
9 Commissioner Swiontek named St. Anthony Parkway, Perry Dog Park, Lauderdale Dog Park,
10 and the Stone Arch Dog Park.

11
12 Chair Fee noted this seems like a big investment with many challenges to overcome. She
13 asked if there is an option to do a beta test before adding a permanent dog park. Ms. Morello
14 stated there would be a cost for a short-term dog park. Chair Fee asked if a half-season dog
15 park was considered. Ms. Morello stated the size would not be enough.

16
17 Commissioner Swiontek stated that a test drive at all rinks would be a good idea. Ms. Morello
18 stated that the staffing model is based on the dog park at one location. It was noted that people
19 are using the ice rink in the off-season as a dog park.

20
21 Commissioner Hark asked about ballfield #2 compared to ballfield #1. He asked if Ballfield
22 #2 is currently not being used due to water issues. Ms. Morello stated that it is unusable when
23 conditions prevent play on the field.

24
25 Commissioner Peterson asked what an engineering study would cost. Ms. Morello stated that
26 it would be a future phase of the consideration. She stated the Commission is requested to
27 recommend a location for City Council consideration.

28
29 Chair Fee asked the Commissioners which location at Silver Point Park is recommended. Her
30 personal feeling is the ice rink. Councilmember Peterson stated she was leaning more toward
31 the ballfield. Commissioner Hark agreed, as the ballfield is more central to the park. Student
32 Liaison Cram agreed the ballfield would be her choice. Commissioner Synhavsky stated she
33 does not know that St. Anthony has a good place for a dog park. She would prefer a pickleball
34 court over a dog park. She feels it is far too complicated. Ms. Morello stated that the
35 Commission is asked to make a recommendation. The question is whether the ballfield or the
36 ice rink is the better location for a potential dog park. Commissioner Synhavsky stated she
37 does not feel either is a good option. Commissioner Swiontek stated that she proposes
38 neighborhood dog parks. She would suggest ballfield #2 and relocating the ballfield to another
39 location.

40
41 Ms. Morello summarized the consensus (4-1) of the Commission, which is that Ballfield #2 is
42 the potential site for a dog park at Silver Point Park.

43
44 Ms. Morello requested that the Commission look at the prioritization for the CIP, including
45 pickleball courts at Wellhouse, the dog park, and the LED lighting upgrades for Central Park.
46

Chair Fee asked if we know the payback period for the LED lighting? Ms. Saulog stated they do not have that information; however, there may be a rebate available. Estimates would be requested of the savings in the future.

Commissioner Swiontek noted her priorities would be Lighting, Pickleball, and Dog Park. Commissioners Synhavsky and Peterson noted the same priorities. Commissioner Hark stated his priorities would be LED Lighting, Dog Park, and Pickleball. Student Liaison Cram agreed she fears pickleball may be a trend, while dog parks would always be used. Chair Fee noted her priorities would be Lighting, Pickleball, and Dog Park. Commissioner Peterson stated she would like to see more information on the noise considerations for pickleball. Commissioner Peterson stated that the Wellhouse tennis courts need repair.

Ms. Morello thanked the Commission for their feedback.

C. Active Transportation Plan Updates.

Sustainability Coordinator Saulog reviewed a PowerPoint including Updates, Community Listening Sessions, and an Online Map and Survey. The Community Listening Sessions will be held on September 22, September 29, October 2, and October 8. Everyone is invited to fill out the survey to share comments available at savmn.com/at-survey or bit.ly/sav-at. Residents are also invited to add comments to the interactive online map at bit.ly/sav-atmap.

VII. COMMISSION REPORTS.

Commissioner Peterson stated she was a volunteer at the Eco-Experience at the State Fair this year. She has information on fix-it clinics throughout the area.

Commissioner Synhavsky stated she has been sharing the bike survey. She is one of the organizers of the Wilshire Bike Bus.

Commissioner Swiontek stated she participated in activities at Silverwood Park. They are in the process of converting their home to solar energy.

Chair Fee plans to attend the bike audit. She received a Lawns grant this year.

Commissioner Hark stated he and his wife will attend the walk, but are unable to attend the bike portion. He had some discussions with the Chamber of Commerce to put together a survey to gauge interest in EV incentives.

Ms. Saulog stated that the EV charging ordinance has been going through readings with the City Council. Public Works is in the process of getting the roof redone. Excel is coming to do their witness test that will give us the green light to start operating the solar system. Staff have been continuing with the implementation of the Energy Action Plan. They have been promoting home energy audits to the community. Staff is seeking testimonials from residents and homeowners who have participated in the program.

VIII. COMMUNITY FORUM.

Mr. Scott Strigel, 2604 34th Avenue, is with the Boosters. He has spent 2-4 nights a week at Silver Point Park. He is very supportive of the dog park and believes Silver Point Park would be the best location. Removing Ballfield #2 would be detrimental to their ability to offer t-ball within the City. They would need to move to a Saturday-only option. He would like the Commission to research having a multi-use rink. Flooding is a concern for Field #2. Parking and traffic are a problem. A dog park is a year-round amenity.

Mr. Paul White, 32nd Avenue, was called the dog park guy. He had been surveying neighbors regarding a dog park. In the surveys done, there was a very compelling interest. He'd be happy to share the survey results. Folks who were interested in a dog park were driving to another location, but they wanted something they could walk to. He always drives to pickleball. He would hate to lose an ice rink, but if there were more consolidation among ice rinks, there might be enough people for a game.

IX. ADJOURNMENT.

Motion by Commissioner Hark, seconded by Commissioner Swiontek, to adjourn the September 8, 2025, meeting of the Parks and Environmental Commission at 9:15 p.m.

Motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Debbie Wolfe
TimeSaver Off Site Secretarial, Inc.