



**PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION MEETING**  
**February 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2026**  
**Recreation Center**  
**12:00 Noon**

**Members in Attendance:** T. Deane, M. Hill, J. Walker, T. Hobson, C. White, B. Combo, B. Nitschke, P. Holm, J. Feeman, B. Stevens

**Members Not in Attendance:** N. Birch

**Call to Order**

B. Combo called the meeting to order at 12:01 pm.

**Approval of Minutes**

C. White moved to approve the December 1st meeting minutes. B. Nitschke seconded. All were in favor.

**Director's Report – P. Holm**

P. Holm reported the following:

- P. Holm introduced Troy Deane, who will be the new Golf Advisory Board liaison to the Parks and Recreation Commission, once he's approved by City Council later this month.
- P. Holm addressed the following topics from his director's report that the commissioners had questions about:
  - a. The caretaker house at Sand Creek Golf Course. He explained that the trailer is dilapidated, and the assistant superintendent living there has moved out. He said the trailer would be removed soon. P. Holm also gave the status of the caretaker houses at Pinecrest and Sage Lakes Golf Courses. He also provided some ideas for the vacated apartment in the Pinecrest Club House.
  - b. Tubing Hill. B. Nitschke expressed some concerns regarding the tubing hill and asked P. Holm why Gateway to Kelly Canyon was able to walk away from their contractual obligations. He thought a complete writeup of the tubing hill project be done so that lessons could be learned. P. Holm stated that he would prepare a report on the project explaining how the situation with the tubing hill began, unfolded, and the ultimate failure of the company in charge. He also described future landscaping plans for the park.
  - c. P. Holm reported that Bonham/Wills & Associates completed the valuation process for the naming rights to the Chukars baseball field. He said they are now working on identifying potential naming sponsors for the

facility. He reminded the commissioners that Melaleuca retains the first right of refusal for one year.

d. He addressed the question regarding River Parkway and temporary repairs needed to get us along until a project is designed and built.

e. He addressed impact fees and the current litigation.

- P. Holm and staff will be hosting a meeting on February 3<sup>rd</sup> with the Idaho Falls Youth Hockey Association regarding rink issues, overcrowding, usage, etc.
- He talked about the status of a future Community Wellness Center.
- There was a group discussion on a second sheet of ice.

#### Action Items

- a. The Adoption of the Facility Allocation & Priority Policy. Following extensive discussion of the policy, and the language in the policy, it was decided to table a vote so that the wording in the policy can be revised. P. Holm asked commissioners to read through it and give him their suggestions on the changes needed.
- b. Annual Vote for Commission Chairman. C. White nominated B. Combo to continue as chairman. T. Hobson seconded. All were in favor and motion carried.

#### **Commission Reports**

##### **Shade Tree - M. Hill**

M. Hill reported on the following:

- The City of Idaho Falls was awarded the Legacy of Leaves Award for our 2025 Arbor Day celebration event. It is the first time we have ever received this award from the Idaho Nursery and Landscape Association.
- He discussed the line clearing by Idaho Falls Power Department and the need for a public service announcement to alert homeowners of their responsibilities associated with the line clearing.
- M. Hill reviewed the city forestry year-end report achievements including: 136 trees planted, 62 trees removed, 2297 work orders, 1036 applications, 613, pest applications, 148 growth regulator applications, 379 trees trimmed, and a drone obtained to help the department manage the city forestry.
- Arbor Day plans are still being finalized, but it is expected to be held on Riverwalk Drive by Taylor's Crossing.
- A pest problem is expected this year due to this year's mild winter conditions and the associated lack of a deep frost.

##### **Bonneville County – J. Walker**

J. Walker reported the following:

- Water levels in the high country are in the low 90's percentile. Blacktail reservoir is currently low.
- Due to lack of snow, people are driving on back country roads causing damage to gates, and docks at Blacktail Park.

##### **School District 91 – N. Birch (absent)**

### **School District 93 – T. Hobson**

T. Hobson reported the following:

- The school districts are in the winter sport season with tournaments coming up. The district girls' basketball tournament started today and wrestling begins next week.
- The state cheer dance event is at the end of the month at the Mountain America Center.
- Spring Sports are coming up and if this weather holds, they might actually be able to hold their tryouts outside.
- The state did not opt to renew the volleyball contract at the Mountain America Center, so he will be working on that.

### **National Trends on Aging – C. White**

C. White reported the following:

A new law was passed in New Jersey for 2026 regarding E-Bikes that he found interesting. The new law requires the following:

- All e-bikes must be registered with the NJ Motor Vehicle Commission (MVC)
- Applies to all e-bike classes, including low-speed models
- Registration required to ride on public roads

#### License Requirements

- Age 17+: Valid driver's license required
- Age 15–16: Motorized bicycle license required
- Under 15: Not allowed to ride e-bikes on public roads

#### Insurance

- Liability insurance is required for registered e-bikes
- Grace period provided to get registered, licensed, and insured

#### Other Key Points

- E-bikes are now treated similarly to motorized bicycles
- Fees may be temporarily waived during the initial rollout
- Local trail and municipal restrictions may still apply

### **Sports Tourism – B. Combo**

No report

### **Park Conditions and Needs – B. Nitschke**

B. Nitschke reported concerns for the following:

- Freeman Park – B. Nitschke asked: "What was up with the arboreal destruction at Freeman Park? The willow trees along Willow Creek were arguably one of the most scenic areas in the park system. He raised questions about the immediate need, the public involvement and future plans.

- Idaho Falls Zoo - Final Report of The Visiting Committee. B. Nitschke reviewed the AZA accreditation report and found it deficient in several key areas. He presented five separate areas of concern to the commissioners. Two of which highlight safety concerns were: the ~ 400-word PREAMBLE TO THE ACCREDITATION STANDARDS does not even mention the words; safety, worker or public. They are explicitly implying that animal welfare is not only everything but the only thing. The report did not even mention the near-death encounter of a volunteer with the lioness. The report should have documented their evaluation of the incident and the adequacy of the corrective actions the zoo implemented. He reminded the Commissioners of the report at the [zoogonebad.com](http://zoogonebad.com) website entitled "Idaho Falls Zoo - None Dare Call It Safe"
- B. Nitschke recommended that the commission send a message to the mayor and city council citing the inadequacies of the AZA final review especially regarding worker safety and asking them to have an independent safety and management review of the Idaho Falls Zoo.
- Following group discussion, it was agreed that B. Nitschke will e-mail out his monthly report to the commission and P. Holm will send out the AZA report to the commission and then discuss this at a future meeting.

**Adjournment at 1:35pm.**

**Next meeting – March 2, 2026**

*Recorded by:*

*Tracy Sessions, Executive Assistant  
Parks & Recreation Dept.*