

MINUTES
PARKS AND RECREATION ADVISORY BOARD MEETING
CITY COMMISSION ROOM
February 9, 2026 - 5:30 P.M.

Present were the following members of the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board: Mr. Nick Lander, Mr. Joe Knopp, Ms. Sue Maes, Mr. Greg Hoyt, Mr. Matt Enoch, and Mr. Bruce Snead.

Absent: None.

Employees present: Mr. Aaron Stewart, Director of Parks and Recreation; Mr. Casey Smithson, Parks Superintendent; Mr. Alfonso Leyva, Park Planner II, and Mr. Stephen Bridenstine, FHDC Director.

PUBLIC COMMENT

None.

BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS

Mr. Knopp commented that there is a new Zoo Director and he has heard that she is an exceptionally good choice. He still stands by his concern to let stakeholders have more ownership in that selection process but wanted to commend the Department on a good job and he looks forward to a long-time service from her.

MINUTES

It was moved and seconded to approve the minutes of the regular meeting held on January 12, 2026. On vote, motion carried 6-0.

STAFF REPORTS

No comments or questions from Board members or Staff on the Monthly and Financial Reports.

NEW BUSINESS

1. Mr. Stewart presented an Aquatics Survey Findings to the Board and commented those findings were presented to the City Commission at the Commission Retreat last week. He shared in 2023, there was a Community Survey with 77% supporting or strongly supporting indoor water and in 2024, the Move MHK! Survey Data suggested a high priority for indoor leisure and competition water. The 2026 Aquatics Survey was developed from that data and went out to registered voters rather than the general population. It also explored a larger Master Plan Concept at CiCo and asked to prioritize between Roads, Aquatics, Reinvestment, and CiCo. He stated there were 1,361 returned results and shared the results for the preferred location, support for tax increases, funding methods, the future of CiCo Park, and community priorities.

Mr. Stewart stated for Location and Distance, 55% would not support indoor aquatics and 54% would not travel to an indoor aquatics center. For Property Tax vs. Sales Tax, 81% did not want property tax and 69% did not want sales tax. For Funding Method and Reasoning, 67% did not support any increases in taxes and 55% said those who use the facility should pay. For Membership Fees, 90% wanted less than \$160/month for a family pass, 68% wanted less than \$40/month for an individual pass, and 59% wanted less than \$8/day. For CiCo Park Priorities, the top priority was maintaining CiCo as it is today, then renovating the fairgrounds, improving Bishop Stadium, building an indoor aquatics center, expanding USD 383 athletic facilities, and then relocating the fairgrounds and Riley County shops. For Community Priorities, street maintenance was the top priority, then indoor aquatics, then CiCo Park renovations, then reinvestment into existing parks.

Mr. Stewart stated the next step is to start exploring Goal #1 which is reinvestment into existing parks. Move MHK! identified concept plans for Northeast, Northview, and City Parks. The intent is to renew the

Quality-of-Life Sales Tax in 2027 and start working on reinvestment. The City Park concept will need to be redone to remove the conceptual aquatic park and to potentially add an inground skate park.

Mr. Hoyt asked if the plan for City Park was to get rid of the ballfields. Mr. Stewart answered yes, the plan was to move them to Northeast Park.

Mr. Knopp asked if the pool group of architects and people who presented the original plan was disbanded or if it will continue. Mr. Stewart answered that group completed their work with the Master Plan in 2024.

Mr. Lander commented he doesn't disagree with the outcome but noticed in the report the percentage of respondents who are in a higher economic bracket were overwhelmingly providing survey results and asked if that was reflective of the voting role for the area. Mr. Stewart shared he cannot speak to that definitively, but from what he knows is that it typically works out that way. The survey went out to the last voter role. Mr. Lander shared even for a reasonable sized indoor facility completely based on user fees including construction and operational costs, it's not even a ballpark of what is feasible. Mr. Stewart stated that depending on what the water and amenities look like would determine whether it could be cost recovered.

Mr. Snead commented there are a lot more people that drive than swim so it's no surprise that street maintenance is at 80%. The need and desire to have indoor aquatics in this community is there but given the current political context the results are not surprising. The longer we wait, the more it will cost.

2. Mr. Stewart presented a Move MHK! 2026 Amendment to the Board and shared part of what Staff is trying to do annually is update Move MHK! as needed. This year, there are 3 documents incorporated for amendment including the Indoor Aquatics and CiCo Park Community Survey, the Riverfront MHK Conceptual Plan, and the Flint Hills Discovery Center Sculpture Trail Plan.

Mr. Stewart shared the Indoor Aquatics Survey and findings would be put into the plan.

Mr. Stewart stated the Riverfront Plan was initiated by the public and brought to the City as a desire to include in long-term planning. It's a conceptual vision across the Kansas River and provides opportunities for people to engage with that river. It does not commit the City to specific projects, funding, or timelines. Future consideration will occur through normal public engagement processes including a statistically valid survey and public meetings. This will allow the City to evaluate riverfront opportunities incrementally and responsively.

Mr. Knopp asked if the City would feel compelled to provide funding because it's included in the plan. Mr. Stewart stated it's like the Move MHK! Plan where the work is already done and handed to us, so the first step is to capture out of survey data where does this land as a priority.

Mr. Stewart shared the FHDC Sculpture Trail Plan creates a framework for public art themes, placement and implementation around FHDC. Supports placemaking, education, and cultural engagement, and also provides intentional guidance for donor-initiated and partner-supported public art over time.

Mr. Stewart shared next steps is for this Board to take action on amending the Move MHK! Plan and Staff is recommending it be approved. It will then be presented to City Commission and if approved, the Move MHK! Plan will be officially amended to include the Aquatics Survey, Riverfront Concept, and FHDC Sculpture Trail Plan. The amendment would be included as part of the appendix along with the 2025 Approved Goals and the Move MHK! Annual Report.

Mr. Lander asked for a refresher on what the short and long-term goals are for the sculpture plan. Mr. Bridenstine shared this is a partnership with the FHDC Foundation and the concept came up as a way to

institute more public art on the property at FHDC. It's a project that can be done incrementally. The goal of this project is to be funded through the Foundation and that this plan gives Staff guidelines but also flexibility of how to take proposals from artists or approach a donor with an idea.

It was moved by Ms. Maes, seconded by Mr. Snead, to amend the Move MHK! Plan to include the Aquatics Survey, the Riverfront Concept, and the FHDC Sculpture Trail Plan. Mr. Lander opened the floor for discussion and public comment.

Mr. Lander shared he is generally in support of the amendment and understands the need. He's not sure how this community or others will fund these things without community support, but he hopes ways can be found to make progress on things that impact a good majority of the community moving forward.

Mr. Snead commented he feels it's important to adopt visions into the plan that come from public processes like the Riverfront plan. By amending the plan, it's validating that these are appropriate projects.

Mr. Knopp stated the plans and visions are there, but until someone gets excited enough to provide some private capital to do it, he doesn't want it to distract from the other higher priorities.

It was moved by Mr. Knopp to amend the motion to remove the Riverfront Concept. No second. Goes back to the original motion.

Mr. Enoch shared from a recreation professional's perspective, typically in these types of plans there are no resources attached to them at all, they are visions. He stated Aaron has done a great job and going about it the right way and just because there aren't resources to go along with it doesn't mean it shouldn't be part of the vision.

Mr. Lander called for a vote on the motion. On vote, motion carried 5-1.

Mr. Lander asked if there was an update on additional Board members. Mr. Stewart answered there has not been a recommendation for appointments from the Mayor yet but there have been applications submitted.

Mr. Knopp asked what happens to the old playground equipment when it is replaced at the schools. Mr. Hoyt shared he didn't know but could possibly find out. Mr. Knopp asked if the Department had any use for playground equipment. Mr. Stewart answered no, the reason being it has exceeded its lifespan and typically parts are not made so it won't pass inspection. However, equipment can be repurposed.

Mr. Lander asked how much is being evaluated for substantial replacement of things that are starting to fail in the Rec Centers like all the dead spots on the courts. Mr. Stewart answered that dead spots aren't a critical infrastructure whereas bubbles or buckles in the floor are being evaluated as it's a safety issue so those would need to be addressed quickly. Building Services is back under Parks and Recreation so that has increased the engagement in those facilities of inspections and repairs.

UPCOMING MEETING TOPICS

Mr. Lander shared the upcoming meeting topics include a 2026-2030 CIP Recommendations and a Summer Recreation Programs Preview.

Meeting adjourned.