



# HANCOCK COUNTY PARKS AND RECREATION BOARD



**AGENDA - Thursday, March 19th, 2026**

10:00 AM

Commissioner's Courtroom

## Park Board

### *President*

Miriam Rolles  
Appointed: Commissioners  
3-year term

### *Vice President*

Heather VanDyke  
Appointed: Council  
4-year term

### *Members:*

Jennie Shively  
Appointed: Commissioners  
Remainder - 1 year term

Kelly McClarnon  
Appointed: Council  
Remainder - 2-year term

Teri Gottschalk  
Appointed: Surveyor  
Remainder - 1 year term

### *Staff:*

John Milburn – GIS  
Gary Pool - Highway  
Cory Taylor – Maintenance  
Kayla Brooks - Planning

## March 2026



Spring is here!  
Explore blooming  
trails, chirping birds,  
and fresh green vibes.



***Disclaimer:** 'Meeting Recording Disclaimer': This meeting is being recorded for transcription and archival purposes. Your active participation implies your consent to being recorded. The recording will be used for internal review and documentation. If you have any objections to being recorded, please notify us at the beginning of the meeting.*

Public Link: [Hancock County Parks & Recreation Board Meeting – Live Stream](#)

## AGENDA

- 👉 **Call to Order**
- 👉 **Roll Call**
- 👉 **Approval of Minutes - February 19<sup>th</sup>, 2026**
- 👉 **New Business**
- 👉 **Park Board Re-Appointments**
  - **Surveyor** – Appointing Authority
    - Requested re-appointment of Teri Gottschalk
  - **Commissioners** – Appointing Authority
    - Requested re-appointment of Jennie Shively
- 👉 **Public Input Session – NineStar Park**
  - Facilitator: Lais McCartney, GIS John Milburn & Caroline < Thank you!
  - Name change: Spring Lake → NineStar Park at Sugar Creek
  - Rezone – withdrawn (BOC & Planning Commission)
  - Review of results from 02/19/2026 session
- 👉 **Veterans / Mental Health – Park benches # 988 “You are not alone”**
- 👉 **Five-Year Master Plan**
  - Input session results and community survey submitted to ProConsulting
  - Upcoming meeting with ProConsulting: March 26, 2026
  - Goal: Submit plan to DNR before April 15, 2026
- 👉 **Social Media Outreach -Dusty Wicker**
  - Strategies to help the Park Board better reach and engage our community
  - E-Blast
  - Contact-us
  - Facebook Page
  - Instagram

*Agenda Continued >*

**Thank you for joining us!**

**March 2026** 🌸 🐦 🌱

Spring is here! Explore blooming trails, chirping birds, and fresh green vibes. 🌸 🐦 🌱

#SpringIntoNature #BloomWhereYouArePlanted #TrailAdventures #NatureLovers #ParksMakeLifeBetter #LetsGoOutside

**“LET’S GO OUTSIDE”**



# HANCOCK COUNTY PARKS AND RECREATION BOARD



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## 👉 **Old Business**

### 👉 **ITP Grants** – DNR continue their application reviews, awaiting decision

### 👉 **Town of Shirley & Octagon House Trail**

- IGNITE: Groundhog removal to begin 03/19/2026 to **rehome** animals
- Shirley Heritage Trail – Groundbreaking photo opportunity: 03/24/2026 at 11:30 a.m.
- Sirosky Memorial Plaque

### 👉 **Impact Fees**

- Impact Fee Review Board members appointed:
  - Realtor: Sarah Jo Achor
  - Engineer: Bob Yeager
  - CPA: Alexander Huth
- Financial report – effective February 5, 2026

### 👉 **Board Discussion – Next Meeting**

- Election of officers for Secretary and Treasurer
- Committee’s discussion – priority committees:
  - Implementation of five-year master plan
  - Finance & Grant Committee
  - Community Engagement & Partnerships Committee

### 👉 **Action Item(s)**

### 👉 **Public Discussion**

### 👉 **Adjourn**

### 👉 **Next Meeting**

- **April 16<sup>th</sup>, 2026, at 10:00 a.m.**

👉 *Accommodation requests related to a disability should be made 10 days prior to our meeting.*

👉 *Contact Board President Miriam Rolles – [Miriam.rolles@hancockin.gov](mailto:Miriam.rolles@hancockin.gov)*

👉 *To view our meeting minutes: <https://www.hancockin.gov/AgendaCenter>*

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**Thank you for joining us!**

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**“LET’S GO OUTSIDE”**

## NineStar Park Survey - Summary of Responses

*(Over 200 total responses)*

### Park Usage

Most respondents already visit parks regularly.

- Monthly: 69
- Weekly: 68
- A few times per year: 51
- Rarely: 24
- Not enough parks nearby: 3

#### Takeaway:

Over 60% of respondents visit parks at least monthly, indicating a strong existing park-user base.

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### Importance of Conservation

#### Preservation of Natural Habitats

- Very Important: 139
- Somewhat Important: 51
- Neutral: 11
- Not Important: 7

#### Takeaway:

Over 87% of respondents believe habitat preservation is important, showing strong community support for protecting wetlands, floodplains, and creek areas.

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### Creek Area Preferences

Most valued features:

- Kayak/Canoe Launch: 52
- Shaded Seating/Benches: 39
- Fishing Access: 38
- Boardwalk/Observation Platform: 38
- Preserve as Natural (no access): 33
- Picnic Tables nearby: 15

#### Takeaway:

Residents want nature-focused access with minimal disturbance.

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## Educational Programs

Interest in learning opportunities about the park:

- Somewhat interested: 69
- Very interested: 56
- Neutral: 53
- Not interested: 34

### Takeaway:

Most respondents are open to educational programming, though enthusiasm varies.

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## Stargazing & Dark Sky Programming

Likelihood of attending evening programs:

- Somewhat likely: 79
- Very likely: 64
- Neutral: 26
- Unlikely: 45

### Takeaway:

About 65% would likely attend stargazing or Dark Sky events.

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## Awareness of Dark Sky Parks

- No: 125
- Yes: 87

### Takeaway:

Most respondents had not heard of Dark Sky Certified Parks, indicating an opportunity for public education.

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## Importance of Night Sky Preservation

- Very important: 96
- Important: 64
- Somewhat important: 25
- Neutral or not important: 28

### Takeaway:

Approximately 74% feel protecting night skies is important.

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## Agreement with Park Vision Statements

Statement 1 = Creating a nature-focused park that protects wetlands, creek areas, and wildlife habitat.

- Agree/Strongly Agree: 154
- Neutral: 39
- Disagree: 19

Statement 2 = Developing the park as a place for conservation, education, and Dark Sky / night sky experiences.

- Agree/Strongly Agree: 195
- Neutral: 12
- Disagree: 6

### Takeaway:

Strong support for the overall vision presented in the survey.

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## Communication Preferences

Preferred ways to receive park updates:

Top choices:

- Email / Newsletter
- Social Media
- Community Meetings or Events
- Park Signage / Kiosks

### Takeaway:

A combined digital + community approach would reach most residents.

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## Age of Respondents

Largest groups:

- 35-44: 58
- 55-64: 44
- 45-54: 38
- 65-74: 38
- 25-34: 29

**Takeaway:**

Survey respondents skew middle-aged to older adults.

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**Where Respondents Live**

- Greenfield: 76
- Spring Lake Area: 53
- Elsewhere in Hancock County: 38
- New Palestine: 33
- Outside county: 6

**Takeaway:**

Most responses came from nearby residents who will likely be regular users of the park.

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## Themes from Open-Ended Responses

Several questions produced many unique responses. Common themes included:

### Desired Activities

- Walking and hiking trails
- Nature observation and wildlife viewing
- Kayaking or canoeing
- Fishing
- Photography
- Quiet relaxation spaces

### Desired Amenities

- Trails and boardwalks
- Benches and shaded seating
- Nature education signage
- Observation areas
- Minimal lighting for Dark Sky viewing

### Vision for a Successful Park

Common themes:

- Protecting natural habitats
- Maintaining quiet and natural character
- Providing simple outdoor recreation
- Creating educational opportunities
- Preserving the night sky

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### Overall Key Takeaways

1. **Strong support for conservation-focused park design.**
2. Residents want **low-impact recreation** (trails, wildlife viewing, fishing).
3. **Educational and astronomy programming shows good interest.**
4. **Dark Sky awareness is low but support is high once explained.**
5. Most users prefer **simple natural amenities rather than heavy development.**



# You Are NOT Alone



JVSG Veteran Team

Get Connected



County Veteran Service Office



## Call 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline



# Hancock County Parks & Recreation Board

## Committee & Officer Overview

### Board Officers

Role	Name	Responsibilities
President	Miriam Rolles	Overall leadership, committee oversight, strategic direction; may guide governance practices
Vice President	Heather Van Dyke	Supports President, assists with committee oversight; may accept a different seat if desired
Secretary	[To be nominated/voted]	Meeting minutes, official correspondence, record-keeping
Treasurer	[To be nominated/voted]	Tracks funds, reports, coordinates with county finance
Governance	[To be nominated/voted]	Establishes policies, board development, ethics; conducts policy reviews and ensures compliance

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### Standing Committees

Committee	Purpose / Focus	Chair (To Be Appointed)	Members
Governance / Bylaws	Bylaws, policies, ethics, board development, naming/donation policies	TBD	TBD
Planning & Land Strategy	Master planning, land acquisition, trail connectivity, capital improvement priorities	TBD	TBD

<b>Committee</b>	<b>Purpose / Focus</b>	<b>Chair (To Be Appointed)</b>	<b>Members</b>
<b>Finance &amp; Development</b>	Grants, public/private partnerships, funding strategy, long-term sustainability	TBD	TBD
<b>Community Engagement</b>	Public input, school & civic partnerships, volunteer programs, programming concepts	TBD	TBD
<b>Implementation</b>	Tracks approved initiatives, monitors timelines, coordinates progress	TBD	TBD
<b>Facilities &amp; Stewardship</b>	Asset management, maintenance standards, ADA compliance, safety, environmental stewardship	TBD	TBD
<b>Programming &amp; Events</b>	Recreation programs, community events, park activation initiatives	TBD	TBD
<b>Volunteer Coordinator</b>	Manages volunteer programs, recruitment, and community engagement	TBD	TBD

## Next Steps

- 1. Election of / Vote Officer Roles** – Secretary, Treasurer.
- 2. Confirm Committee Chairs** – President appointments to be voted on.
- 3. Assign Committee Members** – Board members join one or two committees. (Mindful of dual office holding)