

## **Park Board Meeting Minutes January 13, 2026**

**Park Board Members Present:** Giuseppe Caltabiano (Council Alternate), Terri Dunn, Bruce Aronson, Emily Butler, Thomas Shea, Jim DeHerrera, Melissa Hartman

**Park Board Members Absent:** Frank Sweeney

**City Staff:** Maria Butts, Jennie Bradford, Carla Belski

**Guests:** NA

- A. Call to Order at 5:59 p.m.
- B. Changes to the January 13, 2026, Agenda. None
- C. Approval of October 21, 2025, Minutes. Motion to approve by Member Caltabiano and seconded by Vice Chair DeHerrera. All ayes.
- D. Public Comments: Steve Riddle spoke on behalf of Libby Riddle, owner of Montana Boards, whose written public comment was included in the packet. He spoke to electric assist hand launch watercraft and how this is new and emerging type of watercraft that does not compete with but compliments the existing paddleboard concessionaire at City Beach. He spoke about the low impact of this equipment, and that this is a mobile appointment business where no storage or concession space is needed. In addition to rentals, Montana Boards provide jet board, paddleboard and yoga board lessons. Montana Boards operates from April through October, including the shoulder season when other outfitters are closed. He concluded that Montana Boards would provide accessible equipment to a wide range of people at City Beach and in doing so would allow their small business to contribute meaningfully to community.

Julio Delgado of 630 Karrow Ave, Whitefish spoke to the current use of Memorial Park field. He spoke to the challenges the Whitefish High School encountered in wanting to use the Twins Stadium, noting the Twins wanted to charge them \$6,000 for baseball and \$7,000 for football. Julio shared he previously came to the City and learned of the lease agreement between the City and the Twins for 55 years for \$1 / year, with ability to for the Twins to sublet for a price of their choosing. He added that the Twins get most of the proceeds from the cell tower located on the field. He shared there are so many other programs that could benefit from that money. Julio said he was told the only way this iron clad lease could be revoked is if it was shown that the Twins were breaking the agreement. He has asked the Twins to show them their books but they won't. In review of the Twins annual report, Julio commented that it almost never changes, the same expenditures are listed year after year. Julio also stated their numbers are inflated. He shared he coached the Twins for 20 years and the current level of baseball is lower than it was when he coached. Nowadays, team travel is limited and there are not any overnight expenses. Julio stated the Twins aren't being held accountable and that no one has gone to see what they've done. He shared

it used to be that other organizations and even the public could use the stadium, and they have been allowed to privatize it. Julio stated the only way the Twins will show him their books is if Park Board or the City asks them for it. Julio respectfully asked that the board let him look into it, and requests that Memorial Park field be open to the public. The various groups could walk and inspect the field at the beginning of the season and if there is damage then the group involved would pay for repairs.

#### Committee Reports

- a. Bicycle/Pedestrian Committee – Vice Chair DeHerrera shared the Chief of Police spoke to the committee on the new ordinance for e-bikes. It is currently a draft but will hopefully go to council in April. The Riverbend condo situation is on-going. The mayor hasn't yet been able to meet with new director of FWP. The City has applied for a new permit.
- b. Tree Advisory Committee – Member Dunn shared nothing new to report. Director Butts shared Park and Recreation staff member Carla Belski is working with urban forestry staff Jen Sybrant and Philip Hodge on a DNRC grant to remove and replace some of our ash trees and for a public campaign with some banners downtown to educate people on how to take care of trees. Vice Chair DeHerrera shared that he saw we lost a tree in Depot Park. Member Caltabiano added the tree landed on a BNSF staff vehicle but they are not making a claim with the City.
- c. WSFF Board – Member Shea shared they are still working on getting the new facility up and going. They are still talking about roof replacement/maintenance. Director Butts shared she has already toured the facility and is aware of the issues and need for a new roof. It was left that they were going to talk to the WSFF board to see if they can assist in fundraising and provide a project timeline. Director Butts added that the ice is rented out until 2027. She stated we need them to project when in the future the rink can take down time in summer to get it replaced. She added Judah was going to do research on the cost of the roof to see if he could find a less expensive bid. Director Butts has not yet heard back from him. She shared she did email the WSFF board today as doesn't sound like everyone is on the same page and is waiting on one another, so she is restarting that communication to begin working with them again to get a timeline and funding sorted.
- d. WAG Board – Member Aronson shared the website has a webcam, with stats (temperature, wind, and UV index). Another webcam will be installed facing north towards big mountain. Aronson said apparently WAG is not allowed to remove snow at the dog park. Director Butts corrected Member Aronson stating that it is the sign that needs to go through the same process as any other sign, according to our sign plan. She added the reason for this is that we don't have a mix of different signs in our parks and that all signs in parks are approved by the board. Member Aronson asked why the snow removal responsibilities at the dog park have landed on WAG. Director Butts shared WAG has always volunteered snow removal and that part of the agreement of the paths going in is the board

agreeing to do snow removal. Member Aronson shared the unapproved signs are down.

**E.** Presentations: NA

**F.** Public Hearings: NA

**G.** Old Business: NA

**H.** New Business:

a. Review of City Beach Commercial Permit Fee Schedule and Permit Quotas

- Consideration to approve permit quotas.
- Consideration of recommending City Council approval of fee schedule.

Parks and Recreation staff Carla Belski presented on the enclosed fee proposal document in the packet and requested feedback from the Park Board.

- a) Day and Season Passes: Staff Belski shared she wanted to complete the improvements at City Beach before requesting more in fees and the project was completed this fall to the tune of \$220,000. She shared this will help with launching larger boats and the facilitation of the AIS program. They will continue performing decontaminations free of charge, and they do not charge for inspections, even if the watercraft is not launching in Whitefish Lake. Member Caltabiano asked Staff Belski to remind him if the gazebos and facilities already have resident and non-resident fee. Staff Belski responded they all do except for City Beach. Vice Chair DeHerrera sought clarification on the definition of resident and staff Belski shared this refers to a Montana State resident and they use the boats state registration to determine this. Staff Belski added it would be quite arduous to differentiate between city, county, Flathead Valley etc. Member Caltabiano shared this would only be possible if we used newer technology. Staff Belski said she is currently only using Civic Rec for managing commercial permits and hasn't moved to using this for day or season passes as it is a multistep process. Member Caltabiano shared you could offer a 5% discount for pre-purchased passes. Member Dunn felt this was a very reasonable assessment of fee increases. Member Caltabiano asked staff Belski if she had data on the % of resident and non-resident users from last year. Staff Belski said she has this information for AIS inspections but wouldn't know if they bought day or season passes. Member Caltabiano suggested adding this information into the report council will receive at the work session. Staff Belski shared the majority of small fishing boats launch at State Park, not City Beach, and that the feedback she has received is that many residents feel an increase is fair. Another consideration is that other communities may charge for boat trailer parking and that wouldn't be feasible here. Chair Hartman shared monies not raised through this process come out of tax revenue so having people pay something for a benefit they are utilizing seems reasonable.
- b) Commercial Permits: Vice Chair DeHerrera asked how the new categories with limits compared with where we are currently. Staff Belski shared that aside from the high use category the quotas allow for some growth. Staff Belski added that she may try

these quotas this coming year and then make some adjustments. Solid data would help to give us better numbers. Director Butts added if council approves the fees, the Park Board can decide if we want to change quotas after Carla reports back. It is just the approval of fees that go to council.

- c) Dock Service Providers: creating windows for delivery.

In terms of recommendations, Director Butts suggested we first look at day and season pass fees. Chair Hartman shared her only feedback would be to increase non-resident rates, otherwise the proposed increases seem very reasonable. Member Dunn said she would like to make proposal to approve the fees for this year with a review at the end of the season to amend it, if necessary. Member Shea voiced his agreement to adjust the resident rate down and non-resident rate up. Staff Belski added one of the reasons for the \$15 rate is that most people don't carry a lot of one-dollar bills and making change is a challenge. Member Butler shared she felt \$15 is reasonable for a resident and added we could always raise the non-resident fee next year. Vice Chair DeHerrera made a motion to approve the day and season pass fee schedule as proposed. Seconded by Member Dunn. All ayes.

Commercial Permit Fees: Vice Chair DeHerrera made a motion to approve the commercial permit fees as presented and revisit them after the first season. Seconded by Member Dunn. All ayes.

Dock Service Provider Hours: Member Dunn motioned to approve the suggested windows as presented. Seconded by Member Caltabiano. All ayes.

I. Other Items: NA

J. Items from Parks and Recreation Department

- a. Administrative Report: Director Butts wanted to bring to board's attention that we did invoice Oktoberfest and Stumptown Get Down for turf repairs. We are going to look at it again in the spring. Director Butts did have RPA assess Depot Park and the water is draining properly. It would be a significant challenge to change the drainage off of the tent. Director Butts shared she let Oktoberfest know there are some floor panel resources available in the valley and asked them about the feasibility of putting floor panels under the tent and in high traffic areas. She has asked that they report back to staff and has not heard back yet.
- b. Recreation Coordinator Report: NA
- c. Maintenance Report: Director Butts shared graffiti has been particularly common in the O'Shaughnessy and Parking Garage restrooms but that Police are using camera footage to help identify those responsible. She also shared that she placed a pamphlet on the dais with information on how to report a non-emergency crime. The Police Department is urging the public to use this for reporting purposes.
- d. Community Services Coordinator Report: NA

K. Correspondence: Letter in packet from a resident regarding Soroptimist Park, specifically dogs off leash approaching children and pet owners not picking up

after them. Member Aronson suggested adding to the sign that there is a dog park and a QR code for users to know where it is. Director Butts indicated there seems to be a need for dog park on the north side of the viaduct and asked Member Aronson to speak with WAG about dog park #2. Director Butts thinks Crestwood Park could be a good place. It is currently undeveloped parkland. It would need a fence and parking access. Chair Hartman shares she knows of some places where there are certain hours that dogs are allowed off leash but knows this doesn't solve the problem of owners not picking up after their pets. Director Butts said dogs are allowed off leash at WAG and within the river corridor because that is FWP.

- L.** Items from the Park Board: Vice Chair DeHerrera made a motion to approve Avery Soronson as the Whitefish High School Representative on the Pedestrian and Bicycle Path Advisory Committee. Seconded by Member Caltabiano. All ayes. Director Butts shared that the City is currently working on negotiations of the MOU with the Glacier Twins and that it will be presented next month.
- M.** Adjourned at 7:57 pm. Approved by Member Dunn and seconded by Vice Chair DeHerrera.