

**CITY OF LAKEVILLE
PARKS, RECREATION & NATURAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES
February 4, 2026**

Committee Chair Weberg called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. in the Lake Marion Conference Room.

Members Present: Holly Weberg, Steve Henneberry, Vicki Schwartz, Pat Sauer, Dan Volkosh, Mark Engler, Renee Brekken

Members Absent: Saima Ali, Shahid Nadeem

Staff Present: Parks and Recreation Director Joe Masiarchin, Environmental Resources Specialist II Ann Messerschmidt

1. Approval of January 7, 2025 Meeting Minutes

Sauer made a motion, seconded by Volkosh, to approve the January 7, 2025, minutes as written.

Ayes: unanimous

2. Citizen comments

No citizens were present.

3. Environmental Resources Update on Ritter Farm Park

Ongoing prairie restoration projects have been underway at Ritter Farm Park since 2018. In 2018, staff applied for a grant through Great River Greening to complete Phase I of the project. The Phase I restoration included 10.1 acres of prairie and 6.8 acres of woodland. In 2021, the City applied for an LCCMR (Legislative-Citizen Commission on Minnesota Resources) Grant and was awarded \$36,000 for the Phase II portion of the project. The City matched the awards with a \$26,00 contribution and the funds were paid out over the course of three years. From late 2021 to fall of September 2023, a number of initiatives were completed:

- Prairie restorations and habitat enhancement
- Invasive woody control in woodland
- Native vegetation establishment

These initiatives were accomplished through a number of tasks:

- Seeding existing prairie and areas of woodland
- Removal of dead and downed buckthorn and other invasive vegetation
- Limited mowing operations
- Foliar buckthorn treatment in prairie, grassland, and woodland areas

Environmental Resources staff has worked with MnDOT on purchasing native prairie seed mixtures and is working on finding a mix that thrives at the park. Due to farmland operations, the soil can be unfavorable to new growth. Staff had also worked with other local contractors on seed mixes.

In 2023, staff applied for another grant through Great River Greening and LCCMR to restore 10.5 acres of shortgrass prairie and complete invasive tree removals on 1.25 acres. A total of \$62,500 was received in

grant funding and the City matched with a \$30,00 contribution. Phase II of the project began in March of 2025 and is slated to be completed by spring of 2027. The primary goals of this phase of the project include:

- Shortgrass prairie enhancement
- Invasive black locust removal
- Native vegetation establishment

These initiatives will be accomplished through a number of tasks:

- Prescribed burns
- Forestry tilling
- Flail mowing operations
- Basal back black locust treatment
- Forb seeding
- Woody removals

A prescribed burn was completed in March 2025 and forestry tilling operations are ongoing. The prescribed burns have occurred in other seasons, staff is still determining what garners the best results. Fall burns have contributed to significant spring growth but the summer burn also had favorable results. The prescribed burns are completed by a contractor and are heavily dependent on weather conditions. Staff has already noted native vegetation growth and an increase in pollinators through a Bee Monitoring Program.

Phase III of the project is slated for completion by fall of 2029 and includes 7.3 acres of forest enhancement and 13.2 acres of prairie restoration. This phase of the project includes:

- Initial woody removal in prairie woodland
- Seeding of prairie and woodland
- Critical period cutting of invasive woody species in woodland
- Foliar herbicide application in prairie and woodlands, black locust girdling woodlands
- Foliar herbicide application in savanna woodland

Bee Monitoring with the University of Minnesota Bee Lab is taking place at Ritter Farm Park, nine species were surveyed in 2025 including the elusive rusty patch bumble bee! 759 bees were collected and released in 2025. There has been a steady increase of bees in the park since the monitoring program began:

- 2022: 207
- 2023: 384
- 2024: 244
- 2025: 759

The restoration of native vegetation has a significant impact on pollinator populations in the park.

Committee Discussion:

As trees are removed, is public education available? Staff has placed signage at the park with QR codes that link to the project story map, which includes project progress. Staff has partnered with the Communications Department to post information online and on social media platforms.

Are other non-bee pollinator populations, such as hummingbirds, monitored? They aren't currently monitored at Ritter Farm Park, but they are naturally expected to benefit from the native vegetation restoration, similar to the bees.

What resources, if any are available to residents for native planting education? Landscaping for Clean Water offers rebates for a variety of projects, including rain gardens, shoreline restoration, and pollinator gardens. They also offer a series of classes on these topics; the next series begins in mid-February.

4. Staff Report

Staff will be providing an update on the Parks System Master Plan to the City Council at their February 17 meeting. This is a shift from the Work Session as the council is trying out a new meeting format. The community-wide survey results, needs assessment and story map will be presented for comment. Committee members are welcome to attend.

An Open House is scheduled for March 4 from 4:30-6:30 p.m. This is an opportunity for public comment and fulfills one of the planning process's public engagement initiatives. There will also be a table at the upcoming Home and Garden Expo with information on the Parks System Master Plan.

Staff is working on an LCCMR grant application to support a full-time naturalist and seasonal summer staff to offer nature education programs at the Environmental Learning Center (ELC). Staff is requesting \$800,000 that would fund three years of nature education costs at the ELC. This sum was figured based on current contractor and seasonal staff salaries.

5. Other Business

Henneberry made a motion, seconded by Egnler, to adjourn the February 4, 2026 meeting.

Ayes: unanimous

6. Adjourn

Meeting 7:07 p.m.