

Official minutes
Parks & recreation advisory commission

Members present: Amy Brandli, Bruce Cantor, Jay Jaffee, Adrienne Krill, Sonya Rippe and David Yakes

Members absent: None.

Staff present: Mikayla Beuch, recreation supervisor and Jason West, parks and recreation director

School District present: Patrice Howard, community education director

Guests: Karen McManamon, Westopolis

1. Call to order – roll call

The meeting was called to order at approximately 6 p.m. Chair David Yakes conducted roll call with the following commissioners present: Commissioner Jay Jaffee, Commissioner Amy Brandli, Commissioner Sonya Rippe, Commissioner Adrienne Krill and Commissioner Bruce Cantor. Also present were Jason West, parks and recreation director, Mikayla Beuch, recreation supervisor, Patrice Howard, community education director and Karen McManamon from Westopolis.

The commissioners introduced themselves for voice recognition purposes, going around the room to establish their presence for the meeting recording system.

2. Approval of minutes

Chair Yakes inquired whether all commissioners had reviewed the minutes from the January 21, 2026 meeting. The commissioners confirmed they had examined the lengthy and thorough minutes.

It was moved by Commissioner Rippe, seconded by Commissioner Jaffee, to approve the minutes from January 21, 2026. The motion passed unanimously.

3. Presentations (40 min.)

a. Westopolis update (Karen McManamon)

Karen McManamon from Westopolis, formerly known as Discover St Louis Park, presented an overview of the organization's mission and activities. She explained that Westopolis had rebranded approximately one year and several months prior to better reflect their expanded partnership with Golden Valley.

**Parks & recreation advisory commission meeting
February 18, 2026**

Ms. McManamon described Westopolis' mission as enhancing St Louis Park and Golden Valley's economy, image, and quality by promoting meeting spaces, venues, destinations, parks and recreational fields. She explained that their funding comes from Minnesota State Statute through lodging tax collection. When visitors pay for hotel rooms, they see an occupancy or lodging tax on their receipt, which goes to the city first, then to Westopolis after a small administrative fee is deducted. This funding must be used specifically for marketing and promoting the cities for visitors, not for infrastructure like parking ramps or sculptures.

Ms. McManamon presented 2024 Minnesota tourism statistics, noting that the economic impact was \$24.7 billion with 81.6 million visitors, representing a slight 1% increase from 2023. Visitor spending generated \$14.7 billion, supporting 182,000 jobs and generating billions in state and local taxes. Ms. McManamon emphasized that in 2024, visitor spending saved each Minnesota household over \$1,000 in state and local income taxes.

Ms. McManamon explained that Westopolis serves nine hotels: seven in St. Louis Park and two in Golden Valley. She presented lodging tax data showing the significant impact of COVID-19 on their funding, with a dramatic drop followed by steady recovery back to pre-2019 levels. She noted that January and February are typically slow months, and current events in Minneapolis might cause some downturn, though summer typically sees increases.

She displayed bar graph data showing peak months from May through September, explaining that they actively seek groups and tournaments during off-season months. They even offer grant opportunities with additional funding for off-season bookings.

Ms. McManamon presented Hennepin County economic impact data for 2025, breaking down tourism spending by category. Lodging represented the highest percentage at 30%, though she expressed surprise that food and beverage costs were not higher given current pricing trends.

She discussed partnerships with various organizations including Meet Minneapolis, Minnesota Festival and Events and highlighted their close working relationship with Mr. West in what they call "purposeful partnerships." They work together to sell venues and spaces, sometimes collaborating across multiple cities to meet large event needs. For example, she mentioned current discussions about a gay pride softball tournament requiring ten softball fields within 5-10 minutes of each other.

Ms. McManamon explained their partnership with Meet Minneapolis, where they receive leads from events that Minneapolis cannot accommodate. She shared photos from various events at locations like the ROC and Brookview.

In 2025, Ms. McManamon reported handling numerous sales leads, with awarded leads (actually booked events) increasing from the previous year, which aligned with overall tourism revenue increases. She acknowledged that tracking final outcomes can be challenging since they do not always learn where clients ultimately book their events.

She presented marketing data showing various channels including email, social media, radio and paid advertising. TikTok engagement increased 59% due to its growing platform. She mentioned creating promotional videos including a "go west" themed advertisement featuring cowboys and promoting local activities like pickleball.

Commissioner Jaffee asked about website conversions. Ms. McManamon explained that conversions occur when visitors click through to additional content on their website, such as moving from event listings to related activities or accommodations in the area.

Commissioner Brandli inquired why St. Louis Park and Golden Valley were the chosen cities. Ms. McManamon explained the history, noting that St. Louis Park began the tourism marketing effort in 2011, collecting lodging tax independently as Discover St. Louis Park. Golden Valley later approached them wanting to join the marketing efforts, recognizing they could achieve more with a larger combined budget. Initially, there was concern about Golden Valley accepting the St. Louis Park branding, but they were willing to participate. The rebrand to Westopolis made the partnership more inclusive and opened possibilities for additional cities like Hopkins, Minnetonka, or Crystal to join in the future.

Chair Yakes asked about benchmarking against other similar city collaborations. Ms. McManamon identified major organizations like Meet Minneapolis, Visit Saint Paul and Bloomington, as well as smaller individual city efforts like Burnsville and Lakeville. She described Twin Cities Gateway as a similar collaborative model involving eleven cities and 22 hotels in the Blaine area that pool their lodging tax for collective marketing.

Ms. McManamon explained the challenges of marketing in a competitive metropolitan area where visitors may stay in one city but visit attractions in another. She noted that people often do not know which specific city they are staying in, citing examples of the Mall of America being associated with Minneapolis rather than Bloomington, or the Rec Center being listed under Minneapolis on some hockey websites.

Chair Yakes commented on missing the previous "Discover St. Louis Park" branding from a resident pride perspective but acknowledged the marketing logic of the rebrand for their target audience of out-of-state visitors who may not be familiar with Minnesota geography.

Ms. McManamon discussed recent challenges, noting that while Minneapolis events generally benefit their area, current negative news about Minneapolis could impact tourism. She shared an example of a corporate group that typically stays downtown choosing to look at St. Louis Park to avoid downtown Minneapolis. She acknowledged this presents both opportunities and challenges, particularly affecting smaller businesses and restaurants through reduced service industry employment.

Mr. West displayed a map showing the Minnesota Sports Alliance, a consortium of various convention and visitor bureaus throughout the state that meet quarterly to collaborate and share leads, demonstrating the collaborative approach to sports tourism throughout Minnesota.

Ms. Beuch asked about Airbnb lodging tax collection. Ms. McManamon confirmed that new state statutes now require Airbnbs to pay lodging tax, which will come to Westopolis, creating an obligation to help promote these accommodations on their website. While Airbnb's represent a smaller portion compared to traditional hotels in their area, they cannot be discounted entirely.

Ms. McManamon distributed maps and informational materials about Westopolis services. She highlighted a new program called Destination Uplift, offering marketing training for businesses in St. Louis Park and Golden Valley. This high-level digital marketing education will be available through watch parties and online sessions, covering topics like email marketing best practices and social media metrics. The program runs monthly except during busy periods like Christmas and July 4th, with businesses able to register via QR code without being added to spam lists. Mr. West will also email to commissioners.

b. Community events update (Mikayla Beuch)

Mikayla Beuch, recreation supervisor, presented a comprehensive overview of community events, noting the timing was perfect following Ms. McManamon's presentation since they sometimes collaborate on events.

Ms. Beuch began by recapping fall 2025 events while also highlighting upcoming activities. She described Movies in the Park, which featured four different nights across various St. Louis Park locations. These events were successful with strong community participation, including regular attendees who travel from park to park and can be identified by their consistent setup and chairs.

The 2026 movie lineup will include Minecraft, Zootopia 2, Super Mario Galaxy and Wicked 2, following up on the successful showing of Wicked 1 in fall 2025. Ms. Beuch noted these are lengthy films requiring attendees to settle in for extended viewing. Community Education sponsors the movies by covering licensing and purchasing costs, making these events free to the community. Community Education staff also provide snacks and drinks for children, which typically disappear within the first ten minutes of setup.

Ms. Beuch described ROCtoberfest, held at the ROC with live music and beverages from Park Tavern. The event features various games and activities, including a stein holding contest for children using water-filled plastic mugs they can keep. The Lions Club provides food as a fundraising opportunity, while Park Tavern sponsors the event and covers major costs including band support. The 2026 event is scheduled for September 19 featuring the Brass Bar and Polka Band.

She presented details about Howl-O-Ween, an event she initiated several years ago, held the second Sunday in October at Wolfe Park. The 2025 event attracted approximately 200 people and pets, with 20 vendors including eight returning from previous years and 12 new vendors, demonstrating the event's growth.

Ms. Beuch described adding new experiences including a pet communicator, which she carefully termed rather than "pet psychic" to avoid negative reactions. Beyond

entertainment, she emphasized providing substantial value through vendor offerings like pet accessories, grooming services including nail trimming by Pet Evolution, and educational components. Blue Pearl Vet conducted a 30-minute CPR demonstration using stuffed animals, teaching attendees how to respond if pets choke or need emergency care.

The pet communicator discussed building stronger relationships with animals and becoming more intuitive pet owners, concluding with a live reading demonstration. Ms. Beuch noted the communicator works with all types of animals including horses, parrots and other pets.

The costume contest represents a major attraction, with participation spiking around 2:30 p.m. when the contest begins. She highlighted memorable costumes including an elaborate claw machine design with a dog surrounded by stuffed animals, created by someone who regularly wins contests at other events. Another notable entry featured a dog with mobility challenges using wheels, transformed into a Target shopping cart costume that received enthusiastic crowd response.

The event relies on sponsors and volunteers, with vendors paying tabling fees and offering additional sponsorship. Revenue supports a temporary dog park installation in Wolfe Park's center and covers volunteers and services. St. Louis Park ambassadors assist with activities and judge the costume contest, which Ms. Beuch delegates to avoid being seen as the "bad guy" when selecting winners.

Ms. Beuch presented the Disco Ball Skating series, which has grown over three years from a single trial night to monthly events. The first year tested community interest with one event, the second year added multiple dates, and the current third year features one event per month. She continues evaluating expansion possibilities after completing the February 13 final event of the season.

This year marked the first time charging admission at \$5 plus a \$3 skate rental fee, implemented due to significant staff time and DJ costs. Each event attracts 150 - 200 skaters, with the Valentine's Day event benefiting from beautiful weather. Events are intentionally scheduled around holidays, and the New Year's Eve skate offers free admission with complimentary hot cocoa, s'mores and celebration accessories. A planned January 16 event was canceled due to -19-degree temperatures.

She described the Holiday Train event, clarifying that while not a city-sponsored event, Parks and Recreation provides safety and logistics coordination. The spectacular illuminated train arrives at times determined by Canadian Pacific, requiring city departments to coordinate with STEP, food trucks and other partners for public safety in dark, cold conditions. The train features live music and presents a check to STEP, creating a memorable holiday experience. The 2025 event occurred on a Sunday, which presented staffing challenges, but reduced business disruption compared to weekday scheduling.

Ms. Beuch detailed New Year's Gnome Search, a January activity where she releases weekly clues directing participants to hidden gnomes in various St. Louis Park parks. She researches park history through the historical society and city information to create location-specific

clues. After drafting clues, she tests them with her team to ensure appropriate difficulty levels.

Participants post photos on social media, often obscuring identifiable features to maintain fairness for other searchers. The activity serves all ages and encourages January outdoor activity during typically dreary winter months, supporting mental health through park visitation. This year, participants proving they found all four gnomes receive free aquatic park passes for summer 2026.

Ms. Beuch noted inspiration from similar programs in other cities and strategically selects parks across different city areas using map visualization. The 2026 parks included Birchwood, Lilac, Elie and Ainsworth.

She described BundledUp! a long-running winter fun day held on January 24 despite extremely cold weather from the previous night's -19 degrees. While too cold for horses and Westwood animals, the event proceeded with crafts, winter activities, ambassador-distributed s'mores kits and bonfires. The Rotary Club's raffle raised \$7,250 for donation to the city, supporting the summer concert series. Ms. Beuch shared an amusing anecdote about a child misunderstanding the purpose of snow paint (water and food coloring), creating an unintended but humorous photo opportunity.

Looking ahead, Ms. Beuch outlined upcoming events including the Frosty Mug Crawl in the West End district, featuring a one-tenth mile run/walk. ShamROC Ice Bowling on March 14 offers 30-minute bowling games on ice for teams of four, though smaller groups can register if space allows. The activity welcomes all abilities and ages, with a 12-and-up recommendation when adults are present. Twin Cities Live will feature the event on March 13. Additional upcoming events include the annual spring ice show with the ice skating team (March 21 - 22), Lions Club Egg Hunt (April 4), and Parktacular city festival and parade (June 18 - 21).

Commissioner Jaffee raised concerns about providing toy mugs to children at ROCtoberfest, drawing from his substance abuse prevention career background. He explained that candy cigarettes and similar items in the 1950's normalized adult behaviors, contributing to later smoking habits. He suggested the practice might inadvertently promote drinking behavior to children.

Ms. Beuch acknowledged the feedback, noting they had not previously considered this perspective. Commissioner Jaffee suggested alternatives like root beer mugs or different container types that would not replicate adult beer consumption.

Commissioner Brandli asked whether gnomes had ever gone missing. Ms. Beuch confirmed none had disappeared, though she worries about this possibility. She described a new football player gnome dressed in St. Louis Park colors that only appears on special occasions in heavily monitored areas due to its likely appeal to collectors.

4. Business (25 min.)

a. Review and discuss naming policy* (Jason West)

Mr. West explained that the naming policy review originated from a request in August 2025 (possibly earlier) when an individual approached the commission seeking naming rights for a play structure. During that discussion, staff realized the naming policy had not been updated since 1999, with previous versions dating to 1991, 1977 and originally 1972.

Mr. West had distributed the policy documents to commissioners prior to the meeting for review and reminded them yesterday to examine the materials for more efficient discussion. He offered to review the document line by line or collect suggested edits from commissioners.

Commissioner Jaffee observed that the policies were relatively similar across different time periods, without significant criteria changes over the years.

Commissioner Brandli sought clarification on whether the documents were complementary or replaced previous versions. Mr. West explained that earlier versions appeared to reference all existing parks and how they received their names, serving as historical reference material. The 1999 version represented the commission's decision to establish actual policy guidelines.

Commissioner Rippe identified her primary concern regarding the policy's reference to "significant service" and "significant financial" contributions without defining "significant." While the document specifies 10 years for service, she considered this insufficient for naming recognition, preferring 25 - 30 years. She noted her own approaching 10-year milestone and felt this duration inadequate for such recognition.

Commissioner Rippe referenced the George Hahn trail, named for a former Parks and Recreation director with 25 years of service, as an appropriate example of significant contribution. She also noted that financial significance needed clarification, recalling their previous discussion about requiring 80% of total project costs, citing the Hobbs pavilion example of over \$300,000 donation as truly significant.

Commissioner Cantor expressed comfort with the 10-year service requirement, arguing that some individuals make amazing contributions in shorter periods, creating lasting impacts that continue 25 - 30 years later. He emphasized evaluating actual impact rather than time duration.

Commissioner Rippe questioned how to quantify impact, comparing someone's two-year contribution against another's 25-year service. She argued for objective measures, suggesting the 10-year minimum was insufficient.

Commissioner Cantor acknowledged the difficulty of quantifying social impact but maintained that both duration and impact could be equally valuable. He suggested allowing for either criterion to qualify.

Commissioner Jaffee speculated that the 10-year standard may have originated when people retired at 65, making a decade of volunteer service significant given shorter life expectancy and limited working years available for community service.

Commissioner Rippe provided the example of George Hahn's 25 years of service and Dorothea Nelson, the first Parks and Recreation director and first woman in that role statewide, as demonstrating significant contributions beyond time duration.

Commissioner Cantor suggested combining both approaches - allowing either years of service or major impact, acknowledging difficulty in quantifying major impact.

Commissioner Jaffee recommended trusting future commission membership to evaluate significance thoughtfully, considering quantifiable measures where possible.

Commissioner Rippe proposed modifying the application language under "service community" to require documentation of years of service and/or impact description, providing framework for impact evaluation.

The commissioners agreed that both criteria should be available with an "and/or" structure, allowing applicants to demonstrate either longevity or significant impact.

Commissioner Rippe expressed her personal discomfort with 10 years, preferring 20 - 25 years minimum. She referenced the policy's existing examples showing 25-year service levels and noted other recognition categories like founding fathers, former mayors and property donors.

Chair Yakes questioned whether memorial provisions should be separated from naming policies, as section D appeared to address different circumstances involving smaller monetary contributions rather than major facility naming.

Commissioner Rippe agreed, explaining Plymouth's approach where memorial donations for items like trees and benches include specific costs and lifespan limitations. When a memorial tree dies or benches reach its 10-year lifespan, the memorial recognition ends unless donors provide additional funding for replacement.

Commissioner Jaffee raised concerns about changing park names, referencing recent controversies involving historical figures like Jeffrey Epstein associates who were once considered community paragons. He suggested potentially avoiding personal names entirely, favoring geographical naming conventions.

Chair Yakes asked about mechanisms for changing names when circumstances warranted, noting the two-year waiting period mentioned in the policy.

Chair Yakes suggested including Native American or indigenous peoples in the examples list, particularly following recent Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission discussions about Native American history and naming practices.

Commissioner Jaffee noted that St Louis Park already has some Native American named parks including Dakota and Minikahda but suggested expanding representation. Mr. West offered to consult with the city's REI director for appropriate terminology guidance.

Commissioner Jaffee expressed serious consideration for avoiding personal names in future naming decisions while not changing existing park names, due to concerns about future revelations damaging reputations.

Commissioner Brandli countered that they should not eliminate naming opportunities entirely, citing potential future recognition like naming something after Peggy Flanagan if she became the first woman president. She emphasized maintaining flexibility for recognizing genuinely deserving individuals.

Commissioner Krill agreed that limiting good people's recognition due to concerns about bad actors would be inappropriate, supporting continued personal naming options.

Commissioner Jaffee acknowledged these points while advocating for enhanced background investigation language, suggesting due diligence requirements.

Chair Yakes supported due diligence concepts while questioning specific background check language that might create legal complications.

Commissioner Cantor noted the challenge of judging historical figures by contemporary standards, referencing how George Washington's slave ownership is now viewed differently than during his era. He provided examples of recent controversies affecting previously respected figures like Prince Andrew and Dr. Seuss.

Commissioner Rippe suggested enhancing application requirements beyond current minimal "explain" language to include comprehensive "why" questions requiring detailed justification for naming requests.

Mr. West agreed to develop enhanced "why" questions for applications and consult with the REI director about appropriate indigenous terminology. He sought guidance on the 10-year service requirement modification.

Commissioners agreed to change the requirement to 25 years and/or significant impact, with the waiting period applying to both criteria. They also agreed to enhance application requirements for more detailed information.

Regarding memorial provisions in section D, Commissioner Rippe suggested striking commission and city council approval requirements, arguing that staff would better understand appropriate locations and technical requirements for items like benches and plaques.

Commissioner Cantor questioned whether to provide alternative approval paths for city council members who might want to recommend memorials. Commissioner Rippe noted they could submit applications through normal processes.

Mr. West confirmed striking commission and council approval language in favor of staff approval for memorial items.

Commissioner Rippe suggested simplifying memorial options to specific items like benches and trees with associated costs, similar to Plymouth's approach. She explained this prevents receiving inappropriate or unmaintainable donations while focusing on items that can always be utilized somewhere in the park system.

Commissioner Brandli asked whether St. Louis Park had encountered problems with inappropriate memorial donations. Mr. West confirmed they typically receive only bench and tree requests.

Commissioner Rippe offered Plymouth's approach as a model, noting they had experienced issues with scout projects and other donations that created maintenance burdens without providing park benefits.

The discussion addressed plaque size specifications, with commissioners noting existing bench plaques are approximately 18 inches by 18 inches, much larger than the 225 square inch reference in the policy. For major donors like the Hobbs family who contributed \$350,000, larger recognition plaques would be appropriate.

Commissioner Brandli suggested revising section D's first sentence to address clarity issues, potentially adopting Plymouth's language focusing on "park amenity" and "tree" categories.

Commissioner Cantor asked about living memorials versus deceased person memorials. Mr. West clarified that memorials typically honor deceased individuals, while living person recognition would fall under contributor categories.

Commissioner Rippe noted the memorial section should specify "current or former city resident" to include people who previously lived in St. Louis Park. However, commissioners questioned whether residency requirements were necessary, noting that people who regularly use parks but live elsewhere might want to provide memorials.

Commissioner Brandli provided an example of someone's grandfather being honored by non-resident family members, supporting removal of residency restrictions.

The commissioners agreed to remove residency requirements for memorial donations, focusing instead on meaningful connections to the community or parks.

Regarding financial contribution requirements in section 3b, Commissioner Rippe advocated for percentage-based rather than dollar amounts to account for inflation and future policy reviews. She recalled their previous 80% requirement that the playground vendor declined.

**Parks & recreation advisory commission meeting
February 18, 2026**

Commissioner Jaffee questioned whether 65% or 70% might be more appropriate than 80%. Mr. West displayed the relevant section for reference.

Commissioner Rippe asked for examples beyond the Hobbs donation. Mr. West noted the hockey association's contribution to the construction of ROC but without naming rights, making it an inappropriate comparison for naming policy.

Commissioner Brandli focused on the section's second half regarding commission recommendations for renaming parks or facilities, questioning whether this had ever occurred and suggesting deletion of that provision.

Commissioner Rippe noted that besides Hobbs, most naming examples involved property donations rather than partial project funding. She supported percentage-based requirements due to inflation concerns, noting that dollar amounts become meaningless over time.

Commissioner Jaffee suggested 65% as a "significant portion" of significant facility costs.

Commissioner Rippe used Westwood's \$12.5 million cost as an example, questioning whether 25% (\$3.125 million) would warrant naming rights, concluding that higher percentages like 75% would be more appropriate.

Commissioner Brandli agreed with previous 80% discussions, noting that major corporate naming examples in other communities typically involve substantial contributions.

Mr. West provided examples of corporate naming in other communities, like Furniture and Things community center in Andover and Cambria room in Eden Prairie, representing significant financial commitments.

Commissioner Rippe noted they would likely see contributions in the \$50,000 - \$350,000 range rather than multi-million-dollar facility naming, referencing potential dock naming at \$50,000 as more realistic examples.

The discussion addressed coordination challenges when donors want projects completed on timelines that do not align with city capital improvement plans (CIP). Commissioner Rippe noted this issue arose with the playground vendor who wanted immediate implementation while the project was not scheduled in the CIP.

Commissioner Brandli suggested adding language requiring projects to align with city needs and available funding. Commissioner Rippe emphasized that projects must fit city needs regardless of funding levels, preventing donors from imposing unwanted improvements.

Chair Yakes suggested 80% contribution requirements along with city needs alignment and available funding for remaining costs.

Commissioner Jaffee proposed language including "meets city needs and resources available."

Commissioner Brandli suggested adding timing considerations to the requirements.

The commissioners reached consensus on 80% contribution requirements with additional criteria for meeting city needs, resource availability, and appropriate timing.

Commissioner Rippe noted that renaming was mentioned multiple places in the policy without clear guidelines for when renaming would be appropriate, such as renaming the George Haun trail if issues arose with the honored individual.

Mr. West suggested including renaming language from the removed section elsewhere in the policy to address potential future needs for name changes.

Commissioner Rippe requested that Mr. West return with a revised document showing all strike-through changes for easier review, noting the policy represented ongoing work rather than requiring immediate approval.

b. Identify Youth Association President Summit meeting dates (Jason West)

Mr. West explained that YAPS meetings typically occur in May and November, noting they need to schedule May dates and did not yet have dates from meeting attendee Patrice Howard. He sought commission input on preferred meeting days.

The commission indicated Wednesdays work better than Tuesdays, with Wednesday being the typical third Wednesday monthly schedule for regular commission meetings.

Mr. West suggested maintaining the third Wednesday pattern but needed to coordinate with various schedules and obligations.

May 20 was identified as potentially conflicting with St. Louis Park Dollars for Scholars events. Chair Yakes confirmed he would not be available that day due to the scholarship event.

May 27 was suggested as an alternative. Chair Yakes confirmed availability for that date, though Ms. Howard noted it was a recognized district holiday for Eid al-Adha, which might need updating since Ramadan timing had shifted.

Ms. Howard mentioned potential conflicts with senior award night on May 27, questioning whether Andy Ewald, St. Louis Park School District Athletic Director, would need to attend high school activities.

May 6 was suggested as another option, though Commissioner Jaffee noted he had it marked on his calendar already for some reason. Chair Yakes mentioned it being his anniversary but indicated flexibility for mid-week scheduling.

Mr. West noted his unavailability for both May 6 and May 13, though acknowledged his presence was not essential for YAPS meetings.

Commissioner Cantor suggested April 29 as an alternative. Mr. West confirmed this was a Wednesday, though Commissioner Rippe indicated she would be at a conference that day.

Mr. West agreed to check with Mr. Ewald, about May 27 availability, particularly regarding any senior award ceremony conflicts. The commission noted that some school event dates had been modified, potentially affecting schedule coordination.

The commission decided to tentatively plan for May 27 pending confirmation with Mr. Ewald and other attendees, with November dates to be addressed at a future meeting.

5. Communication (15 min.)

a. Staff

Mr. West reported meeting with Pat Coleman, who conducts monthly meetings with all commission liaisons. He explained that commissioners whose terms expire in May would receive email contact from Mr. Coleman regarding reapplication procedures. Several commissioners in the room had expiring terms in May.

Pat Coleman recommended that commissioners contact him for reapplication processes and details. Mr. West noted that Commissioner Brandli and Commissioner Krill were fine with Krill serving a one-year youth term.

b. Community Education / School District

Patrice Howard provided updates on various community education activities and challenges. She expressed gratitude for staff, parent teacher organizations and parent leadership advisories who supported the school district family, students, and staff during recent ICE presence activities in St Louis Park.

Ms. Howard explained that the community response had been amazing in addressing significant needs that arose in schools. The district moved to an online platform with many families choosing virtual learning for quarter three due to safety and fear concerns. This represented a new virtual school option that had not existed previously.

She noted challenges emerging with academic support needs since online learning represented a new platform for many students, particularly elementary level students with limited online learning experience. The district was taking a wait-and-see approach while maintaining vigilance and communication with community members who provide daily updates.

Ms. Howard mentioned upcoming community events at Lenox Community Center, though she could not recall specific details during the meeting and promised to provide information later.

The district was seeking new membership for their senior advisory committee after losing two members due to health issues. She described this as a very active and vocal group needing replacement members.

Ms. Howard announced a community youth enrichment expo scheduled for Saturday, March 8 at the middle school from 10 a.m. to noon, marking the first time hosting this summer youth expo. The event would allow vendors to provide demonstrations and engage with families, with staff supporting registration. Multicultural liaisons would offer language support for families with limited English proficiency.

She noted that Kelleen O’Brion had been coordinating with Heidi Batistich, Recreation and Facilities Supervisor, to include various community partners showcasing summer opportunities. The event would use their current Eleyo registration platform, though they expected to transition to Arux Software registration system in April or May.

Ms. Howard explained that Eleyo would be sunseting, requiring the platform change to Arux, which owns Eleyo. She anticipated minimal customer impact since the companies were related, though acknowledged that system transitions always present some challenges.

Registration dates were announced with February 15 for youth enrichment, May 1 for Kids Place, and April 1 for all community education programs. She described this as a rolling registration period for various programs.

Ms. Howard noted ongoing challenges with aquatics staffing, particularly recruiting and retaining certified lifeguards. She encouraged referrals for people interested in swimming during colder months who could transition to outdoor roles during warmer seasons.

c. Commission members

Chair Yakes mentioned having a family of raccoon visitors at 3 a.m. in his son's egress window, requiring family coordination to remove them. Commissioner Rippe shared a similar experience the previous year, leading to installation of egress window covers to prevent future raccoon problems.

No other commissioners had specific items to report.

6. Adjournment

It was moved by Commissioner Rippe, seconded by Commissioner Jaffee, to adjourn the meeting. The motion passed unanimously and the meeting was adjourned at 8:06 p.m.

These minutes were created with the assistance of a generative AI transcript service, then edited and finalized by a staff person.