

**EAST GRAND RAPIDS**  
**PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION MEETING**  
**EGR COMMUNITY CENTER**  
**COMMISSION CHAMBERS**  
**6:00 PM**  
**Monday, January 26, 2026**

The regular meeting of the Parks and Recreation Commission was held in the City Commission Chambers in the East Grand Rapids Community Center.

Patrick Parkes called the meeting to order at 6:02 pm.

Present in Person: Paul Bratt, Michelle Brown, Ryan Burdick, Lauren Jacoby, Steve Krogman, Ben Smith, Lan Le and Patrick Parkes

Absent: Larry Fisher

Also Present: Parks and Recreation Director, Derek Melville and Sara Coffey

Guests: None.

**Public Comment:**

None

**Report of Commissioners:**

**Ben Smith** – Is the new representative from the School Board, replacing Layla Kuhl. He is excited to be here and is excited that the school construction project will begin this year.

**Paul Bratt** – Participated in the Resolution Run for the first time. Traffic control should be addressed, especially during the kids' run.

**Director Melville** – Will make this a point of emphasis with the organization in the post event meeting.

**Ryan Burdick** – Applauded the DPW, EGR roads are the best around!

**Lauren Jacoby, Patrick Parkes, Michelle Brown, Steve Krogman and Lan Le** – Nothing.

**Review of minutes:**

Minutes of November 24, 2025, Parks and Recreation Commission meeting were presented for approval.

MOTION to approve: Jacoby

SUPPORT: Burdick

YES: Bratt, Brown, Burdick, Jacoby, Krogman, Le, Parkes and Smith (8)

NO: (0)

**MINUTES APPROVED**

**Special Event Calendar – FYI**

**Consider request to approve Special Events Permits:**

**a. 2026 Gobble Wobble 5K:**

Director Melville presented this Special Event request. This is the 21<sup>st</sup> annual event that uses an out and back course which starts and finishes at the Middle School. This run benefits the Kids Food Basket. This is a well-run event. Volunteers are stationed at roads and event coordinators are required to connect with residents impacted by the event.

No questions or comments.

MOTION to approve: Jacoby

SUPPORT: Bratt

YES: Bratt, Brown, Burdick, Jacoby, Krogman, Le, Parkes and Smith (8)

NO: (0)

**2026 Gobble Wobble 5K Approved**

**b. 2026 Revive 5K**

Revive and Thrive is a local non-profit that provides free meals to individuals who have certain illnesses. Through this event they are hoping to raise funds to help more people. The current Special Event policy allows 2 events (with road closures) each month, there are currently 6 events with road closures outside of Gaslight Village.

Director Melville has suggested they use the same out and back as the Reeds Lake Run and the Gobble Wobble, which starts and ends at the Community Center. Spring is very busy in EGR, with events such as soccer at Manhattan Park and the Middle School. The pools are always busy as well. Coordination between School events and Parks and Recreation to lessen the impact on the community.

Jacoby – Noted that parking and bussing can be even more of a challenge.

Burdick: Voiced concerns about lack of graphics submitted with the application. Asked how confident Director Melville is that this organization will follow through with the event.

Melville: They have had a slow start with the application. This is just the beginning stages and Director Melville is willing to work with them. They will be meeting with the Public Safety team. Efforts are being

made to help this event be successful. Residents on the racecourse will be notified by door hangers and/or postcards.

Burdick: Requested best practices regarding recycling and portable restrooms will be shared with them.

Jacoby: Asked Commissioner Burdick if he had an idea of how the residents in the racecourse felt?

Burdick: Good communication and flexibility is important; neighbors understand that road closures for races are part of the community.

Parkes: Noted that this is a first-time event.

Bratt: Stated that the date of the event is the week after the River Bank Run, so that might hurt attendance.

Parkes: How many attendees are anticipated?

Melville: The goal for their first year is 400.

Smith: Their lack of experience is noted, maybe they can get connected with the Kids Food Basket for guidance.

MOTION to approve: Brown

SUPPORT: Le

YES: Bratt, Brown, Burdick, Jacoby, Krogman, Le, Parkes and Smith (8)

NO: (0)

### **2026 Revive 5K Approved**

**Fred Bunn Trails Maintenance and Improvement Projects:** The multi-use trails were added to Manhattan Park in 2023/24 in collaboration with West Michigan Mountain Biking Alliance (WMMBA), where they provide maintenance and expertise to the city. This group has extensive experience and provides a high level of support. During the 2025 water main project, Manhattan Park the upper loop near Manhattan Park was disrupted. While the area was restored well, they are not trail experts. Because of this the trail needs a more detailed level of restoration by the original trail builder. The cost of the restoration will be covered by money set aside for the water main project.

Trailside enhancements, the area west of the sledding hill are on a steep grade, segments of the trail are susceptible to erosion. This area is not used as much as the outer loop, suggested amenities are rock armor for the steep slopes, which are stones covering parts of the trail to reduce washouts. Adding small jumps, basic jumps, not like a skills course and tabletops, rollers are intended to be built into the side of the trail. These can be bypassed by bikers, walkers and hikers. These amenities provide more variety of use for the trails. The contractor could do the restoration and amenities at the same time.

Brown: What is the timeline for this?

Melville: Not sure yet but hoping to get on the schedule late spring or early summer. The timeline is also dependent on the vote of the Commission. The restoration project should only take a few days. The current fix is not sustainable.

Burdick: Many invasive species were removed, which is great, but can more be removed with the trail maintenance?

Melville: There is not a specific plan of attack and will coordinate with Kent County Conservations District.

Brown: Rock armoring can get mossy, personally would like to see gritty stones be used, not smooth. The tabletop features already out there are great. The main trail should be the straight shot, and someone should veer off for any special biking experiences. Voiced concerns about jumps, young people might not use them properly.

Smith: The Interurban Trails have jumps that are on the side. Noted that quite a bit of visibility is needed.

Brown: Feels that jumps don't fit the appetite for the multi-use trails.

Parke: Asked if adding rock armoring could cause more injury from falls?

Melville: The rock armoring is intended only for the steeper areas. Injury can happen. Algae will make it slippery, clay is the same. Trails should be avoided when they are wet and slippery.

Le: Is this a win-win with WMMBA doing the improvements?

Melville: Rock armoring is a preventive measure, which might be needed in the future. WMMBA is willing to cover the cost of the extras. The restoration from the water main is being paid for by the city.

Brown: Would like to avoid any wooden features because they rot, Suggests the use of stones and natural materials.

Melville: Believes these amenities are dirt but will clarify.

**Waterfront Park Phase II Grant Award:** Director Melville applied for 3 DNR Grants and East Grand Rapids was awarded the biggest grant of \$500,000. The conceptual design is approximately 15 years old. A Request for Proposal "RFP" is needed for a landscape architect. Similar to the Manhattan Park construction, the architect will help coordinate and hold community engagement and collect feedback.

The former owner of the property clearcut and filled in some wetlands with the intent to build condos. The city purchased the property with a DNR Acquisition Grant and would like to return the property to what it was before.

Some areas of interest include:

- Potential parking lot expansion
- Native tree planning
- Restoring wetlands
- Construct sustainable trails and boardwalks
- Overlook decks
- Possible fishing opportunities
- Possible outdoor learning area
- Educational signage for species and wetland information
- Bike racks and trash cans

There is quite a bit of paperwork required. The DNR should send the project agreement around July. The Department of Environment, Great Lakes and Energy “EGLE” will need to issue a permit because wetlands are protected, before the grant is finalized. Contact has already been made with EGLE. The final design is estimated to be completed later this summer. Timeline to go out for bid is late 2026 or early 2027, which is subject to change. Hopefully 2027 will be the construction year. Parks and Recreation Commission will have approval opportunities as they arise.

Parkes: Which comes first, the architectural firm or the community engagement?

Melville: Community engagement is the first step. Based on what the community wants will determine if the EGLE permits are needed. Preliminary designs from the consultant will be obtained and EGLE will be involved in that process.

Steps:

1. Community engagement
2. Conceptual Designs redone
3. Updated wetland delineations
4. Final designs (Where are trails and wetlands located? How long are boardwalks?)

Bratt: EGLE Like to see restoration of wetlands. Congratulations on receiving this grant!

Burdick: Stated that the Parks and Recreation Commission made a hard decision to allow this grant to happen. Thank you for the hard work done here and thank you to the commission for the hard decisions.

Brown: Thank you! This was an investment to submit the application.

Melville: Our grant scored in the top 10 of all the awards this year.

Brown: Is this grant strictly Waterfront Park or is Remington Park included?

Melville: Property deeds were submitted as part of the application. This property parcel was already designated as parkland and perpetuity. The east part of the park received a grant in the past. Work cannot extend into Hodenpyl.

Brown: Could some of these grants help deal with invasive species at Waterfront Park?

Melville: A map was provided and nothing on the east side was proposed, but we can look into it.

Brown: Previously a playground at Waterfront Park was proposed, is this off the table?

Melville: It's not off the table. The playground was part of the other two grants we applied for. If the community wants a playground for younger children at that park, it could be added at the city's expense. No grant money (or match) can be used for a playground.

Smith: Is excited for the outdoor classroom, it would be the closest wetland learning area to several schools.

**Report of Director:**

- There is a Middle Schol basketball game this evening and a cashless option is being piloted. Fees for services such as GoFan were high, so we are using Square. This will give another, much needed, option to pay and reduces the need for cash and change.
- Parks and Recreation have been granted permission to use the gym at Woodcliff, which is great for the younger kids.
- The East Basketball Tournament was this past weekend and 3 of the teams from East won! The club was started as part of vertical alignment and has 12 teams, 5 girls and 7 boys.

Burdick: Could middle school students get in for free to games? Kids just want to see their friends play.

Melville: We can look into that.

Smith: A student's season ticket could be a shirt purchased for \$10, they could be students only and be a fun color.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:20 pm

Next Meeting: February 23, 2026