

CITY OF BERKLEY
PUBLIC NOTICE
PARKS AND RECREATION ADVISORY BOARD
MEETING MINUTES
7:00 P.M. January, 15th, 2026 AT THE COMMUNITY CENTER

CALL TO ORDER: 7:00 P.M.

Present: Mike Kerby, J.D. Otto, Melissa Hammond, John Nicolai, and Andrew Boring

Also, present: Dan McMinn, Greg Patterson, Bridget Dean, Mike Matthews-Pennanen, Marty Smith, Chris Golembiewski, Andrew McIndoo, Tyler Sprague, and Susan McEwan

Unable to Attend: Betty Smith

APPROVAL OF AGENDA: Motion to approve by Melissa Hammond and supported by John Nicolai

APPROVAL OF 12/11/25 MINUTES: Motion to approve by J.D. Otto and supported by John Nicolai

PUBLIC COMMENTS: Susan McEwan requested to know Mike Kerby's name.

BOARD BUSINESS:

1. Public Hearing: 2026 5-Year Plan

- Tyler Sprague, with Johnson Hill Land Ethics Studio, reported that his team has been working to update the City's five-year plan. He noted that several meetings have taken place over the past few months, along with an online survey, and all collected input has been incorporated into the draft plan. The purpose of this portion of the meeting is to gather any additional public comments, which will be documented and forwarded to the City prior to final adoption of the plan.
- **Public Comment – Andrew McIndoo:** Andrew McIndoo provided feedback on the draft five-year plan and accompanying survey. He noted that although the plan identifies a dog park as a top community priority, he felt it was the first item removed from the action plan on page 45 due to land constraints. He also pointed out that the action plan proposes studying multi-use options at Lazenby Field, pocket parks, and an amphitheater—amenities he stated were among the least requested according to survey results on page 143. Andrew expressed concern that the dog park is being characterized as a long-term or future goal rather than an active project, despite being, in his words, something that “pays for itself” and is “being requested by the residents.” He further noted that no additional community input was sought by the Parks and Recreation Committee after the initial meeting and that no new ideas were incorporated before the draft was submitted. He stated that he and others believe the issue is not a lack of available land but a lack of creative design. He questioned whether the recommended 50-foot buffer is a legal requirement or simply a design preference. Andrew offered several ideas for maximizing space, including smart landscaping with strictly enforced hours (similar to practices in Chicago and New York), use of unoccupied areas of Bacon Park that could provide approximately one acre, curated walking paths through medians or pocket play areas, reconsideration of ordinances prohibiting dogs in parks, and repurposing existing assets during certain months, days, or hours. Andrew emphasized that a dog park would be used year-round and could represent a more effective use of park space, noting his view that many of Berkley's parks are only heavily used during certain months. He concluded by urging a stronger commitment to creative land use.
- **Public Comment – Chris Golembiewski:** Huntington Woods resident and former Berkley resident, shared comments regarding the condition and capacity of the community's tennis

courts. He noted that his three children attend Berkley schools, and two have participated in the tennis programs. Over the years, his family has observed that most comparable school programs have a minimum of eight courts, while Berkley has six, and the condition of the existing courts lags behind those of neighboring communities. Chris stated that he reviewed the draft plan and, as a member of the Huntington Woods Planning Commission, appreciates the work that has gone into it. He expressed support for the tennis courts and the broader tennis program, noting the ongoing challenge of limited space. He encouraged consideration of improvements to the existing courts and stated that adding two additional courts would be highly beneficial.

- **Public Comment – Susan McEwan:** Susan McEwan, a Berkley resident, expressed appreciation for the draft report. She shared that she was an RN specializing in gerontology, particularly dementia care, and was pleased to see frequent references to intergenerational programming and a clear focus on seniors. She noted that she had written comments on her copy of the report but was not prepared to share them publicly; she may email them instead. Susan highlighted the mention of landscaping needs and suggested this could be an opportunity for intergenerational activities, such as young people and older adults working together on planting projects. She referenced a master composting class she took, during which a Pattengill Elementary School class were nearby and participated, recalling how excited the children were to explore nature—such as discovering insects under a log. She emphasized the value of these hands-on experiences, especially in an age of heavy phone use. Overall, Susan was very impressed with the report, including its photographs, structure, and clearly defined goals. She did note difficulty locating the report again online and hopes it will be made more accessible. She noted her personal notes she had written down primarily reflected the elements she appreciated and areas where she hopes to participate in the future.
- Mayor Bridget Dean thanked the Parks & Recreation Board, Parks & Recreation staff, and Johnson Hill Land Ethics Studio for their work on the report and the final product. She stated she felt the plan reflects both resident input and the realities of available resources, noting that it represents a strong collaboration among all involved groups. Bridget shared that she attended one of the information sessions and observed productive dialogue, meaningful connections, and the emergence of thoughtful ideas.
- **Public Comment – Susan McEwan:** Susan McEwan noted the report's references to sharing resources and collaborating with neighboring communities. She shared that she recently attended a workshop at the Southfield Library and noted that various programs offered at different libraries could potentially be coordinated with Berkley's city bus system to help residents travel between facilities. She mentioned that she is not very familiar with Oxford Towers but wondered whether they might have a multi-purpose room suitable for hosting events, especially since the building is connected to the local bus system. Susan also expressed interest in presenting information at the Berkley Library about "MyRide2," a service that provides multiple transportation options beyond the community bus system. She plans to pursue this again in the future and would like to help publicize transportation resources for residents.
- **Public Comment – Mike Matthews-Pennanen:** Mike Matthews-Pennanen, noted that he was a former member of the Planning Commission. He shared that he has participated in similar planning processes in the past, both as a participant and as an observer, and

expressed appreciation for the positive work being done. Mike cautioned against limiting opportunities for additional public input, particularly regarding the dog park discussion. He acknowledged that Berkley operates with limited resources but emphasized that the City has historically accomplished a great deal despite those constraints. While he values the expertise that consultants bring, he urged the City not to allow outside experts to overly shape the process, noting that what works elsewhere may not be the best fit for Berkley. He stressed the importance of making decisions that reflect the community's unique character and needs. He encouraged the group to consider all constituencies and shared a personal example: when one of his sons played hockey, the Ice Arena was central to his family's routine, but when his second son did not play, the facility became more of an afterthought. He noted that nearly everyone has a dog today and that most Berkley streets are well-suited for walking, suggesting that these realities should be thoughtfully reflected in the planning process. Mike concluded by encouraging the City to approach the process with "wide-open eyes" to ensure all perspectives are considered.

- Mayor Bridget Dean emphasized the importance of thinking big during the planning process, noting that starting with a broad wish list helps ensure that valuable ideas are not overlooked. While practical constraints may ultimately require scaling plans down, she stated that she is always open to considering ambitious concepts.
- **Public Comment – Marty Smith:** Marty stated that he attended the meeting to gather more information and better understand the direction of the planning process. Having been involved in past efforts, he agreed with Mayor Dean's point that thinking big can generate valuable ideas. He noted, however, that Berkley has long faced challenges related to limited land availability and the difficulty of determining where new amenities could be placed. Referencing the draft plan, he observed that community comments span a wide range of interests and priorities, reflecting many possible directions. Given the City's limited land, financial resources, and capacity, he emphasized the importance of choosing priorities carefully.
- Mike Kerby stated that he felt the plan was well put together. He noted that the City only began developing these plans around 2006 or 2007, and he has been involved in each one since. He appreciated the inclusion of new, innovative ideas and tools that allow Berkley to measure itself against other communities, particularly in areas such as park ratings and accessibility. He highlighted the significant work completed at Bacon Park to improve accessibility. Regarding the dog park, Mike noted that the topic has been discussed for several years and has appeared in past master plans. As a dog owner himself, he expressed support for continuing to explore the concept. He emphasized the importance of being thoughtful and strategic in bringing together the various ideas presented and expressed appreciation for the suggestions shared earlier in the meeting.
- **Public Comment – Andrew McIndoo:** Andrew McIndoo shared that he recently spoke with a woman who told him her friend was planning to move out of Berkley specifically because the city does not have a dog park.
- **Public Comment – Susan McEwan:** Susan McEwan referenced a Table within the plan, which mentions closed-loop walking paths within various parks, including Bacon Park, Oxford Park, and Community Park. She noted Bacon Park already has an existing walking path around it. She reiterated her support for creative uses of space as part of the overall park system. Susan mentioned that Bacon Park currently has a seasonal outhouse and asked whether the addition of new restrooms would require additional staff for maintenance. She

observed that the draft plan did not appear to address staffing needs associated with expanded restroom facilities and emphasized that maintaining such amenities requires ongoing labor.

- John Nicolai addressed Andrew McIndoo's earlier comment, noting that he interpreted a section of the plan differently. In his view, it does not dismiss the dog park but instead suggests being more creative with available space. John asked Andrew whether he felt the plan was saying "no" to a dog park.
- **Public Comment – Andrew McIndoo:** Andrew responded that he and other dog-owning residents interpreted the language as indicating the City would consider the idea in the future but not at this time.
- **Discussion – Tyler Sprague and Dan McMinn:** Tyler Sprague clarified that the intent of the draft plan was not to remove the dog park concept from consideration, but rather to outline the constraints involved—such as available land, required buffers, and the overall space needed. He noted that a single open parcel could potentially serve multiple community needs, and if suitable land became available, the recommendation would be to evaluate all options to determine the best use. If a dog park fit the parameters, it would not be off the table. Dan McMinn added that further investigation is needed to determine what makes the most sense for the City given its available resources. Tyler reiterated that the plan's content consists of recommendations, and while some communities with limited space have very small dog parks, the guidelines presented reflect general recommendations for a community like Berkley.
- **Public Comment – Andrew McIndoo:** Andrew noted that some residents have suggested partnering with the new dog-friendly bar in the area, but he views that as a private business you would drive to; not a substitute for a dedicated public dog park.
- Mike Kerby noted that while the top priorities identified in the plan include a new recreation center, a pool, and a dog park, he is uncertain whether the first two are achievable within the five-year timeframe. He noted the dog park appears to be the most feasible of the three but emphasized that progress on any major project will depend on available funding. Even a dog park, he noted, will require financial resources.
- **Public Comment – Andrew McIndoo:** Andrew McIndoo believes the funding needs for a dog park are relatively minimal. He shared that he has spoken with residents who expressed interest in contributing financially. He also referenced that the City of Southfield recently opened a dog park with electronic gates, lighting, and cameras at a cost of approximately \$100,000. Southfield is also securing sponsorships to offset fencing costs and hopes the park will be cost-neutral within two years. He feels a dog park would be used year-round and does not require extensive planning or a large footprint. He suggested that a small parcel—potentially using some of the innovative ideas he mentioned earlier in the meeting—could be sufficient. He encouraged creative thinking, noting that some parks are underutilized and could potentially support shared-use hours. He also suggested exploring cost estimates, volunteer involvement in construction, and simple amenities such as fencing, signage, and dog-waste bag dispensers along walking trails. In his view, a dog park is not a complex project and should not require five years to implement.
- **Public Comment – Marty Smith and Response from Tyler Sprague:** Marty Smith asked how large a parcel would be needed for small dog parks in urban areas. Tyler Sprague responded that small areas are often classified as dog runs rather than full dog parks. He noted that many apartment buildings, for example, have private dog runs that function on a smaller scale than a traditional park.

- Andrew Boring asked who would be held liable if a dog bite occurred on City property. A brief discussion followed about whether liability would fall on the dog owner, the City, or both, depending on circumstances.
- Mike Kerby inquired about how many dogs could reasonably be accommodated within one acre and what size space would be needed to properly serve the community.
- Greg Patterson responded that he believes the general guidelines suggest approximately 1.5 acres for a standard dog park and about 1.3 acres for a small-dog area. He noted that \$100,000 cost noted earlier for Southfield was the grant funding from Oakland County Parks to support their dog park project. Tyler Sprague agreed that he believes the \$100,000 referenced for Southfield was grant funding only and did not represent the total project cost.
- Mike Kerby noted that identifying a full acre of available space has historically been one of the primary constraints in pursuing a dog park. He emphasized that the challenge of finding land of that size has been a recurring limitation in past discussions.
- **Public Comment – Andrew McIndoo:** Andrew McIndoo noted that many residents already gather informally with their dogs at Community Park. He shared that he and others previously used the high school field prior to it being under construction and found it to be a suitable space. Andrew stated that Community Park is large enough to accommodate a designated dog area and that, in his view, an acre to an acre and a half would be more than sufficient for most dog owners he knows.
- Mike Kerby commented that it would be great to see progress on any of the three major priorities identified— a recreation center, a pool, or a dog park—if the opportunity arises.
- **Public Comment – Andrew McIndoo:** Andrew McIndoo said it would be disappointing for residents if none of the top survey items were reflected in the final plan, given the strong community interest expressed.
- Mike Kerby noted that dog parks have been a recurring topic of discussion for many years and shared that he is a dog owner himself. He reaffirmed that the comments and suggestions raised during the meeting will be included for consideration in the planning process.
- **Public Comment – Marty Smith:** Marty Smith expressed hope that the discussion leads to a meaningful resolution. He noted that a master plan ultimately functions as a wish list, outlining aspirations rather than guaranteed projects. In communities like Berkeley, he added, there can be stretches of time where items cannot be implemented because the necessary resources are not available.
- Mike Kerby noted that despite limited resources, the Parks & Recreation Department has accomplished a great deal over the past five years, particularly through grants and community crowdfunding efforts such as the improvements at Bacon Park. He added that many of Berkeley's parks have been renovated within the last decade, and overall, the system is in strong shape considering the City has not relied on a large millage to fund these upgrades.
- Mayor Bridget Dean noted that City Council had requested a full facilities inventory, prompting a consulting firm to assess the condition of all municipal buildings. She shared that she initially thought the Community Center would rank as the worst facility, but the assessment identified City Hall as being in poorer condition. The evaluation highlighted the significant challenges facing all City buildings and raised key questions about whether to rebuild, renovate, or expand existing structures. She noted that the City has already addressed several issues at the Community Center—such as the roof and bathrooms—and is

gradually making progress. Moving forward will require clear decision-making, a defined plan, and strong communication with the community. Bridget expressed optimism about the path ahead.

- Greg Patterson echoed her optimism, adding that despite space limitations, the Parks & Recreation Department continues to develop new programs and expand offerings for residents.

2. 5-Year Plan Resolution

- Copies of the resolution were distributed to all board members, and Mike Kerby read the document aloud.
- A correction was noted in the first paragraph: the dates should be updated from 2025–2026 to 2026–2030.
- **Motion by:** Andrew Boring
- **Supported by:** John Nicolai
- **Votes in favor:** Unanimous approval by the full Parks & Recreation Advisory Board

3. National Fitness Campaign Grant Opportunity

- Dan McMinn noted that both the draft plan and community feedback highlighted interest in outdoor fitness equipment. The National Fitness Campaign offers grant funding to support the installation of outdoor fitness courts, which could help address this need.
- A brief informational video was played.
- Dan McMinn commented that the nearest existing National Fitness Campaign installation is in Madison Heights, located south of 11 Mile Road and west of John R, near Huffman Park.
- Greg Patterson added that Oak Park also features some outdoor fitness equipment along 9 Mile Road.
- Dan McMinn noted the National Fitness Campaign offers grant funding of up to \$50,000 toward the installation of an outdoor fitness court. The total cost for the fitness court alone is approximately \$180,000, meaning the City would need to secure additional funding—potentially through the CIP process or other grant sources.
- Dan McMinn noted three potential locations have been discussed: Bacon Park, Oxford Park, and Friends Park. He reiterated this opportunity is being presented because outdoor fitness amenities were a recurring theme in the 5-Year Plan feedback and would like to confirm whether the Board supports moving this concept forward to City Council for consideration.
- Mike Kerby asked what type of space is required for the outdoor fitness court. Dan explained that the installation must be at least 150 feet from a playground. Based on that requirement and the layout of the parks, the fitness court could be accommodated at any of the three previously discussed locations—Bacon Park, Oxford Park, or Friends Park. He emphasized that the primary goal of the project is to support community fitness.
- Andrew Boring noted that online comments about the Madison Heights fitness court highlight the benefit of placing the equipment near a play area (i.e., parents appreciate being able to work out while their children play nearby).
- Dan McMinn inquired if the board was in support of further exploring.
- Mike Kerby stated he felt the outdoor fitness court is worth exploring further, acknowledging that the feasibility of the project will ultimately depend on identifying sufficient funding.
- Mike Kerby asked Dan McMinn how the outdoor fitness court would be maintained once installed. Dan noted that he would follow up with additional information on maintenance

requirements but indicated that the equipment is generally expected to have relatively low ongoing maintenance costs.

- Susan McEwan noted that the proposed fitness court does not necessarily address the needs of seniors. She recalled from the video that one of the options appeared to include space suitable for yoga. Dan explained that there are two different configurations available, one of which includes a fitness studio setup with a center wall and a flat platform that could accommodate classes. However, this expanded option comes at a higher cost. Susan added that yoga or dance-style movement could be well-suited to that type of space but emphasized that seniors would likely prefer shaded areas. Dan responded that shade sails could be added, though doing so would further increase the overall project cost.
- Chris Golembiewski noted that Huntington Woods installed a scaled-down version of the outdoor fitness equipment, consisting of roughly five stations. He shared that people of all ages use it regularly, and from his observations, it attracts a wide range of users throughout the year.
- J.D. Otto asked whether the fitness court equipment comes in a single configuration. Dan confirmed that the equipment layout is standardized and offered as one configuration. He added that customization is possible through the public art component, such as selecting specific colors or commissioning artwork on the structure, though these enhancements would increase the overall project cost.
- Andrew Boring asked when the grant application would be due. Dan explained that the National Fitness Campaign offers 10 grants per year, and the City would likely pursue the opportunity further down the line to ensure adequate funding is in place. He noted that the project can now be added to the CIP for future consideration. Dan also shared that 6 of the 10 available grants for 2026 have already been awarded, reinforcing that this would be a longer-term planning effort.
- Marty Smith asked about the size of the area where the former ice rink was located. Dan McMinn estimated that the space is just over one acre. Marty Smith followed up by asking whether there are any current plans for that site. Mike Kerby noted that the area is frequently used for youth soccer programs, particularly for younger children.
- Mike Kerby returned to Susan McEwan's earlier question regarding restrooms at Bacon Park, noting that permanent bathrooms at that location have long been a community desire. He explained that modern restroom facilities can be equipped with automated locking systems, eliminating the need for on-site staff to secure them. He also mentioned that there are companies that provide ongoing maintenance for such facilities. If installed, this would become the third permanent restroom facility in the City's parks inventory.
- The discussion concluded with consensus from all board members in attendance to continue exploring the opportunity.

4. Program Updates

- Dan McMinn reported that the Parks & Recreation Department has rolled out a new sponsorship guide, which is now being used to seek support for a wide range of programs and events—such as individual movie nights, Touch-A-Truck, and other community activities. The effort has already seen strong early success. Dan noted that the guide was shared with local sports organizations, and two realtors discovered it online and proactively reached out to the department with sponsorship interest. SOCS has committed to participating, as well as the two realtors. Some sponsorships are in place (e.g., senior trips and lunches, Cruisefest, Winterfest). Mayor Dean inquired whether the department has

reached out to the City's new engineering firm and law firm to explore potential sponsorship opportunities.

- Winterfest is scheduled for February 7, 2026, from 12:00–2:00 p.m. The event will feature food trucks, inflatable bouncers, a petting farm, and ice sculptures. It continues to be a great opportunity for residents to get outside and enjoy the winter season.
- The department has brought back Kindermusik, which has not been offered in approximately 5–7 years.
- Summer Camp planning is underway, with early-bird registration opening for residents on February 2 and for non-residents on February 9. Due to construction at Anderson, Pattengill will serve as the camp's home base this year.
- Dan McMinn noted that Josie is partnering with Articipate to offer new art workshops. The first session was held this week, and the three seniors who attended rated it a 10/10. The second workshop is scheduled for the 29th. She also has several upcoming senior trips planned, including a tour of the Detroit Opera House, a visit to Meadowbrook, and a senior trivia outing. Exercise classes have resumed and are seeing strong participation, with attendance up by approximately 10–15 people above the usual average.
- J.D. Otto inquired about regarding potential collaboration with Huntington Woods. Dan explained that the departments already coordinate on several summer specialty camps to ensure adequate enrollment and staffing. Registration will be opening soon.
- Mike Kerby commented that he liked the sponsorship idea and appreciated the updates.

5. Board Business

- Mike Kerby explained that the Board Business section will be used going forward to discuss board-related items, including bylaws and identifying topics the board would like placed on the agenda for the following month.

MISCELLANEOUS:

- Andrew Boring thanked Dan McMinn for his work and shared another potential sponsorship idea, suggesting Slows BBQ mobile food truck as an option to explore.
- Bridget expressed her appreciation, thanking staff for all their work and energy.
- Susan McEwan expressed her appreciation for the clear and effective way the meeting was conducted. She noted that she likes the addition of the Board Business section and shared that she was impressed with the depth of Dan McMinn's research and follow-up on various items.
- Andrew McIndoo thanked Dan and the Board for their continued work. He added that he will keep advocating for what many residents have been requesting—a community dog park.
- John Nicolai encouraged Andrew McIndoo to continue advocating for a dog park, noting that the Board wants its time and efforts to be meaningful. He said Andrew's points were well taken and that he looks forward to making progress on those items. John also thanked Dan McMinn for his work, expressed well-wishes for Betty, and complimented staff on their strong performance. He added that today's meeting was very well run.
- Tyler thanked the Board for the productive discussion and the positive feedback shared throughout the meeting. He outlined the next steps for the master plan, explaining that the resolution reviewed earlier will serve as the Board's formal recommendation for Council consideration at their meeting on the 26th. If Council adopts the resolution, the plan will be finalized and submitted to the

Michigan Department of Natural Resources for posting on their website. The submission deadline is February 1st.

- Greg Patterson noted that residents are welcome to attend the upcoming City Council meeting and Andrew McIndoo added that a group of residents planning to attend the Council meeting in support of the proposed dog park.
- Melissa Hammond thanked everyone for attending the meeting and expressed her appreciation for the perspectives and ideas shared. She also thanked Tyler Sprgaue for being present and offered well wishes to Betty Smith.
- J.D. Otto reflected on the previous meeting and emphasized the importance of identifying how the Board can meaningfully contribute to the Parks and Recreation Department. He noted that the new five-year plan will provide a strong framework for the Board's efforts and expressed enthusiasm about reviewing all the input received and exploring creative ideas moving forward.
- Mike Matthews-Pennanen commented that it was a great meeting. He shared that during a recent committee meeting in Royal Oak, there was discussion about boards engaging with new businesses in the community. He agreed with Andrew Boring's suggestion to reach out to Slows BBQ.
- Marty Smith agreed with the idea of engaging new businesses and emphasized the importance of Parks and Recreation. He shared that he has not attended one of these meetings in many years but feels the department is in good hands. He added that Dan McMinn is doing a fine job.
- Dan McMinn shared that he saw Betty Smith last week and that she says hello. He thanked everyone for attending the meeting and expressed that he is looking forward to finalizing the 5-year plan. Dan noted that it has been a short timeframe with a significant amount of work and expressed his appreciation for all the effort that has gone into the process.
- Greg Patterson reported that City Council met on January 5th and approved a contract with Better City, LLC to develop an economic development strategy/plan. Council also approved a lease agreement for the municipal parking lot next to the new theater. The City will continue handling snow removal and general upkeep, while the theater will assume responsibility for the lot. The theater plans to keep the marquee. Mike Kerby asked for clarification on the economic development plan. Greg explained that it is a strategic effort to assess existing businesses, identify gaps, and determine which types of businesses might be needed within the community. Greg also noted the City is beginning a new process for Boards and Commissions, with a meeting scheduled for January 26th. Greg noted that Charlena has left the City; emails should now be directed to the Boards and Commissions address. He also conveyed to Council the Board's desire to have more input into Parks & Recreation-related items and encouraged members to speak up if something does not feel right. Greg closed by thanking Parks & Recreation staff for all their hard work.
- Bridget Dean noted that the shared parking agreements are a creative and cost-effective way to meet the community's needs.
- Mike Kerby thanked everyone for attending the meeting and shared that he felt the master plan was very detailed. He noted that items such as improvements to Bacon Park were not originally outlined in the general master plan, but new needs and opportunities naturally arise over time. He acknowledged that additional priorities will likely surface in the future as well. He expressed his appreciation to Parks & Recreation staff and Johnson Hill Land Studio for their work throughout the process and said he was pleased with both the process and the final document. He also offered well-wishes to Betty Smith and thanked Mayor Dean for attending the meeting.

ADJOURNMENT: 8:37 p.m.

NEXT MEETING: February 12, 2026