

**MINUTES OF THE
PARKS & RECREATION COMMITTEE
DESTIN CITY HALL BOARDROOM
AUGUST 26, 2025, - 4:00 PM**

1. CALL TO ORDER:

Chairwoman Weidenhamer called the Parks & Recreation Meeting to order at 4:00 p.m. on Tuesday, August 26, 2025, in the Destin City Hall Boardroom immediately followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

2. ROLL CALL:

Members Present

Autumn Weidenhamer
Jessica Jullian
Andrea Ansley
Alison Stephens
Aubrey Santucci
Matthew Sweetser

Members Absent

Jan McGraw

Staff Present

Lisa Firth Parks & Recreation Director
Ryan Reed P&R Deputy Director
Bryan Kellar Recreation Supervisor
Sharon Gardner Records Mgmt. Specialist

3. Agenda Approval: Chairwoman Autumn Weidenhamer asked for approval or for any changes to the agenda.

Motion made by Committee member Alison Stephens to add annual recreation calendar discussion to the agenda under her name. Committee member Jessica Jullian provided the second.

Motion passed 6-0. Committee member Jan McGraw was absent from the meeting.

Motion made by Committee member Alison Stephens to add workshop discussion for a float for the city's annual Christmas parade to the agenda under her name. Committee member Jessica Jullian provided the second.

Motion passed 6-0. Committee member Jan McGraw was absent from the meeting.

Motion made by Chairwoman Autumn Weidenhamer to add Social Media request update to the agenda under her name. Committee member Jessica Jullian provided the second.

Motion passed 6-0. Committee member Jan McGraw was absent from the meeting.

Motion made by Chairwoman Autumn Weidenhamer to add Dog Park Fence discussion to the agenda under her name. Committee member Jessica Jullian provided the second.

Motion passed 6-0. Committee member Jan McGraw was absent from the meeting.

Nomination of Vice Chairman to Parks & Recreation Committee.

Committee member Jessica Jullian announced she would be interested in the position if no one else was.

Committee member Matthew Sweetser also announced that he was interested in the position as well.

Motion made by Committee member Audrey Santucci to nominate Matthew Sweetser for Vice Chairman. Second was provided by Committee member Jessica Jullian. Motion passed 6-0. Committee member Jan McGraw was absent from the meeting.

4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

1. August 7, 2025, Parks & Recreation Minutes

Motion made by Committee member Andrea Ansley and seconded by Committee member Jessica Jullian to approve the minutes as written.

Motion passed 6-0. Committee member Jan McGraw was absent from the meeting.

5. OLD BUSINESS

A. Adopt-A-Park Schedule

Discussion ensued regarding the schedule for the rest of the year, and the members decided upon the months they would each visit and inspect the Dog Park.

September- Andrea Ansley

October- Alison Stephens

November- Jessica Jullian

December- Matthew Sweetser

January- Aubrey Santucci

Discussion continued regarding placing “Adopt-A-Park” on the website. Committee Member Jessica Jullian mentioned she was in this year’s class of Destin Forward and adopting a park had been discussed by a few of those members.

B. Park Inspection List

Deputy Director Ryan Reed reassured the committee members that the inspection list doesn’t need to be finalized during this meeting. Members were encouraged to email their preferences for parks they would like to be assigned. This will ensure an even distribution of responsibilities as well as a geographic clustering of parks to improve efficiency.

Deputy Director Reed also acknowledged that in past years, some members had requested to inspect parks in specific areas (e.g., a mix of beach accesses and west side parks). He expressed his willingness to accommodate such preferences where feasible. He also noted that some members had up to five parks assigned, but with more members available, there is now an opportunity to reduce individual workloads.

Questions were asked regarding how often inspections are to be performed, and regarding the format of the inspection sheet.

Deputy Director Reed provided the following answers:

Inspections are typically conducted twice a year:

Spring- when parks are less active

Fall- after the busy season.

However, members are welcome to conduct inspections at any time and to report any observed issues via the inspection form or directly to him via email or phone call.

Inspection Sheet Format:

In response to the question regarding the format of the inspection sheet (Word document vs. Paper).

Deputy Director Reed confirmed that a Word document version of the inspection sheet is available and will be sent out to members. A paper copy is also provided in the meeting notebooks, and members are free to make copies and annotate them as needed.

C. Annual Report/Workplans

1. Annual Report:

Deputy Director Ryan Reed initiated a discussion regarding the Annual Report. A draft report that was previously compiled by former Parks & Recreation Committee Chairwoman Sandy Trammell was presented to the committee members. Members were asked if they were comfortable with that version or if they preferred to rework or update it. There was a consensus that due to committee turnover, it may be appropriate to revise the report to better reflect the current group's activities and participation.

2. Workplans:

Deputy Director Reed discussed that all work plans from the past year have been compiled into the meeting packet, including previous work plans by the committee, and plans from prior annual reports submitted by former Parks & Recreation Committee Chairwoman Sandy Trammell, and work plans submitted by Harbor and Waterways Vice Chairman John Stephens.

Members were informed that this was not intended to be reviewed in full during the meeting, but they were encouraged to review the compiled materials before the next meeting. Parks & Recreation Director Lisa Firth encouraged the members to read through the work plans and decide which items to continue, revise, or remove.

Discussion on "Process Owners" for each work plan item was raised, as many plans still list previous members as the owner. Members were asked to consider reassigning ownership where appropriate. Director Firth stated she would confirm the timeline for the Annual Report and Workplans to be submitted to City Council.

6. NEW BUSINESS:

A. Destin Little League Artificial Turf Infields Background and Proposal

- It was reported that at the City Council meeting on August 18th, representatives from Destin Little League approached council with a request for cost-sharing to install artificial turf infields at the Little League park.
- The proposal is intended to reduce weather-related delays and improve conditions.
- Two cost estimates were presented, with the relevant portion being the infield-only option.
- Estimated cost: approximately \$229,000 (not yet final).
- The City and the Little League would split the cost equally.

Council approved moving forward with the request, with the understanding that the matter be brought before this committee for:

- Information sharing
- A motion of support
- Consideration of applying for a Florida Recreation Development Assistance Program (FRDAP) grant to offset costs.

Motion made by Committee member Jessica Jullian to support the improvement of the Destin Little League artificial turf infields, and for staff to apply for the FRDAP grant. Vice Chairman Sweetser provided the second.

Motion passed 6-0. Committee member Jan McGraw was absent from the meeting.

Member Concerns:

- Vice Chairman Sweetser asked whether the project had been budgeted.
- Staff confirmed it was not budgeted for the current year. If not offset by FRDAP or fundraising, the project may be budgeted for FY2026.
- Vice Chairman Sweetser also raised concerns about whether only one bid had been obtained.
- Staff responded that, because the project cost is being split with the Little League, the process may differ, but further information will be gathered to confirm compliance.

Drainage Issues:

- Committee member Andrea Ansley asked whether the project would address existing drainage issues at the field before turf installation.
- Staff confirmed that a site meeting was held with the City Engineer, the Deputy Director of Public Works, and a representative from Forever Lawn.
- The turf installation plan involves excavating down and installing a rock base, rather than placing turf directly over clay.
- Additional stormwater issues at the park are undergoing review, and plans include the use of concrete curbing to further help with water management.

Next Steps: Committee members asked for clarification on:

- Final project cost.
- Confirmation of grant application timeline and eligibility.
- Procurement requirements (number of bids).
- Long-term stormwater improvement plans for the park.
- A motion of support is expected to be considered following clarification of these items.

Action Items:

- Staff to clarify procurement requirements regarding the number of bids.
- Finance staff to confirm budget implications and funding source for the City's 50% share.
- Staff to proceed with preparation of a FRDAP grant application.
- Committee to revisit the motion of support once additional details are provided.

NEW BUSINESS continued:

B. Clement Taylor Park Renovation Project

Project Timeline and Park Closure:

- The park is scheduled to be fenced off on September 2nd, but will remain open for the Labor Day Weekend, with fencing installed immediately afterward.
- Estimated completion timeline is approximately 9 months to 1 year, with completion anticipated in 2026.
- A temporary sign will be installed before the weekend to notify the public. Messaging will indicate that this is the final opportunity to use Clement Taylor Park before construction begins. The sign will not include specific completion dates but will emphasize improvements coming in 2026.

Tree Protection and Site Design.

- Committee members stressed the importance of preserving the mature trees on-site, noting they are among the park's most valuable assets.
- A Tree Protection Zone (TPZ) will be established with boundaries marked around each tree.
- The committee will stay actively involved to ensure contractors adhere to these protections.
- Members agreed to coordinate a meeting with the construction firm to emphasize tree protection requirements.

Security and Site Monitoring.

- Questions were raised about site security once the park is fenced off.
- Staff noted that while the area will be fully fenced, local neighbors are proactive and provide informal monitoring.

Coordination with Community Events.

- Staff confirmed coordination with groups affected by the closure:

- The Destin Fishing Museum will be notified, as its annual October Haunted Tour typically uses the park
- The Rodeo Run has already been relocated to Leonard Destin Park in anticipation of construction.

Renderings and Public Awareness:

Members requested updated renderings of the project.

Staff explained that while preliminary visuals exist, they do not clearly depict final pavilion designs.

Staff advised that a sign will be posted showing planned amenities including:

Playground

Restrooms

Additional Pavilion

Pathways and Parking improvements.

Historical Recognition:

- It was noted that Clement Taylor Park is the site of the community's first schoolhouse.
- The Parks Foundation, in partnership with community member Sandy Trammell, is exploring funding for: educational signage, and design features incorporating elements of a schoolhouse (e.g., pavilion roof style).
- Committee members reaffirmed plans to dedicate a pavilion to the memory of Ms. Dot Jones, a long-time contributor to the City and former committee member.
- Options discussed included:
 - A commemorative sign**
 - Planting of a tree (already completed)**
 - Educational material summarizing her many contributions to the City**

7. COMMITTEE MEMBER COMMENTS/QUESTIONS

A) Autumn Weidenhamer- Destin Dog Park

Chairwoman Autumn Weidenhamer raised concerns about the fence alignment at the small dog park. The fence currently meets the sidewalk awkwardly and doesn't fully extend across the designated area. This creates both a functional issue and an aesthetic concern.

Discussion followed regarding the potential replacement of the entire fence. Staff advised that a contractor estimate is needed to determine costs. Once a quote is obtained, the project can be added to the budget. If a full replacement is too costly the City could consider phasing the replacement by sections.

The committee discussed whether there was the potential for fundraising for park improvements and it was noted that any fundraising initiative would require the Parks Foundation approval. Staff agreed to obtain a formal quote for the dog park fence replacement and the committee would revisit fencing needs once budget and fundraising options are clarified.

B) Autumn Weidenhamer- Social Media Updates

Chairwoman Weidenhamer discussed issues concerning local Facebook groups that frequently feature questions from residents about parks, including Clement Taylor Park and the dog park. Her concern is without official updates; residents often speculate or spread inaccurate information. Staff acknowledged that the Public Information Director Tamara Young monitors social media and posts updates on the official City of Destin Facebook page when appropriate.

Several committee members clarified that they are not allowed to engage directly on social media in an official capacity, citing Sunshine Law restrictions. Staff advised that the correct approach is to direct residents to official channels, such as contacting the Parks and Recreation Department or the Community Center directly.

C. Alison Stephens-Event Calendar

Committee member Alison Stephens distributed a proposed calendar to be used for developing an annual online calendar for youth sports and recreation programs. The goal is to make it easier for families, particularly those with multiple children, to keep track of registration periods and seasons.

Staff agreed that this is a valuable idea and confirmed that program schedules are typically created well in advance by the recreation team. Currently the program information is listed on the City's website, but improvements are needed for better usability. Staff also agreed to explore integration of a year-round program calendar into the City website and Civic Rec. It was recommended by Vice Chairman Sweetser to consider adding this initiative to the committee's work plan for formal presentation to City Council.

Alison Stephens- Christmas Float

Discussion concerning how to get together and come up with a plan for a float entry in the Christmas parade. The committee members discussed potential sources of decorations and supplies along with sponsorship opportunities that may be pursued with recognition offered in return. Options under consideration were holding a special workshop dedicated solely to float planning and/or using the October regular meeting for focused float planning if time is limited.

The committee members will identify a point person at a future meeting to lead float coordination and volunteer organization. Deputy Director Ryan Reed agreed to meet with the City Clerk to determine availability of meeting spaces for a float workshop, and the compliance requirement for public notice and recording of the potential workshop.

8. STAFF REPORTS:

None at this time.

9. PUBLIC COMMENTS FROM THE AUDIENCE:

None at this time.

10. NEXT MEETING DATE:

Chairwoman Weidenhamer announced the next meeting date is September 23, 2025

11. ADJOURNMENT:

Having no further discussion, the meeting was adjourned at 5:19 PM

Adopted this 28th day of October 2025

Autumn Weidenhamer
Autumn Weidenhamer, Chairwoman

Sharon A. Gardner
Sharon Gardner, Records Mgmt. Specialist