

Meeting Minutes
Parks and Recreation Board
September 9, 2025, at 9:00 AM

Gilcrease Museum | 1400 N Gilcrease Museum Road | Tulsa, Oklahoma 74127

Attendees:

MEMBERS		
<i>Name</i>	<i>PRESENT</i>	<i>ABSENT</i>
Savage	X	
Meinders Burkett	X	
Reese-Tipton	X	
Fernandez		X
Miller	X (Left at 10:10 AM)	

- I. Chairperson Meinders Burkett called the meeting to order at 9:16AM.
- II. Meinders Burkett asked for review and approval of July 1, 2025, PRB minutes. No corrections or revisions were requested.

NAME	IN FAVOR	OPPOSED	ABSTAINING	NOT PRESENT
SAVAGE	X			
MEINDERS-BURKETT	X			
MILLER	X			
REESE-TIPTON	X			
FERNANDEZ				X
TOTALS	4			1

Motion carried.

- III. Reports
 - a. Parks, Culture and Recreation Department Report – Anna America

Anna America noted that this has been a tough mowing season due to the rain, ozone alerts, and the bidding process. America noted that we are finally caught up on mowing.

America noted that aquatics and summer camp have ended. America noted the struggle with finding pool staff, mainly lifeguards. America noted that staff is working on a plan to develop programming and training among local lifeguards over the winter to make sure people are certified.

America noted that the Department has activated the Rec N' Roll van (mobile playground). America noted the success of the van.

America touched on the Woodward Park project that is ongoing with the Stormwater department. America noted that they are running into issues with construction due to concrete underneath the pond. The Parks team is working with them to identify water quality issues.

America noted that the United Way campaign has kicked off. America noted Day of Caring will take place on Friday at Veteran's Park.

America noted the Maker's Fare taking place at Centennial Center. There will be over 100 booths present at the park. America noted this will be on September 18, 2025.

America noted that there was a Park Policies and Procedures document available online that states it was approved by the Board in 2017. America noted that Park's staff went through three years of meeting minutes and could not identify where the Board approved it. America noted that the Department is working on clarifying the policies. Once completed, the Board will be asked to approve.

Savage noted the charter change in 1988. Savage noted that in her years working on the charter change, this document was never presented. Meinders Burkett noted that during her time on the Board, this document had never been presented for approval.

America noted that Nick Sidorakis presented at the Sales Tax Overview Committee (STOC) regarding Tulsa Golf. America noted that Sidorakis will be presenting to the City Council as well. America noted the overwhelming positivity surrounding the improvements to golf.

Questions were welcomed.

b. Tulsa Garden Center Update – Andy Fusco

Andy Fusco presented the Tulsa Garden Center Update. Fusco also shared a copy of the Tulsa Garden Center Newsletter. Fusco noted that he was previously the Director of Horticulture and has recently become the Executive Director of the Tulsa Garden Center.

Fusco noted that Up With Trees has come worked on the maintenance and planting of trees – 30 new trees have been planted as of Fall 2023. Fusco noted that several more native trees will be planted in the Fall of 2025. Fusco noted that Phase II includes walkways and signage.

Questions were welcomed.

c. Horticulture Update – Heather Michaelson-Hale

Heather Michaelson-Hale presented the Horticulture Update. Michaelson-Hale noted the move to the Carriage House at Woodward Park for all Horticulture staff. Michaelson-Hale noted that this move has increased efficiency and allowed them to have a faster response to any issues and maintenance that may arise.

America noted that the Horticulture team has been testing suitable and disease resistant roses for the Rose Garden. Michaelson-Hale noted that all roses will be provided and planted by AGRS. The City's only cost will be installing new beds and steel edging. Michaelson-Hale noted the improvements coming to Woodward Park including diverse plantings of shrubs, bulbs, and perennials.

Michaelson-Hale noted the Chamberlain Park Project which will include new sustainable plantings and public engagement. Chamberlain Park has one 250ft square bed, and the Horticulture team will be adding six new areas.

Michaelson-Hale noted the Day of Caring at Veteran's Park. There will be over 100 volunteers that will be helping with cattail removal, mulching, and pond clean-up.

Questions were welcomed.

IV. **ISSUES FOR DISCUSSION AND/OR ACTION**

a. Eagle Scout Project – Simone Hounshell

Simone Hounshell presented her Eagle Scout Project. Hounshell's Eagle Scout project was centered around Orienteering at Mohawk Park. This would be the first of its kind. Simone noted that Mohawk Park stood out as an accessible park which is why she suggested it as the Orienteering site.

Hounshell noted the history surrounding Mohawk Park which would be highlighted in the Orienteering project. Hounshell noted the project will not interfere with parks maintenance or mowing.

Hounshell noted that this project would be added to the Orienteering website. Hounshell noted that she would have scouts help her assemble the poles. Hounshell noted the project will be completed within 30 days of Board approval.

Hounshell noted the benefits of Orienteering including a new free activity for the citizens of Tulsa. Hounshell noted that JROTC and Scouts would also use the project.

Hounshell noted that this will be Tulsa's first permanent orienteering course that will teach people navigational skills.

Meinders Burkett asked for the difference between orienteering and geocaching. Hounshell noted that the main difference is the use of a compass in orienteering.

NAME	IN FAVOR	OPPOSED	ABSTAINING	NOT PRESENT
SAVAGE	X			
MEINDERS-BURKETT	X			
MILLER	X			
REESE-TIPTON	X			
FERNANDEZ				X

TOTALS	4			1
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Motion carried.

b. Renaming of Legacy Park – Emily Scott

Emily Scott presented the Renaming of Legacy Park. Scott noted that the project has been funded 10% through donations. Scott asked for a recommendation to rename the park to Brush Arbor Grove Dog Park. The request will need to be sent to the City Council for formal approval.

NAME	IN FAVOR	OPPOSED	ABSTAINING	NOT PRESENT
SAVAGE	X			
MEINDERS-BURKETT	X			
MILLER	X			
REESE-TIPTON	X			
FERNANDEZ				X

TOTALS	4			1
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Motion carried.

c. Howard Park Dinosaur – David Oliver

David Oliver presented the Howard Park Dinosaur. Oliver noted that there were five levels of approval in order to get started on this project. Oliver noted that the project has been approved by the City of Tulsa Arts Commission. The project will be on the Board of Adjustments agenda in October 2025.

Oliver noted that Howard Park was chosen due to the history and underutilization of Howard Park. Oliver noted that they decided on a dinosaur due to the oil and gas history,

and the “quirkiness” of the current Route 66 projects. Oliver noted that the presented packets include the budget of the project.

Savage noted that the Contract was signed in September 2024. Oliver noted that the funding of the contract lasts through 2027.

Board member Miller left the meeting at 10:10AM.

Voting to adopt the concept for the Howard Park Dinosaur.

NAME	IN FAVOR	OPPOSED	ABSTAINING	NOT PRESENT
SAVAGE	X			
MEINDERS-BURKETT	X			
MILLER				X
REESE-TIPTON	X			
FERNANDEZ				X
TOTALS	3			2

Motion carried.

V. New Business

[NOTE: "New business" is restricted to any matter not known about or which could not have been reasonably foreseen prior to the time of posting. *Oklahoma Open Meeting Act*, 25 O.S.2001, §311(9)]

No new business.

VI. Public Comments

Caroline Guerra Wolf noted that the Board members are not allowed to speak on the public comments, but the items can be added onto the next agenda item if approved by the Board.

a. Linda Collier

Linda Collier noted that she and her husband own two properties in Crosby Heights. Collier noted that the upswing of the neighborhood has been incredible of the past few years. Collier noted that she is here to speak on behalf of the portion of Newblock Park that was abandoned. Collier noted that the west end of the park is used to read, journal, and have lunch. Collier noted that she is the owner of the Cave House.

Collier noted that the portion that was abandoned is peaceful and important to the neighborhood.

Collier requested that on the next agenda the Board formally reverse its recommendation to abandon that portion of the park.

b. Larry Mitchell (exact comment)

The Crosbie Heights Small Area Plan was developed from 2016 through 2018 and was approved by the Tulsa City Council on Feb. 2, 2019. The small area plan working group included neighborhood residents and a large consortium of planning professionals both public and private. The plan was vetted and approved by all major City of Tulsa departments, including Parks and the Mayor's Office.

On page 8 of the small area plan Executive Summary, Map #3 titled Recommended Land Use Designations shows all of Newblock Park remaining as a park!

With the leadership of the City of Tulsa and private partnerships, our neighborhood has risen above blight for the first time in decades. Young families are moving in, there is new business and residential construction, and crime is down. Around 100 residential properties have been extensively renovated.

Our newfound success is fragile and can be undone by actions such as the Park Board's June 3 vote on a specific agenda item which stated: "Discussion and possible action on a recommendation to abandon the park use of a portion of Newblock Park to allow for a transitional housing program.... Mayor's Office or Designee". Mayor Nichols has publicly stated since then that the homeless housing proposed for Newblock Park will not go forward. The Park Board abandonment no longer applies to the stated agenda item. We want it overturned. Our neighborhood should have a say in its future. The safety of children using Newblock Park should be of utmost priority.

The City of Tulsa apparently has long range plans to develop the old Juvenile Detention Center building into a homeless housing facility. This vacant building owned by Tulsa County is located at the west end of our neighborhood. When this development occurs, Crosbie Heights will be bookended by social services, with the Archer corridor on the east and the old Juvenile Detention center development on the west. That is enough for one neighborhood!

We further ask the Park Board to amend its bylaws and/or policies and procedures to include these 3 items:

1. The Park Board will contact local residents in advance of any agenda item that involves abandoning or repurposing park land. (To the best of my knowledge, no one in Crosbie Heights was notified prior to the June 3 Parks Board meeting.)
2. The rulings and implications of the 2021 Helmerich Park Oklahoma Supreme Court ruling will be included to ensure the legality of abandoning park land.

3. The proposed use of abandoned park land shall be stated specifically, and if that proposed use changes, the abandonment will become null and void.

In conclusion, for the safety of children using Newblock Park, for recognizing the social services exposure this neighborhood already faces and will continue to face into the future, for the burden this unknown future land use places on our neighborhood, for the potential negative impact on the developing West of Main business community and Riverview Arts District, for the preservation of urban green space, and because the specific agenda item in question no longer applies, we ask that the Newblock Park abandonment be overturned.

c. Deb Cramer (exact comment)

Osiyo—. I am Deb Cramer, and I am here on behalf of the residents of Crosbie Heights and the surrounding neighborhoods of Newblock Park. Good morning, Parks Board members, and thank you for the opportunity to speak today.

We ask you to reconsider and reverse your June 3rd decision to abandon 2.5 acres of Newblock Park. At the time, the purpose was to support temporary housing. But as Mayor Nichols and Councilor Laura Bellis have since confirmed, that plan is no longer being pursued. So, we simply want our park back in full.

While it may seem like a small parcel to the Parks Board, it is significant to Crosbie Heights. I've seen children from the school running in the fields, neighbors walking dogs, and families treating it as their backyard—because in dense urban neighborhoods like Crosbie Heights, few have swing sets or soccer goals at home. The park is more than green space—it is where families gather.

I am a proud Cherokee citizen, and I was inspired by Chair Susan Savage's words—quoted in Tulsa People Magazine in August 2020—that a key tenet of her public policy leadership hearkened to a Native American saying she paraphrased: "Every decision should take into account the next seven generations." This wise Native American philosophy teaches that our choices must honor sustainability, fairness, and respect for the environment we all share—not just a solution to the challenge of the moment. Another favorite Native American teaching reminds us: "We do not inherit the earth from our ancestors; we borrow it from our children."

According to the USDA, a single mature tree can provide a day's supply of oxygen for up to four people, and it absorbs more than 48 pounds of carbon dioxide annually. In Crosbie Heights, an area adjacent to the West Tulsa Industrial Area, these benefits mean cleaner air, cooler surroundings, and reduced stormwater.

When parkland is released, even a small portion, it sets a precedent that public green space—land held in trust for all citizens—can be given up when other needs arise. Parkland should be the absolute last, not the first place Tulsa looks when land is needed for a project. And I hope you might reflect with me: would the same abandonment have been considered at Woodward Park or Hunter Park, which also has areas of land that are not fully utilized by park visitors? Preserving this parcel is more than keeping a piece

of land—it is honoring a commitment. It shows that Tulsa values its parks as part of our public trust, and that the Parks Board and the community stand side by side in protecting them. By choosing preservation here, we send a clear message: Tulsa’s green spaces are not expendable, they are essential—for today’s families and for the seven generations who will follow.

On behalf of Crosbie Heights residents and Tulsa citizens, I urge you to restore this land to full park status—because to me it seems like we all have the same mission in mind: to preserve and protect Tulsa Parks for all citizens—even those who can’t take off work to let you know this is important to them.

I want to close by expressing my appreciation for your service to the City of Tulsa and for the thoughtful work you do on behalf of our parks.
Thank you—or in Cherokee, wado.

d. Chris McCabe

Chris McCabe asked that the board rescind the vote to use Newblock Park for transitional housing. McCabe noted that there is no project, benefit, or plan in place to use Newblock Park at this point. This sets a precedent that park land can be abandoned even when there is no further use.

The vote to abandon the park land happened without the Parks Director and Park Board Chair. The vote occurred with people who work closely with the Mayor’s administration.

McCabe noted that the abandonment of park land should be rare and leaves a scar on the park system and communities that rely on Newblock Park for recreational activities. McCabe asked the Board formally reverse its recommendation to abandon that portion of the park.

e. Elizabeth Browne

Elizabeth Browne noted that her students utilize the parks for recreational activities (map trees, walks, studying water runoff). Browne asked that the Board rescind the vote to use Newblock Park for transitional housing.

VII. Next Meeting – October 7, 2025, at Whiteside Community Center – 4009 S Pittsburg Ave., Tulsa, Oklahoma 74135.

VIII. Adjournment at 10:31AM.