

Meeting Minutes
Parks and Recreation Board
July 14, 2026, at 9:00 AM

Helmerich Center for American Research | 1400 N Gilcrease Museum Road | Tulsa, Oklahoma 74127

Attendees:

MEMBERS		
NAME	PRESENT	ABSENT
SAVAGE	X	
MEINDERS BURKETT	X	
MILLER		X
REESE (arrived at 9:09 AM)	X	
TOTALS	3	1

- I. Chairperson Savage called the meeting to order at **9:03 AM**.
- II. Savage asked for the review and approval of June 9, 2026, PRB minutes.

Savage noted that the Board did not have quorum and would be waiting for Board Member Cassie Reese to arrive. The Board moved on to Anna America's Department Report.

III. REPORTS

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

Anna America noted that the Department's Forestry staff were able to treat ash trees. America noted that they have treated some of Tulsa Public Schools' trees on their land as part of the good tree behavior and are hoping that the ash trees can be salvaged.

America noted a meeting with Councilor Laura Bellis and staff that talked through philanthropic needs and those who are interested in turning abandoned lots into wildflower plots.

America noted Stacie Martin has worked with master gardeners and assessing the balance for a wildflower plot and how to coordinate mowing. Additionally looking to help find ways for public to support.

America mentioned a couple events that were popular, and the different collaboration of partnerships throughout Parks. Sk8 Dates have been very popular with well around a couple of hundred people showing up to these events and how people are getting out to skate.

America mentioned Tulsa Parks is working on a new model for partnerships. Oklahoma that the Department had a pop-up last Friday at McCullough Park with Food Bank of Eastern

Oklahoma that provided free lunches to kids. America noted that a similar second event is planned July 24.

America noted that the Department has its official groundbreaking planned for Fred Johnson Park on August 7, 2026. The renovation and improvements will include pickleball courts, playground, dog park, skate elements, looped trail, covered basketball, which will be first covered basketball court in the City of Tulsa.

America mentioned there is no official date yet, but October will be final date for Woodward Park updates and ribbon cutting.

America mentioned November 2026 will be the first phase of Gilcrease trails.

America noted the Zoo ran into a crisis with African wild and things being over budget. America noted that the City was able to provide \$7.5M with the requirement that the Zoo raise \$2.M, and Zoo reached goal before August deadline. America noted contract was signed to modify the agreement to reflect the allocation of funds.

America noted the 2026 ParkScore Index included in the July Park board packet. America noted that the packet shows how our park system ranks overall. Nationally, Tulsa dropped slightly in overall rank from 59 last year, and this year it was ranked 63.

America noted Tulsa is in the middle of the road on most of the rankings on the ParkScore Index but ranked high on Park Space Equity at 73 out of 100 points.

America also noted 11/100 scores on investment throughout park system. These scores reflect Tulsa County, Gathering Place, and river parks and we have worked with them on how to make data accurate. Tulsa is ranked 99 out of 100 when it comes to public investment in parks.

Savage noted the acreage section of the report and asked how acreage score is determined. Savage also requested the definition of a destination park.

America noted we define a destination park as the intent solely for people who drive there. Dog Parks are not accessible from neighborhoods and would be considered destination parks. It was noted that Tulsa has approx. 64% that live within walking distance of a park. East Tulsa is sparse and South Tulsa more developed and underserved in parks as well. Tulsa is Top 10 in the country for outdoor pickleball courts.

Savage asked if those are considered destinations. America stated that they are considered destinations.

America noted that the Department tries to look at the data to add amenities, like basketball courts, pickleball and knows we rank low on dog parks.

America mentioned Tulsa Parks' Communication Coordinator, Sarah Edwards, and the Tulsa Parks social media page.

Questions were welcomed.

b. Communications/Marketing Update – Sarah Edwards

Edwards noted that the next Sk8 Date is August 13, 2026.

Edwards noted that, since has started with the City, she has increased followers, views, and engagement on the Tulsa Parks social media pages.

Edwards noted that goals moving forward would be to increase awareness and showcase what Tulsa Parks offers.

III. Savage asked for the review and approval of June 9, 2026, PRB minutes.

Meetings minutes were addressed at 9:32 a.m.

PUBLIC COMMENT

James Taylor noted meeting minutes from June were not accurate and he would like what he stated to be reflected accurately.

Taylor noted he recorded and has a transcript of what he said at the June meeting.

Caroline Guerra Wolf advised the Board that they could approve or oppose Taylor's public comments and approve of making the change.

Savage noted that the goal would be to have meeting minutes reflect accuracy.

Guerra Wolf suggested reviewing Taylor's comments and moving the vote to the August 4, 2026, Board Meeting. The Board agreed to this suggestion.

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

a. *Howard Park Route 66 Unifier Signage – Steven Lassman

Steven Lassman seeks approval for one of four shields to be installed at Howard Park. Lassman noted with the vinyl wrap and Howard Park being a roadside attraction with the dinosaur statue coming as well. Lassman noted that the shield will be 6ft tall and 6 ft wide, funds available for wrap if shield becomes damaged or vandalized.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

James Taylor made comments concerning what policies govern art in the City Parks.

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

TOTALS	3			1
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Motion carried.

b. *Kendall Whittier Neighborhood Sculptures – Jamie Pierson

Jamie Pierson with Scraps Design mentioned the Kendall Whittier Beautification Program is funded by the Oklahoma Main Street incentive program. Through American heritage bank payroll tax allocation.

Savage noted there is no payroll tax for Oklahoma.

Pierson noted she will verify with Kendall Whittier Main Street but seeks approval for installing statues, bike racks, and some lighting. The funds have to be used in public spaces and working with different organizations like Growing Together, Bike Club and others on where bike racks would be most useful.

Pierson noted page 7 will give an idea of what the statues look like. Specs are 8ft wide by 8ft tall. All Statues and bike racks will be painted by local artists. Fabrication will be done locally.

Pierson mentioned the Archer Park community said they would be interested in adding lighting. Scraps Design does have funding for lighting; solar lights were recommended and contractor would be Third Gen. Electric to light statue and parking lot.

Pierson noted they were looking at removing one tree and were currently working with Geoff Braga for a relocation. Pierson noted Up With Trees will handle the relocation of tree in October.

Pierson noted the maintenance aspect and wants to prepay fabricators for maintenance for up to five years, which will cover electrical and structural maintenance and repairs.

Pierson asked about legal framework of the additions.

Savage noted that legal framework should not be a part of approval. Staff will work on details and the official language.

PUBLIC COMMENT

James Taylor made a comment regarding what Board policies govern this action.

Savage noted Taylor received information from Mayors' office.

Meinders Burkett noted approval and suggested working with staff on logistics.

NAME	IN FAVOR	OPPOSED	ABSTAINING	NOT PRESENT
SAVAGE	X			
MEINDERS-BURKETT	X			
MILLER				X
REESE	X			
TOTALS	3			1

Motion carried.

V. Public Comments

- a. Addressing the need for clear, accessible policies, but not limited to, art in the park – James Taylor

“A manual setting forth the policy statements of the Park and Recreation Board is needed to provide guidance in the administration of the City’s Park and Recreation programs. Policies are not immutable or rigid laws, but are, rather, statements that provide positive direction, clarify relationships, assist in evaluation, ensure fair treatment, provide uniformity of action and give a clear picture of Park and Recreation objectives. Through policies, a sense of direction consistent with the City Charter and ordinances, can be maintained.

Policies are often distilled from many small decisions made over a long period of time or they may have evolved from habit and may or may not be in written form. The making of decisions by board members in the absence of reference materials is often difficult and inconsistent; therefore, the enunciation of policies is of prime importance. A policy manual is valuable in eliminating potential problems that may arise when new board members are becoming acquainted with the department and with their duties as board members.

Policy statements should reflect past actions of the board so that the needs of the future can be consistently evaluated. All decisions relate in one way or another to

policy, therefore, either all Board action should conform to established policy or policy changes should be made as needed.

Through policies, the board ensures that parklands are held and not dissipated by allocations to various other purposes than those for which the lands were acquired, that the development program is confined to the purposes announced in the charter, that recreation programs are well planned and directed and that all citizens are treated fairly and equally. Confusion and lack of continuity will arise less frequently if various procedures, directive and regulative policies and operations are set forth in writing. This manual is written to try to accomplish these ends. As changes occur in the City of Tulsa, as standards are revised and as new administrators and board members become associated with the Park and Recreation Department, the policies stated in this manual will need to be updated. Periodic revisions will be necessary to ensure their continuing validity.

Those aren't my words. They're the words of the Parks Board, adopted in 1994. And notably, they were approved during the tenure of the current Board Chair as Mayor of Tulsa.

Tulsa Parks once understood something this system has clearly forgotten public spaces belong to the public, and the public has the right to know the policies that govern them.

When there are no visible policies, the public cannot participate as true partners. They can't hold government accountable. They can't challenge decisions against an objective standard. They're left to negotiate personalities instead of principles.

That's not how public trust is built, that's how it's lost.

The future of Tulsa Parks belongs to the people of Tulsa. Your job is not to stand between the public and its parks. Your job is to build a system that gives the public the power to steward, protect, and curate the places we already own.

That includes the parks themselves, the gardens they nurture, the public art they contain, and the cultural legacy they represent. Those things should never depend on who happens to be sitting on this Board. They should be protected by clear, public policies that outlive every one of us.

Anything less than that is a failure of public trust.

Today this Board operates as though written policy's unnecessary, as though each issue can simply be decided in the moment. That's not governance. That's discretion without accountability.

And really, the greatest loss here isn't even transparency. It's talent. A system without clear public policies doesn't attract the most capable, creative, and passionate people, it drives them away while rewarding those who are willing to navigate ambiguity instead of those who are willing to challenge it.

What you end up doing is limiting the Parks ability to draw from the super deep well of incredibly talented and passionate local artists, gardeners, historians, educators, and civic leaders who want to contribute to our parks.

That is not a failure of the people, it's a failure of the system.

So understand this: this is not just the history of Tulsa Parks. It's the future, with you or without you.

The question is not whether Tulsa Parks will again be governed by clear, written public policies because it will be. The only question is whether this Board will lead that effort or whether a future Board will have to repair the damage left by your refusal to do so.

Today, I am asking for one simple act of accountability.

By the next Board meeting, publicly identify every written policy that currently governs this Board..."

-- TIME EXPIRED / END OF PUBLIC COMMENT --

VI. 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.

VII. Next Meeting – The next regularly scheduled meeting of the Park and Recreation Board will take place on August 4, 2026 – Route 66 Train Depot – 3770 Southwest Boulevard, Tulsa, Oklahoma 74107.

VIII. Adjournment at 10:03 AM.