

MINUTES
SPRINGFIELD-GREENE COUNTY PARK BOARD
Park Board Administrative Offices, 1923 N. Weller Ave., Springfield, Missouri
And via Microsoft Teams for Park Board Members
Friday, November 7, 2025

I. ROLL CALL

Ms. Susie Turner, Chair, called the meeting to order at 8:31 a.m.

Park Board Members Present: Leslie Carrier, Don Chenevert, Jr., Cody Danastasio, Curtis Jared, Mark McNay (via Teams), Dr. Dale Moore, Dr. Dianna Parker, Royce Reding, Susie Turner

Park Board Members Absent: None

Park Board Staff Members Present: Tim Carpenter, Jenny Edwards, Leigha May, Tim McCrea, Jerry Mitchell, Miles Park, Ron Schneider, Jill Simmons, Jeff Smith, Jackson Thompson

Guests: Dan Dawson, Railroad Historical Museum, Heidi Herrman, Springfield 66 Program.

II. READING & APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- a. Mark McNay made a motion to approve the minutes from October 10, 2025, Park Board Meeting; seconded by Don Chenevert, Jr. The motion was approved unanimously.

III. REPORT OF THE OFFICERS

- a. Chair Susie Turner acknowledged that Miles Park has announced his intent to retire in December following his many years of dedicated service to the Park Board. She expressed her sincere appreciation for his significant contributions, commitment, and impact on the Parks Department, noting that his absence will leave a considerable gap.

IV. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

There was no unfinished business to discuss.

V. NEW BUSINESS

- a. **Presentation on the Springfield 66 sculpture program** Heidi Hermann, Director of Springfield 66, provided a presentation on the upcoming Springfield 66 Centennial Celebration, commemorating the 100th anniversary of Route 66 in 2026. She explained that the mission of the Springfield 66 Centennial Sculpture Series is to honor Springfield, Missouri, as the birthplace of Route 66 by transforming this historic milestone into a vibrant, community-driven partnership and artistic showcase.

The initiative, inspired by Kansas City's "Parade of Hearts", aims to celebrate Springfield's unique identity through public art that reflects its creative spirit and historical significance. The project seeks to unite and uplift the local arts community, foster meaningful and inclusive experiences, and strengthen connections among residents and visitors. Additionally, it is designed to encourage tourism, promote economic vitality throughout Springfield's cultural districts and downtown area, and build lasting connections between art, history, and community that future generations can continue to experience and expand upon.

The presentation also provided an overview of the digital map and interactive check-in experience available through the Visit Springfield app, which would encourage visitors to explore and locate each of the Route 66 Centennial sculptures. The sculptures would be installed in accessible, high-traffic areas where visitors can gather, take photos, and engage in the artwork, creating community excitement and visibility around the project.

Each sculpture, standing approximately five feet eight inches tall and 80 inches wide, will feature artwork created by local and regional artists. The project's goal is to foster community pride, attract visitors, and establish a legacy of public art within Springfield.

Park Board members inquired about sculpture ownership, maintenance responsibilities, installation methods, and expected lifespan. It was noted that the sponsoring entity will assume responsibility for maintenance, with sculptures anticipated to have a lifespan of ten years or more. The sculptures will be securely installed using side brackets and bolts anchored into a concrete base or similar structure.

- b. **Lake Springfield Pedestrian and Bicycle Bridge Review and Discussion** Jeff Smith with Parks and Ben Tegeler with Ozark Greenways presented updates on the proposed pedestrian and bicycle bridge over Lake Springfield, a priority project identified in both the Comprehensive Plan and the Lake Springfield Plan. The project aims to address a major connectivity gap between the boathouse and the east side trail system, improving pedestrian and neighborhood access around the lake. Preliminary construction costs are estimated at \$9.8 million, and Ozark Greenways is funding the full engineering phase using remaining ARPA funds. Engineering and environmental clearance are underway, with final design expected by July 2026, making the project shovel ready. The design concept features a simple, durable, prefabricated concrete-deck pedestrian bridge approximately 14 feet wide, supported by connecting on-grade trails and boardwalk segments.

This project would significantly improve regional trail connectivity, including links to the Chadwick Flyer, Trail of Honor, and surrounding residential neighborhoods that currently lack safe pedestrian access to the lake. Discussion included long-term maintenance responsibilities and the importance of designing a resilient, low-maintenance structure. The project is under consideration for Year 2 or Year 3 of the new half-cent sales tax. Board members expressed enthusiasm, acknowledging the project's long history and its potential to be transformative for the Lake Springfield area.

- c. **Cooper Sports Complex and Bear Boardwalk Improvement Projects Update** Miles Park, Assistant Director, provided a comprehensive update on the Cooper and Killian sports complex improvements, noting the project is nearing completion after several months of construction activity. Work at both sites include the new detention basins, upgraded backstops, new scoreboards, turf installation, and accessibility improvements. At Killian, fields now feature multiple base-length options, upgraded batter's box materials, and new protective netting, while Cooper has progressed significantly with turf installation, backstop construction, and preparation for the new press box and bleacher system. Additional enhancements include unfunded, expanded parking serving both complexes and updated LED field lighting.

Miles also summarized project funding, primarily supported by ARPA contributions from both the City and Park Board, with additional support from the CVB. The project remains on

budget after adjusting the scope to defer several amenities such as pedestrian lighting and shade structures. A future development concept for the only remaining buildable area north of the Cooper Tennis Complex was also presented, outlining long-term opportunities for parking, maintenance access, and expanded facilities.

Jackson Thompson, Assistant Director – Zoo, provided an update on the Bear Boardwalk reconstruction project at Dickerson Park Zoo, noting the significant progress made since demolition began on July 3, 2024. The boardwalk has been closed since November 2021, serves as a 300-foot visitor pathway overlooking the black bear and swift fox habitats. Engineering began in 2023, with Miller Engineering completing design work and Hambey Construction LLC leading construction. Early efforts included extensive clearing by Park Board arborists, Zoo staff, MDC partners, and volunteer groups. Improvements underway include a new gazebo, reinforced footers and stem walls for stronger containment, enhanced keeper access areas for swift fox management, and updated perimeter fencing designed with animal welfare and safety in mind. Bears were temporarily off exhibit during demolition but have since returned on a limited basis, with full access expected once the central gazebo structure and fencing are complete.

The project is just over 50% complete, with a targeted final walkthrough date of December 23, 2025, and a public ribbon cutting anticipated in spring after the bears emerge from hibernation. Funding includes \$19,010 for engineering from FY23–24, \$580,000 in City of Springfield general fund carryover, and \$91,152.39 contributed by Friends of the Zoo, for a total project cost of \$608,162.39. Staff emphasized that construction is progressing smoothly with no outstanding work orders or changes at this time.

- d. **Superintendent of Parks Business Report and Comments** Superintendent of Business Operations, Jerry Mitchell, presented the financial report, strong financial performance compared to the prior year, with operating revenues up approximately \$250,000 and expenditures down roughly \$357,000, resulting in a year-over-year improvement of about \$607,000. While the trend is positive, staff emphasized the importance of continued careful spending, especially regarding repairs and maintenance needs. Some revenue declines were noted at Rutledge-Wilson Farm Park due to several weather-related closures, as well as reduced concessions revenue during fall events; however, these decreases were partially offset by lower expenditures. Turf management costs were also significantly reduced due to six vacant seasonal positions tied to decreased maintenance demands during ongoing facility projects, with hiring expected to resume in spring.

In the Golf Enterprise Fund, merchandise and equipment sales continue to show notable growth, contributing to increased revenue alongside improved controls at Betty Allison Golf Course and Oscar Blom, resulting in higher rounds and better fee capture. Staff also provided an update on the Parks Countywide Capital Projects Fund, noting that many expenditures reflect previously obligated carryover funds from the city. Efforts are underway to automate financial reporting to improve efficiency and incorporate projected revenues and expenditures into future reports.

- e. **Director of Parks Report and Comments** Director Schneider referred the Board to the staff written report located in report packet. The Board retreat is tentatively scheduled for Monday, March 2, 2026, more details will be provided.

Four Parks Department employees were recognized in October for service milestones. Jamie Hannaford and Mallory Weber each celebrated 5 years of service; Christopher Hunt and Joseph Farwell each celebrated 10 years of service. Their dedicated service to the community should be applauded!

Shane Turner was recently hired and started work as a Park Ranger. Director Schneider noted staff welcome Shane on the team and look forward to his presence in the parks. Staff is still actively recruiting more Park Rangers for the team and working closely with Human Resources on this.

After 23 years serving at the Springfield-Greene County Park Board, Assistant Director Miles Park announces his intent to retire. Mr. Park's dedication and commitment to providing exceptional parks and recreation services will be missed. Miles helped to lead the Parks Department through a tremendous period of growth and expansion during his tenure. Miles is a respected leader, dedicated public servant, Springfield-Greene County Park Board and thoughtful decision maker who will leave a lasting impact on those he served. His last day of work with the Park Board will be December 18, 2025.

VI. CALENDAR

Park Board Meeting: Friday, December 12, 2025, at 8:30 a.m., at the Park Board Administrative Office, 1923 N. Weller Ave., Springfield, Missouri

VII. ADJOURNMENT

Dr. Dale Moore made a motion to adjourn the meeting; seconded by Curtis Jared. The motion passed unanimously. The meeting ended at 9:48 a.m.