

Planning Committee Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, September 24, 2025; 8:15 am
Fargo Parks Sports Center
Alex Stern Boardroom

Present: Vicki Dawson, Zoe Absey, Joe Deutsch, Aaron Hill, Susan Faus, Dave Bietz, Jayne Gust, Luke Evenson, Broc Lietz, Carmen Johnson

Permission to Bid Cornerstone Bank Arena Ice Refrigeration Replacement Project:

Dave Bietz presented. Discussion centered on a major refrigeration equipment replacement at Cornerstone Bank Arena, which is at the end of its life. The project is estimated at around \$3.5 million and will move from glycol to ammonia for ice refrigeration, aligning with industry trends. - The board is seeking permission to bid on this project due to its cost exceeding \$250,000.

Arena Maintenance Issue: A leak was discovered in the ice system at the same arena, requiring removal of ice and glycol, leak detection, and repair. The process is expected to take up to a month.

The committee recommends moving this to the full board and placing it on the Consent Agenda for consideration and approval.

2026 Final Budget:

Broc Lietz and Luke Evenson presented. The annual budget for 2026 was presented, highlighting a balanced approach with a focus on property tax relief. The Fargo Park District is lowering its tax rate slightly, benefiting from community growth.

The general fund budget is set at approximately \$42 million, with increases in revenue from grants, state aid, and interest income. No new full-time positions are being added, but there are increases in both full-time and seasonal salary budgets. The district employs about 168 full-time staff and 710 at peak summer season, but then if we include regular part-time and "Franchise" employees, the number goes up to 979-all employee categories excluding regular full-time.

Employee benefits, especially health insurance, are rising by 9%. Utilities are expected to increase by 3.5%. \$7.5 million is allocated for ongoing maintenance and capital improvements, reflecting a proactive approach to facility upkeep.

Two major projects are funded for 2026: the arena mechanical upgrade and Old Grove Road rehabilitation, with a \$2.1 million deficit in the capital projects fund to be offset by future pledge collections. A third project (kayak launch) was removed due to escalating costs.

The Park District's contribution to its foundation is capped at \$275,000, with the foundation managing its own budget. - Valley Senior Services operates on a \$7 million budget, funded by county, state, and federal sources, with no direct impact on the Park District's operating funds.

The committee recommends moving this to the full board and placing it on the Regular Agenda for consideration and approval.

Other:

Feedback from users of Courts Plus highlighted maintenance, cleanliness, and scheduling issues. The board acknowledged these concerns and committed to improved oversight and responsiveness. Ongoing efforts to improve communication and relationships with community sports organizations and local government officials were discussed.

Meeting adjourned at 9:24 am.

Minutes submitted by Carmen Johnson, Executive Assistant