

Planning Committee Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, June 17, 2026; 7:30 am
Fargo Parks Sports Center
Alex Stern Board Room

Present: Vicki Dawson, Jerry Rostad, Zoe Absey, Aaron Hill, Joe Deutsch, Susan Faus, Dave Bietz, Jayne Gust, Tyler Kirchner, Tony Schmitt, Broc Lietz, Kali Mork, Kevin Boe, Kelly Kisell, Rocky Papachek, Dave Klundt

Public Comment: Members of the public were afforded the opportunity to discuss issues with the Board.

Transfer Agreement with Central North Dakota Steam Threshers, Inc.
Susan Faus, presenter

- Children's Museum at Yunker Farm is closed; Park District owns the train cars, rails, barn, and fence and has no future use planned.
- Legal opinion: assets have no resale value; disposal would be very expensive.
- Proposal:
 - Transfer ownership to Central ND Steam Threshers (charitable/civic organization).
 - Threshers assume all costs and responsibility to move the train, track, barn, and fence.
 - Train will become an active attraction at their shows; public still gets to see and use it.

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

Urban Archery Deer Hunting Program Request from Sandhills Archery Club
Tony Schmitt, Rob Mounts, and Odin Helgerson, presenters

- Long-running urban herd reduction program in Fargo (20+ years).
- Does/antlerless only – no bucks allowed.
- Emphasis on:
 - Public safety
 - Hunting at low-use times (early/late hours, weekdays, low-traffic months).
 - Strict rules and training; hunters must report all interactions, incidents, and lost/wounded deer.
- New request: Add three South Fargo nature parks; Forest River, Orchard Glen, Heritage Hills back into the program.
- Rationale:
 - Overabundant deer suppress understory vegetation and forest succession (oaks, shrubs, wildflowers).
 - This reduces bird and wildlife diversity; only deer-resistant species and invasives (buckthorn, honeysuckle) thrive.
 - Hunting provides:

- Population control and hunting pressure, which prevents parks from becoming “wintering yards” and pushing deer deeper into the city.
- Hunters would:
 - Stay well away from high-use trails, fishing spots, and apple-picking areas.
 - Use limited numbers of assigned hunters per park (not all in at once).
 - Focus some areas late season only (after key fall uses are done).

This topic is being deferred to a later date until more information is available.

Resolutions Creating Park Improvement District

Broc Lietz, presenter

- District has revived the longstanding model of using special assessment districts to finance new neighborhood parks in development.
- Developers typically provide land (equivalent to two lots); Park District designs and builds the park; costs are assessed back to lots via special assessments.
- Current projects:
 - Madaline’s Meadows
 - Similar pipeline work for Selkirk
- Legal/Process:
 - Multiple formal resolutions required:
 - Create the Park Improvement District
 - Declare official intent to construct the park
 - Direct engineers/architects to prepare reports, then plans and specs
 - Authorize advertising for bids and eventually award contracts
 - Must follow ND state statute and public notice requirements
- Special Assessment Committee:
 - Independent committee (previously authorized by board) now:
 - Applies the approved value matrix to each project.
 - Confirms whether the park improvements equal or exceed the proposed assessments.
 - Their formal recommendation will come later as the process advances.

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

2027 Fees for Youth and Adult Programming, Facilities and Pools

Kevin Boe, presenter

- Mostly small increases where staffing, officials, and supplies justify it.
- Some fee decreases (e.g., archery, selected programs) to rebuild or stabilize participation.
- Strong reliance on scholarship program (youth + adults), especially for pool passes.
- Commissioners flagged:
 - Long-term need to define “core” programs that may warrant very low/no fees.
 - Interest in free or sliding-scale “life skills” (swim lessons, bike skills), with cost-recovery implications to be studied.
- Facilities & Campground
- Ice rental: Up to \$190/hr (metro average alignment).
- Fields & shelters: Modest increases; more rigorous cost-recovery modeling needed with Ops (water, utilities, labor).

- Lindenwood Campground:
 - ~5% nightly fee increase; still below fairgrounds.
 - Lower campground infrastructure issues (flooding, pads, road, electrical) flagged for future capital decisions.
 - Strong revenue year when lower campground stays open; highly weather dependent.
- Pools (2027)
 - Daily admission: No change; single gate rate for everyone.
 - Season passes:
 - Residents: Held flat.
 - Non-residents: 10% higher than resident rate (value of property-tax support).
 - Structured passes maintained.

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

2027 Fees for Golf

Rocky Papachek, presenter

- Green fees:
 - 4% increase; non-prime rates eliminated (every day treated as prime due to demand).
 - Still competitive vs. Sioux Falls, Bismarck, King's Walk, etc.
- Season passes:
 - Introduces resident vs non-resident pricing.
 - Non-resident pass categories increased by 14% from non-rate of 2026. Residents receive 10% discount from the non-resident rate.
 - Some categories consolidated (e.g., junior passes simplified).
 - Desire to track household pass usage more granularly to ensure equity and detect outsized discounts.

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

2027 Fees for Sports Center

Kali Mork, presenter

- Compared to similar tri-state markets (Duluth, Rochester, Sioux Falls, Bismarck).
- Adjusted for unique scale and amenities (full-size turf, indoor track, etc.).
- Decisions:
 - Most fees held steady or see small increases.
 - Slightly larger increases for:
 - Turf field rentals (still below regional cost-per-square-yard norms).
 - Community rooms (due to demand and amenity level).
- Non-prime pricing:
 - Proposal to eliminate non-prime discounts during main seasons; instead, offer:
 - Dedicated summer rates to draw use in low-demand months.
 - Phased transitions for a few groups that deliberately rented at non-prime times to manage budgets.
- Community access:
 - Indoor track is free and very heavily used (~300/day in winter peaks).

- Open play sessions: \$5/person, with 1,600+ punch cards sold in 2025.
- Punch cards are eligible for scholarship support.

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

2027 Fees for Courts Plus Community Fitness Membership and Additional Fees

Kelly Kisell, presenter

- Membership structure:
 - Moving back to month-to-month model (contracts increasingly rare in industry).
 - Existing members: ~3% increase.
 - New members: pricing based on average of old short-term vs. 12-month contracts.
 - Membership types: Individual, Dual (two at same address), Household.
- Comparison:
 - Benchmarked against YMCA, Family Wellness, Choice in Grand Forks, etc.
 - Courts Plus typically remains below YMCA rates, especially once pool access is valued in.
- Pool integration:
 - Members get one free “home” pool pass (indoor or outdoor) tied to active membership; upgrades available for more pools.
 - Pass is invalid if membership is cancelled.

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

Credit Card Fees

Broc Lietz, presenter

- Current state:
 - Credit card processing averages ~3.78% across the District.
 - District-wide costs rose from ~\$204k (2021) to ~\$383k (2025).
 - In Square alone (concessions, some POS), 2025 flipped to ~\$1M card vs. \$500k cash – card volume now dominates.
 - These costs are currently absorbed in department budgets
- Proposal:
 - Begin passing card processing fees directly to card-using patrons (approx. 3%, varies by system/card type).
 - Patrons would always have no-fee options:
 - Cash
 - Check (for appropriate transactions; less likely at concessions)
 - Debit card (note: surcharge cannot apply to debit under ND rules).

This was information brought to the Committee from the Finance Department. It was to get feedback from the committee.

Meeting adjourned at 10:20 am.

Minutes submitted by Carmen Johnson, Executive Assistant