



**CITY OF WALLED LAKE
PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION
MONDAY, MAY 11, 2026**

The Meeting was called to order at 7:30 p.m.

PLEDGE TO FLAG

ROLL CALL: Dufresne, Johnson, Linihan, O'Rourke

ABSENT: Arnold, Fernandes, Robertson

OTHERS PRESENT: HR Director Sears, DPW Superintendent Ladd

REQUESTS FOR AGENDA CHANGES:

Chairman Johnson requested discussion regarding cemetery improvements and cleanup in coordination with the Walled Lake Masons and the Commerce Township Historical Society.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

**P&R 05-01-26 APPROVAL OF THE APRIL 13, 2026, PARKS AND
RECREATION COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES**

Motion by Linihan, seconded by O'Rourke, CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY: To approve the April 13, 2026, Parks and Recreation Commission meeting minutes.

AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION: None

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

1. 2027 Spring Egg Hunt Date

The Commission discussed potentially changing the date that the city hosts its annual Spring egg hunt, to help avoid confusion with other community egg hunts. The Commission agreed to revisit the topic in the fall and asked Mrs. Sears to add the topic to the October 2026 agenda for further discussion.

NEW BUSINESS:

1. 2027 Memorial Day Parade Route

Commission Member O'Rourke said he thinks everybody's aware now that there was a push at the very last minute to have the parade route changed and to go back to what it

was several years ago, which was to come through downtown. So basically, originating at the Tiki bar and turning right onto Pontiac Trail, then come down to Maple and turn right. The real reason for this is because it does take us through more of the business district of downtown. There's a lot of businesses that actually do some of their best days of the year on that day, like the Dairy Queen. We anticipate the Brunch House is going to have a lot of success and the WOW Gas Station. It really appears that's where the community would like it to go as well. We heard a lot of feedback from the community when the talk came up of getting it changed back, that they supported that. However, it's something that should have been addressed in December or January, given the safety concerns around parades today. There's a lot that goes into changing the route, it's a far bigger commitment by the police to block off roads and entrances of businesses on Pontiac Trail versus coming down Maple out of the church where there's a lot less driveways. There's no question that it appears that next year we do want to move the parade route back to what it originally was, but we need to figure out how to stage that. But it's something that we definitely want to do, and city council is in support of it. There was just no way we could successfully do it this year.

Chairman Johnson said he agrees with Mr. O'Rourke. Initially he thought it would be great. We'll just move it around, no big deal. Not thinking about all of the work that it takes to get it done. Officer Shakinis took time to explain all the safety risks. Again, to piggyback on Mr. O'Rourke, we all want to think about the fun and the good of a parade. He said his mind doesn't run that way, he doesn't think about all the bad things people are thinking about doing like causing harm and mayhem during a parade. He said he realizes now how important it is to think about those things. He said he is definitely looking forward to 2027, bringing things back downtown in some variation of that. He said he gets the opportunity with Dennis's Facebook page to see what a lot of the residents have to say about a lot of things. He said he knows that in some of the community groups, it has been brought up by several people. At least more than 50 or 60 people have asked why it isn't downtown anymore. This was before it even came up with the mayor at the last meeting. He said he thinks it's really important that we look at the best ways to make this happen. Maybe it's not exactly like it was before, but we can figure out how to make it safe and at the same time accommodate the businesses. You know, we're all about trying to listen to what the people have to say and to accommodate them because that's who we're ultimately here to serve.

The Commission discussed some potential options in regard to the staging area and route. The Commission acknowledged safety and logistical concerns related to road closures and parade staging need to be addressed with public safety. The Commission agreed to revisit the topic after allowing some time to plan out the safety and logistics of the route.

DISCUSSION:

1. Market Place – Opening Day

Recording Secretary Sears said the weather was excellent, and we had just under 30 vendors in attendance for opening day. Staff received a great deal of positive feedback from vendors regarding both attendance and sales throughout the event. Ms. Hall

promoted the Market Place on social media by highlighting several vendors and attractions featured that day, including Tru pizza food truck, Odd Vessel Coffee, a bubble tea vendor, and live music performed by Nick from Weekend Comeback. In addition, the library hosted a children's scavenger hunt in place of its traditional story time activity, which was well received by families in attendance. Overall, the event was successful and well attended throughout the day.

Commissioners complimented Ms. Hall on her management and social media promotion efforts.

Commission Member Dufresne said the vendor next to her was wonderful and received a great deal of interest from attendees with her jewelry display. All of the vendors appeared to have strong engagement throughout the event, and she personally had many positive interactions with visitors as well. She noticed a significant number of families in attendance, particularly parents with young children in strollers. One vendor, who was selling books, created a very inviting setup using multiple booths that were covered and designed to resemble a school bus. It was especially appealing to families and created a welcoming space for children. Overall, it was a very successful and enjoyable first day for the marketplace.

2. 2026 Memorial Day Parade

Chairman Johnson asked where the commission is at with ordering shirts for the Parks & Recreation Commission members.

Recording Secretary Sears stated that at the previous meeting, commissioners were asked to email their shirt sizes. Mrs. Sears noted that she did not receive any responses. As a result, it is likely too late to place an order and receive the shirts prior to Memorial Day. Mrs. Sears further stated that she would check to see if any extra shirts are available for commissioners who plan to volunteer for the parade that do not currently have one.

The Commission discussed rotating invocation responsibilities among local churches. Mrs. Sears was asked to contact St. William Parish regarding the 2026 invocation.

Commission members inquired how many applications we have so far and what time they should report to assist with parade-related duties.

Recording Secretary Sears said there are currently 37 applications with over 1300 participants. Mrs. Sears said the commission members should arrive at the staging area at 9/9:30 A.M. Mrs. Sears said she will send out an email with more information about a week prior.

3. DIA Inside|Out Program

The Commission discussed the installation of artwork as part of the 2026 Detroit Institute of Arts Inside|Out Program.

Chairman Johnson expressed his appreciation to Mayor Pro Tem O'Rourke for helping bring the program to Walled Lake.

Recording Secretary Sears discussed the planned activities connected to the program, including: Yoga photo contest, coloring contest, yoga in the park, and a passport activity. Mrs. Sears said the DIA will provide prizes for these contests. Mrs. Sears said she requested a DIA volunteer to set up a booth for the summer festival at the Market Place.

Commission Member Dufresne expressed interest in facilitating some tours of the artwork.

Recording Secretary Sears stated that she would provide Ms. Dufresne with a contact to determine whether this request can be accommodated.

4. Park walk-through

The Commission discussed holding a park walkthrough in lieu of the June Parks and Recreation Commission meeting. It was noted that the Commission would meet at Riley Park on June 8th at 7:30 p.m. to evaluate both Riley Park and the Foster Farmhouse. The Commission further discussed the possibility of visiting Hiram Sims Park following the initial walkthrough, time permitting prior to sunset. Additional discussion included the option of individually reviewing the remaining parks at separate times.

The commission requested that Mrs. Sears prepare public notices, meeting information, and social media advertisements.

5. Commission Attendance and Participation

Chairman Johnson discussed attendance expectations for board members. Discussion included: concerns regarding recurring absences and maintaining quorum, the importance of active participation by appointed commissioners, virtual attendance and Open Meetings Act requirements and stricter attendance enforcement beginning in Fall 2026.

6. Coordination with Other Community Organizations

Chairman Johnson discussed improving communication and collaboration with organizations hosting community events, including the Downtown Development Authority and other event organizers. Commissioners expressed interest in attending meetings of other boards and commissions, improving coordination for community festivals and events and clarifying distinctions between city-sponsored and independently organized events.

7. Cemetery Beautification Initiative

Chairman Johnson shared information from his discussions with Jim Stevenson of the Walled Lake Masons regarding cemetery beautification efforts. Discussion included:

cleaning and restoring gravestones, volunteer opportunities and learning from cemetery restoration projects in other communities.

Commission Member O'Rourke inquired with DPW Superintendent Ladd regarding the request submitted by himself and Council Member Woods for the purchase of additional flags for the cemetery.

Mr. Ladd confirmed that flags for the cemetery have been ordered and are expected to be installed prior to Memorial Day.

P&R 05-02-26 ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 8:25 p.m.

Miranda Sears
Recording Secretary

Giovanni Johnson
Chairman