

**City of Columbus
Park Board Meeting**

July 15, 2025

PLEASE PRINT

NAME	ADDRESS
Drew Kalknick	8952 Zumbroth St. NE Blaine MN
ARNIE WICKER	3940 Breezy Pt Dr. Wyoming
Jennie Lellan	7944 174 th Court NE
Sue Fraley	7507-180th Ave NE
Jim Fraley	" " " "
LARRY ENERSON	9311 172 ND AVE N.E.
Gary Schulte	16138 Kettle Run Blvd NE
Jan Schulte	16138 Kettle Run Blvd NE.

Wyoming
MN.

CITY OF COLUMBUS
PARK BOARD MEETING
INTERACTIVE MEETING FORMAT
STATUTES SECTION 13D.021
07-15-2025

The 07-15-2025 Park Board meeting for the City of Columbus was called to order at 5:30 p.m. by Chair Brad Norling at the City of Columbus City Hall. Present were Board members, Kris King, and Bob Bodene.

City Council Liaison Mayor Ron Hanegraaf, City Administrator Jack Davis, Assistant Planner Eleanor Hahn, Public Works Director Jim Windingstad were present.

Absent: Andrea Messina and Steven Ray

Also Present: Drew Karnick, Arnie Wicker, Councilmember Jennifer Lattin, Sue and Jim Fraley, Larry Enerson, Gary and Jan Schulte, and Gordon Strum (sp?) via Zoom

AGENDA APPROVAL:

Motion by Norling to approve Park Board agenda for 07-15-2025 meeting as presented.

Second by Bodene.

Roll call vote: King – aye, Bodene – aye, and Norling – aye.

All in favor, motion carried.

APPROVAL OF PARK BOARD MINUTES:

Motion by Norling to approve the minutes of the 05-20-2025 Park Board meeting.

Second by King.

Roll call vote: King –aye, Bodene – aye, Norling – aye.

All in favor, motion carried.

PUBLIC OPEN FORUM:

Public comments were integrated with Agenda Item 5A (Tennis Court Update) due to the focused nature of community attendance.

DISCUSSION:

Tennis Court Update:

Chair Norling introduced the item by noting the unusually high turnout and welcomed public input regarding the condition and future of the city’s tennis and pickleball courts. He confirmed that action is needed due to court deterioration and growing safety concerns, adding that while the Park Board is committed to making improvements this fall, the final design remains undecided. Funding remains a limiting factor, and the Board aims to be fiscally responsible while serving broad community needs.

City Administrator Davis introduced the current status:

- The City had solicited bids for court resurfacing and reconstruction, utilizing the same footprint of the existing court.
- Three layout options were bid:
 1. **Base bid:** Resurface existing dual tennis courts with pickleball overlay lines (as currently configured) – \$124,600.00
 2. **Alternate A:** Resurface 2 tennis courts, with one including 2 pickleball overlays – \$125,900.00
 3. **Alternate B:** Resurface 1 tennis court and add 2 dedicated end-to-end pickleball courts – \$126,500.00

He explained that the bids are only valid until **July 31, 2025**. If the City delays selection, the project must be re-bid at an additional cost of approximately **\$1,800**. The project is funded primarily through park dedication fees and other non-levy sources.

There were comments shared by attendees:

In Favor of Dedicated Pickleball Courts:

- **Jim Fraley and Sue Fraley** – 7507 180th Ave, Columbus advocated for one tennis court and two dedicated pickleball courts, citing the sport’s increased popularity among seniors and the benefits of lower-impact play. He expressed concerns about shared nets and line confusion on dual-use courts. He referenced nearby towns implementing similar layouts.
- **Gary Shulte and Jen Shulte** - 16138 Kettle River Blvd, Columbus echoed support for separate pickleball courts, noting faster rotation and greater accessibility for all ages. Gary expressed concern about long tennis matches monopolizing space adding that shared use discourages return visits. Jen commented that she has seen teen and 20-year-olds participating in pickleball play as it is just not for seniors.

Bodene confirmed that he and his wife walk the park at different times of the day and have repeatedly seen a group of young adults playing pickleball.

In Favor of Preserving Two Tennis Courts:

- **Arnie Wicker** – 30940 Breezy Point DR. East Bethel, spoke in favor of maintaining two tennis courts, citing potential loss of tennis participation and underuse of single courts. Wicker noted coexistence with pickleball was possible using dual striping or portable nets and agreed that pickleball growth is valid but tennis has grown by 28% since 2020 adding high schools still have tennis as a high school sport. Wicker added that the courts need attention on days that they come to play and have no problem blowing or sponging them off, making sure they leave them cleaner when they are done playing.
- **Drew Karnick** -8952 Zumbrota St NE., Blaine, shared Wickers concern that reducing to one court will decrease current users adding long-term, individual courts are best, however he understands space is limited.

- **Gordon Strum(?)** – Falcon Heights – Commented that he plays tennis with Arnie and Drew but also is a pickleball player. He noted that in his neighborhood they just resurfaced two tennis courts and added two pickleball courts to one of them, but they did not install pickleball nets as they have portal nets available in a lockbox. This format still preserves 2 tennis courts.

Strum also expressed concern about noise complaints in other cities but acknowledged it may not be an issue in Columbus.

Public comments concluded with general support for court improvements and ongoing community engagement. Norling emphasized that while the Board cannot satisfy all preferences, the goal is a safe, inclusive facility with broad community appeal, aligned with funding possibilities. He noted that feedback gathered through a public survey and tonight’s discussion will guide the final design. Board members expressed concern about proceeding without analyzing new survey results, which had been recently distributed and would remain open for two more weeks. Early results showed an even 50/50 split in user preferences between tennis and pickleball.

Following deliberation, the Board unanimously passed a motion to table a recommendation on the court configuration and bid award until additional community feedback is received, and further discussion can take place. This delay may result in rebidding the project and postponing work until 2026.

Motion by Norling to table recommendation on the court configuration and bid award until the board has reviewed the community input survey response and explored additional site planning options.

Seconded: Bodene

Roll call vote: King –aye, Bodene – aye, Norling – aye.

All in favor, motion carried.

Chair Norling thanked all attendees for their input and emphasized that the Park Board remains committed to improving the facility in a way that serves the full community. The meeting then proceeded to the next agenda item.

Dug Out Cover Update:

City Administrator Davis reported on the status of discussions with Forest Lake Area Fastpitch Association (FLAFA) regarding potential dugout improvements. Communication gaps have delayed progress, but a proposal is now moving forward.

The Proposal Summary:

- The Park Board would commit to supporting the construction of dugout covers on one field in 2025.
- In exchange for FLAFA’s \$10,000 contribution, the Park Board would grant first rights to reserve the field for the 2026–2028 seasons.
- Pricing freeze on rental fees was discussed but not included in the motion.

Motion by Norling directed staff to send an email proposal to FLAFA offering support for one dugout project in 2025 contingent on their \$10,000 contribution, in exchange for first rights to reserve the field for

the 2026 -2028 seasons.

Second by Bodene.

Roll call vote: King – aye, Bodene – aye, and Norling – aye.

All in favor, motion carried.

Park Master Plan Update:

Hahn presented a draft layout of long-term improvements to Columbus Park. The draft, based on recurring Board discussions and community needs, is intended as a visioning tool, not a funding plan to help guide future investments, prioritize projects, and create a unified vision for the park’s development over the next 10–20 years.

Key Elements of the Draft Plan:

1. Court Facilities

- Retain the existing tennis/pickleball location but recognize that expansion within the current footprint is limited.
- Investigate relocating or adding courts in the **underutilized T-ball field area** to allow for dedicated pickleball facilities while keeping tennis intact.
- Board members discussed relocating court facilities to the less-used T-ball field area to allow more flexible multi-use development (basketball/pickleball) if community demand grows.
- Board members examined options of the existing tennis court location remains and adding pickleball courts north of existing courts creating a relocation of the existing parking lot to the east.

2. Playground Upgrades

- Replace aging equipment with **modern, ADA-accessible structures**.
- Add shade structures and seating for parents and caregivers.
- Include sensory play features to serve children of varying abilities.

3. Walking and Biking Trails

- Expand trail loops to create **continuous walking circuits** around the park and near the cell tower.
- Improve trail surfacing and add wayfinding signage.
- Explore potential linkages to citywide trail systems.

4. Picnic and Shelter Areas

- Increase covered picnic shelter capacity.
- Add more small-group shelters for casual family gatherings.
- Consider reservable spaces for events.
- Enhancing portable restroom areas with shelters

5. Parking and Access

- Expand parking in phases to support larger events.
- Improve ADA parking and pathways to key amenities.

6. Natural Areas and Landscaping

- Activate underused green spaces with native plantings, pollinator gardens, and low-maintenance landscaping.
- Preserve open space for potential 3–4-hole Disc Golf and informal recreation.

7. Sports Fields

- Maintain existing softball fields with targeted upgrades (dugouts, lighting).
- Consider reconfiguring one underused field for alternative recreation if demand shifts.

8. Community Gathering Spaces

- Create flexible-use lawns for festivals, markets, and performances.
- Potential stage area for community concerts

Davis shared with the Board the future funding opportunities that could be available. He stated that if the Hidden Park property is sold, a portion of proceeds could be directed to park improvements. Parkland dedication fees from possible apartment developments and available grants were mentioned as other forms of funding possibilities. The Board reiterated that the city needs to start transferring money to the parks if they are going to provide an adequate park system for their residents. Hahn and Davis encouraged continued dialogue and feedback before creating a finalized master plan map.

Trash Receptacle Discussion: The public works department requested to purchase 4 more trash receptacles to replace the current plastic barrels. The garbage bags in the barrels are not secure and fall into the container and additionally the containers get filled with rainwater making it unpleasant to maintain the placement of garbage bags in the park. Windingstad provided a handout of the current receptacles that are in the park and requested the Board approve the purchase of 4 more.

Motion by Norling to authorize the purchase of up to 4 trash receptacles at a cost of \$1,000.00 to be placed strategically in the park.

Seconded: King

Roll call vote: King –aye, Bodene – aye, Norling – aye.

All in favor, motion carried.

PARK BOARD MEMBERS OPEN DISCUSSION:

General discussion among Board members reiterated appreciation for the public input received on tennis/pickleball use.

King inquired about the possibility of keeping a porta potty available year-round for the park walkers in the winter and spring. The Board would like to discuss this option further at the next meeting.

Norling stated that the tree along the pathway that was damaged from the previous storm needs to be replaced. Windingstad replied that he is going to purchase a tree yet added a tree company is relocating to Columbus and has offered to demonstrate a tree planting at the upcoming Columbus Fall Fest and possibly donating the tree as well. Mayor Hanegraaf stated he would visit the company and confirm this donation before Windingstad purchases one.

Norling requested that Davis request an extension of the tennis court bids and that the Board reconvenes in two weeks to exclusively discuss the tennis court configuration and bids. The board agreed with this suggestion.

NEXT MEETING:

The next scheduled park board meeting is Tuesday, September 16, 2025, at 5:30 p.m.

ADJORN:

Motion made by Norling to adjourn.

Second by Bodene.

Roll call vote: King – aye; Bodene – aye; Norling – aye.

All in favor, motion carried.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:40 p.m.

Lorie A. Spangler

Respectfully submitted: Lorie Spangler, Deputy City Clerk