



Independence Park Commission Minutes

November 6, 2025 4:30 PM

Independence Uptown Market - 211 W. Truman Road

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Kyser called the meeting to order at 4:30 pm.

Commissioners Present: Diane Kyser, Paula Martin, Pamela Smith, Kay Douglas, Kevin Baird, Jana Evans

Staff Present – Councilmember Jennie Vaught, Melissa Brown, Rosie Carlson, Cheryl DeHaan, Morris Heide, Mike Hicks, Jennifer Kim, Candi Laster, Tabitha Williams

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

1. Minutes - September 4, 2025

Commission Baird motioned to approve, Commissioner Martin seconded, minutes approved as presented.

STAFF REPORTS

1. Budget

Morris Heide, Parks and Recreation Director, presented department revenues, expenditures and fund balances for the first quarter of the fiscal year. He explained the different revenue sources and categories of expenses.

Discussion followed about minimum reserves, how funds could be used, fund balance amounts and capital projects.

2. Parks, Facilities & Grounds

Assistant Director Mike Hicks gave an overview of the courts, fields, parks, trails, and services provided by maintenance staff. He then highlighted major events of the first quarter including storm cleanup, firework debris cleanup, disc golf tee pads, installation of artificial turf at Clothier Park and the fence replacement at George Owens Nature Park. He also shared that Charlotte Olejko, Horticulturalist III, was this year's Susan Paxton Block Award for Public Service recipient.

3. Recreation Services

Director Heide announced that Assistant Director Frank Buhro has retired. Director Heide then reported on the core program areas for recreation programming and highlighted major programs and events that took place during the first quarter.

4. Promotions

Promotions & Marketing Supervisor Candi Laster reported that work has begun on the Spring/Summer recreation catalog which will be in both printed and electronic formats. Staff is also creating an end of the year report and developing a new sponsorship program policy. She noted that Comcast will be sponsoring Santa's Village this year. All social media accounts saw gains in followers and reach during the first quarter. The Visit Independence Instagram account will be transitioned to the new Convention and Visitors Bureau soon.

5. National Frontier Trails Museum

Director Heide introduced Melissa Brown, Museum Services Supervisor. She presented information to the Commission about attendance numbers, how staff learns what states and countries the visitors are from, and why they chose to visit the National Frontier Trails Museum. Ms. Brown highlighted a visit from the Higashimurayama Sister City delegation, and a new educational program geared toward school-age children, "Wagons Ho: the Reality Show" where students go back in time to see if they can survive the 1800s. The program will be presented to the Independence School District for possible inclusion in their curriculum next year. Museum staff is brainstorming ways to adjust it for adults. During the slower winter months, staff will be refreshing museum exhibits and displays.

OLD BUSINESS

1. Parks and Recreation Master Plan - Nov. 17, 2025 Workshop

Work continues on the Parks and Recreation Master Plan. Pros Consulting will be leading a workshop with the City Council on Monday, Nov. 17th. All Park Commissioners are encouraged to attend.

NEW BUSINESS

Commissioner Baird asked for more information about the Benton Park Playground on the City Council agenda. Director Heide explained how the playground was selected and which parks have playgrounds with accessible features.

Parks and Recreation was awarded the Eileen Normile Weir Community Impact Endowment Fund to be used for a doggie drinking fountain in the Santa Fe dog park. The department received this award last year also and used it to purchase new pickleball equipment.

Maintenance staff is currently winterizing park restrooms. Waterfall Park is the only park with heated restrooms that will remain open all winter. Homeless individuals have been sleeping in the restrooms and burning fires in them.

Commissioner Martin asked if the department or the City had any World Cup activities planned. Director Heide and Councilmember Vaught stated no new events are planned at this time. It is difficult to determine how many people will be here, and FIFA has not announced which teams will be playing at Arrowhead Stadium yet. Lee's Summit Parks and Recreation is not doing any special events.

1. Election of Vice-Chair

Chair Kyser discussed the need for a vice-chair. Jana Evans was nominated, accepted the nomination, and was selected as the vice-chair.

ADJOURNMENT - NEXT MEETING FEBRUARY 5, 2026

Meeting Schedule - 4:30 PM on the first Thursday of September, November, February and May
This commission is to act in an advisory capacity to the City Council relating to public education, use and knowledge regarding Parks and Recreation programs, will consider recommendations from the Tree Commission, will solicit and suggest disbursement of funds donated from private sources and will review the status of the projects funded by the Parks Improvement Sales Tax. They are to make a report to the City Council at least twice a year. They are to meet at least quarterly.

Commissioner Smith moved to adjourn. Meeting adjourned at 5:41 pm.

