

Minutes of the Ecological Advocacy Committee (EAC) Meeting on April 6th, 2026

Committee Members Present:

Clay Kusbach (Chair)
Charlene Rountree (Vice-Chair)
Andy Schnabel
Andrew Tucker
Brian Will
John Hamilton

Others Present:

Garry Harrington – VPA, Director of Rum Village Nature Center
Mary Wojcik – Horticulturist, VPA
John Martinez – VPA, Facilities and Grounds

I. Call to Order – Meeting at Rum Village Nature Center at 8:30am.

II. Approval of Minutes

Brian W. moved to approve the minutes of February 23rd, 2026. John H. seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

III. Old Business

A. Facilities and Grounds Update

John M. informed us of spring activities beginning with the grounds crew. Facilities and Grounds will begin a low-mow policy for Sensitive Park Properties based on NRMP guidelines. John ensured there was plenty of time for detailed discussion and thorough answers from himself on bioswales, trash accumulation on some properties, and his crews mowing practices from the committee.

B. Selected Subcommittee properties and EAC Member Assignments

Clay K. followed up on the finalization of subcommittee names, assignments, and sensitive park selection. For park properties of interest, the following was designated:

- Andrew T. – Veterans Park

Clay reminded that throughout 2026, each committee member will look into the ecological improvement opportunities of each sensitive park property they have chosen to focus on.

Regarding final subcommittee arrangements and names, the committee agreed on the following:

- Parks Management Subcommittee – Clay K., Andy S., and Andrew T.
- Wetlands Resources Subcommittee – Charlene R. and Lori C.
- Education & Outreach Subcommittee – Brian W., Diana Z. (student member), and John H.

These subcommittees were established and assigned by motion, seconded, and unanimous vote acceptance.

C. Rum Village Park Five-Year Plan

Andy S. and Clay K. reiterated their presentation to the Park Board regarding ecological concerns on the Rum Village Park development plan. Much media and community attention was surrounding this scheduled meeting. Clay informed on how there will be further meetings for both the public and special interest groups to debate on this plan in the near future. Development of the mountain bike trail specifically will most likely not take place in the next 1-3 years; however, expressed ecological concern is being made consistently on this.

Andy S. suggested providing a drafted letter of feedback to VPA regarding the proposed concept plan. The entire committee reviewed all 21 points of the listed concept plan in order to help narrow down the focus of the letter to be sent to VPA.

IV. New Business

A. Horticultural Updates

Mary W. gave some updates on spring plantings and on the establishment of more funding for further seed and planting objectives to be accomplished. So far, all is on track, and budgets are optimistically going to remain stable.

B. Various Updates

Garry H. informed on how Director Jordan Gathers is leaving his role. Given prior experience with directorship change, the interim director will most likely be a long-transitioned position and period.

Arbor Day events are going to be held in April at multiple park properties. Tree giveaways will involve two interesting species this year as a focus: Persimmon and River Birch are being featured in flyers!

V. VPA and City Updates

Garry H. and Mary W. updated on urban geese signs being printed and now displayed at parks as desired. Wildlife Coexistence efforts have been accomplished and implemented!

VI. Miscellaneous

Discussion occurred on how selection for Director of VPA candidates may be more prudently made considering relevant experience as a necessary merit.

VII. Privilege of the Floor

None Noted.

Action Items

- Committee members begin looking into sensitive park properties of choice.
- Begin determining subcommittee objectives for the next meeting.
- Draft letter to VPA regarding Rum Village Park 21-point concept plan both positive and concerning.

The next meeting will be on Monday, May 11th, 2026; 8:30 am at Rum Village.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:55 am.