SOUTH BEND BOARD OF PARK COMMISSIONERS
REGULAR MEETING
June 15, 2026

The Board of Park Commissioners of the City of South Bend, Indiana met on Monday June 15, 2026, at Howard Park Ribbon Town Room, 219 S. Saint Louis Blvd, and virtually on Microsoft Teams for its regular meeting. Notice of the date, time and place of the meeting were duly given as required by law. The public was provided with a link to join the virtual meeting.

Park Board members present were as follows:
Mr. Mark Neal, President
Mr. Sam Centellas

VPA staff members present: Allie Dolz-Lane, Interim Executive Director; Anastasia Smith-Davis, Executive Assistant; Erin Thornton, Chief Experience Officer; Dezha Moore, Chief of Venues and Promotion; Chief of Park Operations, John Martinez; Amy Roush, Director of Experiences and Events; Cody Risedorph, Director of Golf Operations; Mercedes Aguirre, Project Manager; Olivia Sanchez, Special Event Manager; Kelli Notteboom, Aquatics Manager; and Malcolm Coates, GVI Project Manager.

Other city representatives present: Michael Schmidt, Assistant City Attorney; and Sheila Niezgodski, 6th District Councilwoman.

I. Call to Order

President, Mark Neal called the meeting to order at 5:03 pm.

President Mark Neal recognizes the quorum with the two Commissioner's onsite for the meeting.

II. Minutes of the Regular Board Meeting held on May 18, 2026, meeting.

Motion to approve the meeting minute of May 18, 2026, by Sam Centellas, supported by Mark Neal, motion carried. Roll call vote 2-0.

III. Consent Agenda

Motion to approve the consent agenda of June 15, 2026, by Sam Centellas, supported by Mark Neal, motion carried. Roll call vote 2-0.

A motion was made to remove New Business Items 2 through 4 from their original placement and move them to agenda item IV.

Motion to move items 2-4 from New Business to agenda item IV, by Sam Centellas, supported by Mark Neal, motion carried. Roll call vote 2-0.

IV. New Business Items 2-4

Disclosure of Randy Goering, Member of Invictus: Protections and Investigations, LLC.

Board Attorney, Michael Schmidt first acknowledges the presence of Randy Goering and proceeds to inform the board the disclosure agreement before them is a uniform conflict of interest disclosure and how Randy is in interest and ownership LLC in Invictus: Protections and Investigations. Due to new State of Indiana regulations, any individual who owns or operates a business as well works as a public servant must disclose their interest in their private business in a public meeting. Providing further explanation, Michael educates the Board that once the disclosure is passed, it will go back to the legal department for the next steps of submitting the conflict of interest and other forms are sent to the County and State.

Randy Goering introduced himself to the board and provided an overview of the services included in Invictus's detail. Weekly security services for Venues Parks and Arts (VPA), special event security at Morris Performing Arts Center, along with servicing other community organizations such as University of Notre Dame, local retail, and apartment communities.

Michael Schmidt clarified that the contractual agreement with Invictus is for one year with the expectation of renewal. The legal department is determining if annual disclosures are required. Michael confirmed the proper motion for the disclosure agreement for Randy Goering

After a few questions from the board, Randy confirmed his Invictus work does not overlap or interfere with his city employment.

Motion to accept the public disclosure and statement of Randy Goering, by Sam Centellas, supported by Mark Neal, motion carried. Roll call vote 2-0.

Resolution No. 2026-004

Michael Schmidt shares this resolution is supplemental to the disclosure process. Recognizing and acknowledging the City's compliance with Indiana state code 35-44.1-1-4A, the State's conflict of interest statute.

Motion to approve Resolution No. 2026-004, by Sam Centellas, supported by Mark Neal, motion carried. Roll call vote 2-0.

Amendment to Invictus Contract

Michael continues with the last item involving Invictus. The amendment includes updates to points of contact, additional staff for evening hours at specific park locations, and the implementation of an electronic incident reporting process.

President, Mark Neal notes the listed locations in the amendment are Howard Park, Seitz, and the MLK Dream Center as the locations with additional staff being added.

Sam Centellas questions what is considered an incident/accident for reporting purposes.

Erin Thornton follows with the explanation of what kind of incidents classify as report worthy.

Motion to approve the Amendment to the Invictus Contract, by Sam Centellas, supported by Mark Neal, motion carried. Roll call vote 2-0.

V. Interviewing of Interested Residents

No residents spoke at this time

VI. Outstanding Partner of the Month

Amy Roush acknowledged the organization EventSys as the partner of the month. This long-standing City partner has been vital in the Fusion Fest, helping the VPA team navigate having multiple stages for one event.

Husband and wife, Martin and Angela Leechman, owners of EventSys thank VPA for allowing them to live out their vision of the community being able to experience the arts through their assistance.

VII. Use of Parks- New Events

Amy provided brief descriptions and information on each event listed in the item. Informing the board that all renters have proper documentation in insurance and filings.

Motion to approve Use of Parks- New Events, by Sam Centellas, supported by Mark Neal, motion carried. Roll call vote 2-0.

VIII. Business by Interim Executive Director – Allie Dolz Lane

Allie begins by thanking the board and VPA team for supporting her during the transition into Interim. She then introduces the newly appointed Executive Director, Erin Thornton. She provides a brief overview of Erin's time with VPA as the former Chief of Experience.

The board gives Erin a formal welcome.

Erin proceeds with the following updates:

- Celebratory groundbreaking for the Kennedy Aquatic Center
- Two ribbon cuttings for both the David A. Filler tennis courts at Leeper Park and Byer's Softball Complex
- Great turn out at the South Bend Police Departments School's Out Cookout at MLK Dream Center
- Annual Senior Week seen a record-breaking attendance at the Senior Picnic
- Summer concert series is in full event. Concerts happen at Howard Park, Seitz Park, The Morris Performing Arts Center, and Potawatomi Park.
- Multiple events coming in July like Kids Triathlon, Adult Recess and the VIBES Festival.

IX. New Business

Temporary Access Agreement

Erin Thronton presented the agreement informing the board that the agreement will grant Notre Dame access to certain parks areas for soil and environmental testing, excluding locations under specific VPA or city requirements. City and VPA staff reviewed and approved the selected fields for research.

The board confirms that the research would not disrupt any park use or would involve minimal disturbance, and that any issues could result in termination of the agreement. The agreement is open-ended to accommodate the research timeline.

Motion to approve the Temporary Access Agreement, by Sam Centellas, supported by Mark Neal, motion carried. Roll call vote 2-0.

Rum Village Masterplan

Erin continued to present on the Rum Village Masterplan. Erin detailed the planning process and began with the adoption of a neighborhood plan in 2022, followed by the selection of Site Design as the design firm. Multiple rounds of community engagement, including events and stakeholder meetings, informed the plan, with a focus on ecological stewardship and accessibility. Phase one will prioritize paving the pedestrian road for safer access with potential additions such as signage, wayfinding, cameras, and internet infrastructure, contingent on funding form public and private grants.

Councilwoman, Sheil Niezgodski joined Erin and expressed her strong support for the plan, highlighting the importance of incremental improvements, neighborhood engagement, and the preservation of natural areas. The removal of the proposed bike trails the old growth area was specifically acknowledged and appreciated.

The board discussed the Masterplan timeline for public bidding and construction, with expectations that road work would begin in the late summer or early fall and updates to be provided to council members as the process advances.

AEP Easement Agreement for Tarkington and Boehm Park

Annie Smith from AEP presents on the proposed easement agreements for utility work adjacent to Tarkington and Boehm Parks, with the board authorizing city staff to negotiate final terms.

The board had an ongoing discussion regarding specific terms and inclusion of city right-of-way. Ultimately the board approves the easement concepts.

Annie informs the board AEP aims to complete the project by the next baseball season with construction expected to begin after final easement approval. The easement extends an existing agreement to accommodate new infrastructure, with no anticipated additional land use changes.

Michael Schmidt informs the board that two motions need to take place for this action item.

Motion to approve the proposed AEP Easements for Tarkington Park, by Sam Centellas, supported by Mark Neal, motion carried. Roll call vote 2-0.

Motion to approve the proposed AEP Easements for Boehm Park, by Sam Centellas, supported by Mark Neal, motion carried. Roll call vote 2-0.

X. Report by GVI Project Manager Malcolm Coates

Malcolm Coates provided a comprehensive update on the South Bend Group Violence Initiative, outlining how GVI targets group/gang related gun violence through a three-tiered approach: law enforcement, social services, and community voice. This initiative focuses on a small number of high-risk individuals' youth or young adults.

Malcolm continued to share the recent efforts of GVI have included new contracts for outreach and social services, the creation of a data hub for tracking referrals and outcomes, and partnerships with Beacon Health System and University of Notre Dame to enhance data analysis and service delivery. From these efforts, the program has seen improvements in its data collection and case management.

A resident asks for clarification of the program.

Mark Neal reiterates what the initiative is and the three-tiered system.

Malcolm concludes his presentation with updating the board on the soon to be resumed call-in events, including plans for mini call-ins and the first juvenile-focused call-in, recognizing the recent trend of younger individuals being involved in gun-related incidents.

The board thanks Malcolm for his service and wishes him luck on the success of the future call-in events.

XI. Adjournment

The next meeting scheduled will be held Monday, July 20, 2026, at 5:00 p.m. at Howard Park Event Center.

Respectfully Submitted,
Anastasia Smith-Davis