

Village of Antioch Park & Recreation Advisory Board

Wednesday, August 20, 2025

6:30 p.m. Village Senior Center, 817 Holbeck Drive, Antioch, IL

1. Call to Order

Park Board Nolan called the August 20, 2025 regular meeting of the Park Commission to order at 6:32 pm.

2. Roll Call

	Present	Absent
Deichsel_____	X_____	_____
Hartman_____	X_____	_____
Nolan_____	X_____	_____
Olufs_____	X_____	_____
Weber_____	X_____	_____
Staff		
Kotloski_____	X_____	_____
Ford_____	X_____	_____
Fielder_____	X_____	_____

3. Pledge of Allegiance

Antioch Park Commission led the Pledge of Allegiance

4. Approval of Minutes

Olufs/Nolan motion and second to approve the April 16, 2025 Park Commission minutes.

Vote –

Yes = 5

No = 0

5. Communications

Nothing to report

6. Chairperson's Report

Chairman Weber began his report by noting that the 4th of July Parade was a success overall. However, he suggested that moving forward, it would be beneficial to

schedule a meeting in advance with the full board to review parade logistics and lineup procedures. He shared that, historically, the board has met with the parade director prior to the event, typically in the Maple Room at Village Hall, to review and update the parade's policies and procedures annually.

Weber also emphasized the importance of maintaining certain traditions within the parade lineup, such as having the Antioch queens lead the group, followed by the Lake Villa and Lindenhurst queens, with all other queen groups following. Kotloski acknowledged that she was not previously aware of this meeting tradition but welcomed the feedback and looks forward to collaborating next year to ensure a smooth process.

Kotloski shared that one of the challenges this year was the absence of any formal documentation or records outlining prior parade procedures, which contributed to the unintentional misplacement of the VFW group in the lineup. She noted that the VFW was very gracious and understanding as the correction was made. She emphasized the need for clear records moving forward, which is something she has been instilling since her start.

Chairman Weber brought up the issue of providing shelter and accessible restrooms for parade participants in case of inclement weather and restroom needs. He suggested that the high school doors be unlocked for this purpose. Kotloski explained that a request had already been made to the high school, but unfortunately, access was denied, which led to the placement of porta-potties on site. Weber recommended that future requests reference ADA compliance, which may help secure access to the high school's facilities. Kotloski made note of this recommendation for next year's planning.

Weber also inquired about the parade participation fee. Kotloski confirmed that the current fee remains \$30, consistent with prior years. However, she noted that a price adjustment may be considered for next year. She also mentioned receiving feedback from several participants who stated they had never paid in the past. Additionally, there were special groups such as the Mounted Patrol who stated that historically they have not paid the fee in addition to department also making a donation of a little over \$300 to help cover their participation costs. The board made note of this.

Chairman Weber then asked about the recently purchased parcel of land off Route 59. Kotloski confirmed that the Village has officially acquired the property. When asked about future plans for the space, she shared that while there are currently no concrete plans, there are various ideas being discussed. Weber included a past suggestion of installing a fishing pier. Kotloski mentioned that the mayor has expressed interest in potentially creating a beach area; however, testing for safe swimming in the water would be a requirement, and that testing is not currently being done.

Commissioner Weber mentioned that Heron Harbor had intentions to develop something similar in their area. Commissioner Olufs added that it would be advantageous to explore the possibility of connecting Route 59 property to the adjacent park to allow a safe route for pedestrians to cross Route 173. Weber further suggested that if the Village were to acquire the Dahl property, it would allow for the creation of a fully connected and accessible recreation corridor.

7. Director's Report

Centennial Park Master Plan Update

Director Kotloski reported that the Centennial Park Master Plan is progressing well, though the process has been slow. Bidding is expected to begin in late fall (around November), with construction planned to start in the spring. As part of cost-saving measures, the team is considering moving soil from one area of the park to another to avoid the cost of importing new soil.

Chairman Weber asked whether the construction team is aware of a 36-inch drain tile that runs beneath the park, which was installed in the 1980s when the property was still a ravine. He shared historical context regarding the drainage system and its importance to the site. Kotloski confirmed that this will be reviewed with the project team to ensure it is properly accounted for.

Weber also requested to be involved in the final planning stages and asked for a copy of the current (draft) master plan. Kotloski agreed. She also noted that the grant timeline for the park's development is two years, with a completion goal of October 2026. The grant is set to expire in February 2027. The park's board will further participate in the involvement of Centennial Park as plans move forward.

Department Updates & Upcoming Events

Director Kotloski introduced Kristen Fielder, the department's new Events Coordinator, who began on June 6. Kotloski commended Kristen for her strong start and professionalism. Kristen introduced herself and shared that she has already overseen 40 events since joining, with many more planned. She is working quickly to catch up and stay ahead of upcoming seasonal events.

Kotloski also shared that the department added a **bonus week of summer camp** to accommodate families whose school calendars started later than expected. The additional week followed the traditional camp structure and received positive

feedback. While some families had already made alternative arrangements, many expressed interest in signing up for the bonus week if offered again next year.

Upcoming events for the fall and winter include:

- Ghost Tour
- Treat the Streets (in conjunction with Harvest Fest)
- Bowling with Your Son
- 3-on-3 Basketball Tournament
- Punt, Pass, Kick with the Antioch Vikings
- Daddy-Daughter Dance
- Breakfast with Santa
- Santa at the Sawmill
- Tree Lighting Ceremony
- Thursday Concert Series
- Sequoit Saturdays (including a new volunteer-led **Fitness in the Park** program)

Ford shared that **Fitness in the Park** was developed through a partnership with a local volunteer who approached the department with the idea. The program has seen strong community engagement.

Event Accessibility and Layout Discussion

As planning continues for **Treat the Streets** and **Harvest Fest**, Commissioner Dieschel revisited a prior discussion on how to make the event more inclusive and accessible to all businesses and guests. She suggested closing Toft Street to host additional vendors and accommodate those with mobility concerns.

Kotloski shared that this year's Treat the Streets will be combined with Harvest Fest for better efficiency and increased attendance. While the Toft Street idea is not part of the current plan, she expressed interest in exploring it in the future. Parking and ADA accessibility were discussed, and the importance of ensuring available handicapped spaces during events was reaffirmed.

Chairman Weber proposed utilizing Sequoit Creek Park's parking lot for vendors, while Dieschel emphasized the need to protect ADA spaces and suggested Orchard Street as an alternative event space. Kotloski noted that while Orchard Street was previously used for the 4th of July fireworks, feedback from the police department recommended limiting closures on that route due to traffic patterns. If future street closures are pursued, required signage and timelines will need to be followed.

The commission also began a broader discussion about planning proactively for event layout and signage to better support accessibility, safety, and public engagement. Suggestions were noted.

Board Membership Discussion

Director Kotloski opened a conversation about whether to maintain the current **seven-member commission** or reduce it to **five members** due to two current vacancies. The quorum for a five-member board would be three.

Commissioner Olufs supported the idea of reducing the board size, noting that meeting attendance has varied and quorum has been difficult to maintain.

Commissioner Dieschel emphasized the importance of diverse perspectives and suggested that the board first seek community interest in filling the vacancies.

The commission agreed to **keep the two open seats available for a limited time**. If there is no public interest, they will be reducing the board to five members.

Clarifying the Advisory Board's Role

Director Kotloski facilitated an open discussion on the role of the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board within the department. She expressed a desire for clearer alignment between the board and department initiatives, particularly in areas such as event planning, park development, and community outreach. She invited commissioners to share how they envision their involvement.

Commissioners shared thoughtful reflections on past involvement, including in projects like Trevor Creek Park and Sequoit Creek Park. While some felt past contributions were underutilized, there was a shared interest in becoming more involved moving forward, especially in areas like trail access, park planning, and inclusive programming.

Kotloski emphasized that as departmental oversight of parks has evolved, there is now more opportunity for the commission to be engaged in future projects. She highlighted the importance of shared communication and welcomed ideas for how the board can support departmental goals.

Commissioners expressed interest in:

- Receiving regular updates from the department
- Reinstating a volunteer sign-up system for events
- Supporting youth and high school volunteer opportunities
- Playing a greater role in park restoration and development planning

Kotloski noted that all volunteer tracking is now handled through the department's registration portal to ensure accurate recordkeeping. She also expressed appreciation for the board's interest in being more involved and reaffirmed her commitment to aligning departmental and advisory efforts more closely.

Park Ordinances and Facility Use Policies

Kotloski shared that the department is currently working to **establish formal park ordinances** to guide public use of parks and facilities. Currently, there are no written rules governing permitted group sizes, or facility usage's of parks. New ordinances will help ensure safe, equitable, and sustainable use of public spaces.

Planned ordinances will include requirements for: Groups over 50 to provide insurance, Facility and park rentals for events, Fees to support ongoing maintenance and restoration.

These measures will help prevent misuse of public amenities and ensure fair access for all residents. As an example, a private wedding is scheduled to take place at Sequoit Creek Park this weekend, under new ordinances, such events would be permitted only through formal approval.

Commissioners suggested adding signage with park rules and capacity limits. Kotloski explained that new signage requires Village Board approval, which can be a longer process. However, once ordinances are in place, signage can be pursued to better inform the public.

Parks, Maintenance, and Infrastructure Planning

Weber raised concerns about ongoing maintenance needs, including a flooding issue near one of the parks and a large tree interfering with a flagpole. Kotloski clarified that park maintenance and construction are completed either by Public Works or by external contractors. Over the last 15 years, maintenance oversight of parks was done by the public works department. She stated that we have transitioned from Public Works to the Parks and Recreation Department, giving the department a stronger leadership role in park operations.

Olufs asked if the village has an engineer on staff. Kotloski responded that the village works with contracted engineers, including **HR Green**, for municipal projects.

The board also discussed the importance of maintaining and improving legacy parks like the Sawmill, which features historic structures such as the Sawmill Wheel. Commissioners expressed interest in restoring and enhancing this space for greater community use, much like the addition of the chalkboard feature. Director Kotloski welcomed the support and reiterated the department's intent to build momentum for improvements in all parks.

Weber also shared that a time capsule, placed in 1976, is located in one of the parks and is expected to be opened in the coming year or two. He offered to provide the contents list, which Director Kotloski gladly accepted.

Funding and Park Improvements

Director Kotloski provided updates on funding and resource planning. She explained that while grant funding, such as the one received for Centennial Park, is extremely helpful, other park improvements are constrained by broader municipal budget priorities.

The department is working on:

- **Facility rental fees** to create a dedicated revenue stream for park upkeep
- Developing **strategic partnerships** with community organizations
- Exploring **funding opportunities** and advocating for increased investment in parks

Commissioners discussed past plans, including a five-year restoration plan created by Hitchcock Design Group, and inquired about the **cannabis tax revenue**, which had been originally discussed in 2022 as a funding source for park restoration. Director Kotloski will follow up on this matter, as no dedicated fund currently exists for this purpose.

Despite challenges, the department remains committed to prioritizing parks and spaces. Director Kotloski noted strong support from Mayor Scott Gartner and emphasized that long-term planning, collaboration, and consistency will be key in moving the department forward.

8. **Financial Reports for Period Ending July 31, 2025**

The Commission reviewed the Financial Reports for the period ending July 31, 2025.

9. **Next Meeting**

The next Park Commission meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, September 17, 2025 at 6:30 pm at the Dolly Spiering Community Center (former senior center).

10. **Other Business**

During open discussion, Commissioners raised several points and inquiries related to current operations and future planning:

- **Young Adult Programming**

Commissioner Dieschel recommended developing more programming for young adults ages 18–24, suggesting collaboration with the **Antioch Public Library**. Director Kotloski shared that the department has already expressed interest in collaborating with the library. However, a challenge exists due to the library's requirement that programs remain free, whereas the Parks and Recreation Department often needs to charge a nominal fee to support program sustainability and revenue. Dieschel suggested a **puzzle contest** as a potential low-cost and engaging event for that demographic. Kotloski, Ford and Fielder have kept this suggestion in mind for future events and programs.

- **Park Permits and Sports Organizations**

Commissioner Hartman inquired about whether the current park permit structure and associated fees apply to **organized sports teams**. Director Kotloski confirmed that all park rentals and field usage fall under the same permitting process. When asked if any local teams currently pay to use the facilities, Kotloski explained that all sports programs except for the Antioch Waves swim team do not. The department is

reviewing these arrangements as part of a broader effort to implement equitable use policies and funding structures.

- **Upcoming Event Planning**

Commissioner Hartman asked Event Coordinator Kristen Fielder about her planning timeline for spring and summer events. Fielder shared that her current focus remains on fall and winter events, with plans to transition to spring and summer shortly. Director Kotloski acknowledged the significant task of developing new programming and events without historical department records, which has required the team to build many processes from scratch.

- **Department Structure and Staffing Updates**

Hartman asked for clarification on the current Parks and Recreation Department team. Director Kotloski confirmed that the department consists of herself, Kristen Fielder, and Grace Ford. He inquired about the status of the Program Coordinator role previously held by Dawn Johnson. Director Kotloski informed the board that Ford will be transitioning into a similar role in early September but will receive the title of Recreational Supervisor. While this announcement was not yet official, she shared the update in response to the board's inquiry.

11. **Adjournment**

Olufs/Hartman motion and second to adjourn the meeting at 8:27 p.m.

Vote –

Yes = 5

No = 0