MINUTES OF THE PLANNING COMMITTEE MEETING OF THE PLEASURE DRIVEWAY AND PARK DISTRICT OF PEORIA, ILLINOIS HELD AT 10:00 A.M. ON WEDNESDAY, JUNE 3, 2026 AT THE BONNIE NOBLE CENTER FOR PARK DISTRICT ADMINISTRATION, 1125 W. LAKE AVENUE, PEORIA, ILLINOIS.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Trustee and Committee Chair Joyce Harant, Trustee Ron Silver, and Executive Director Emily Cahill

MEMBERS ABSENT: None

TRUSTEES PRESENT: Trustees Joyce Harant, Reagan Leslie Hill, Alexander Sierra (in at 10:18 am) Ron Silver, Mark Slover, and Vice President Steve Montez

STAFF PRESENT: Executive Director Emily Cahill, Nick Conrad, Matt Freeman, Becky Fredrickson, Jennifer Swanson, Willie Howe, Jacob Kuban, Ryne Schafer, Bob Streitmatter, and Alicia Woodworth

OTHERS PRESENT: Joyce Blumenshine, Tim Herold, Mike Rucker, Karrie Alms, Eric Hutchison, and David Pittman

1. CALL TO ORDER

Trustee Harant called the meeting to order at 10:03 am.

2. ROLL CALL

3. MOTION TO PERMIT COMMITTEE MEMBER TO ATTEND MEETING ELECTRONICALLY

No request to attend meeting electronically was received.

4. MINUTES

4.A. Approval of Minutes of April 8, 2026 Planning Committee Meeting

Trustee Silver MOVED TO APPROVE the minutes of the April 8, 2026 Planning Committee meeting. Motion seconded by Executive Director Cahill and carried unanimously by roll call vote.

5. NEW BUSINESS

5.A. Rock Island Trail Re-Route Request for Consideration

Chair Harant opened discussion regarding the request received concerning the proposed Rock Island Trail extension between Park Avenue and Abington Street.

Executive Director Cahill explained that while the Park District maintains portions of the trail through an agreement with the City of Peoria, it has no decision-making authority regarding the route selection. The City requested input from the Park District regarding the proposed extension and is currently pursuing grant funding for the project.

Staff explained that the City's current focus is the approximately 1,800-foot abandoned rail corridor between Park Avenue and Abington Street. Engineering funds have been included in the City's 2026 budget, with grant applications anticipated during the upcoming funding cycle.

Mike Rucker addressed the committee and reviewed the history of the proposed extension, noting that the abandoned rail corridor has been discussed for many years. He expressed support for completing the connection through the former railroad right-of-way and stated that the section represents the most significant missing link in the Greenway Trail system.

Committee members discussed ADA accessibility requirements, noting that certain federal grant funds require trail widths meeting current accessibility standards. Staff advised that additional information regarding future extensions beyond Grant Street was not yet available.

Tim Herold, representing the Detweiler Neighborhood Association, presented an alternate alignment extending through the abandoned railroad corridor, crossing Adams Street, and continuing along Caroline Street. He explained that the alternate route would preserve flexibility should future development occur within the floodplain while continuing to provide neighborhood connectivity.

Mr. Harold also questioned aspects of the City's current concept, including multiple street crossings along Abington Street, and suggested that the alternate alignment would reduce conflicts while maintaining access to neighborhood destinations.

Joyce Blumenshine, representing the Sierra Club, expressed support for the neighborhood proposal. She presented an additional alternative utilizing Madison and Caroline Streets and emphasized environmental justice considerations within the North Valley neighborhood. She noted that maintaining neighborhood connectivity during future construction would benefit residents while continuing public access to the Greenway Trail.

Karrie Alms, a North Valley resident, also expressed support for preserving alternate routing options, stating that having multiple potential alignments provides flexibility should conditions change during future planning.

Additional public comments were received from experienced trail users who discussed safety, visibility, neighborhood access, historical features along the proposed route, and the importance of encouraging trail users to visit nearby parks and public spaces. Committee discussion followed.

Trustee Silver expressed support for asking the City to evaluate alternate neighborhood routes rather than relying exclusively on Abington Street. He noted concerns regarding cyclists and pedestrians sharing roadway space with motor vehicles.

Trustee Slover encouraged additional evaluation of neighborhood impacts, including obtaining input from adjacent property owners and public safety officials before selecting a preferred alignment.

Chair Harant requested that staff communicate to the City the committee's recommendation that neighborhood representatives who developed the alternate concepts be included in future discussions.

Staff agreed to forward the committee's comments and recommendations to City officials for consideration.

5.B. Memorial Bench at FPNC

Jennifer Swanson presented a request for installation of a memorial bench within the Forest Park Nature Center property.

The proposed bench complies with the Park District's Memorial Tribute and Memorial Bench Policy. Staff explained that the requested location had been reviewed with the donor and Parks staff to ensure appropriate placement and accessibility.

The donor will pay all costs associated with the bench, including installation and future maintenance requirements established under District policy.

Committee members discussed the location and confirmed that all expenses would be covered by the donor.

Trustee Silver MOVED TO SUBMIT to the Full Board for Approval at the June 10, 2026 Regular Board meeting for approval. Motion seconded by Trustee Harant and carried unanimously by roll call vote.

5.C. RiverFront DEE Amphitheatre Discussion

Chair Harant requested an update regarding ongoing coordination with the City concerning the proposed RiverFront DEE Amphitheater and the development of a revised intergovernmental agreement.

Discussion focused on two primary topics:

- the status of facility design and operational planning; and
- the agreement requiring a one-dollar surcharge on each ticket sold at the amphitheater.

Staff explained that no final design has been approved. Multiple meetings have occurred between Park District staff, City staff, architects, engineers, and representatives of the Hengst Foundation.

Several operational concerns remain unresolved, including:

- permanent seating and chair storage;

- concessions infrastructure and equipment;
- backstage facilities, dressing rooms, and green rooms;
- restroom access;
- electrical and water service;
- fencing and event security;
- operational costs associated with temporary infrastructure.

Staff emphasized that these items significantly affect the Park District's ability to operate national-level concerts and community events in a financially sustainable manner.

Committee discussion also addressed the proposed one-dollar ticket surcharge. Chair Harant expressed concern that subsidized Park District events or cultural programming could ultimately be required to remit ticket revenue to the foundation. Members discussed the lack of clarity regarding exempt "cultural events" and requested additional discussion before final agreements are executed.

Staff explained that the City's agreement with the Hengst Foundation governs the surcharge while the Park District's role will be defined through a separate operating agreement. Staff indicated their current priority is ensuring adequate capital investment in the facility before negotiating long-term operational responsibilities.

Committee members requested a written summary identifying:
- outstanding operational concerns;
- staff priorities;
- recommended solutions;
- items requiring future Board direction.

5.D. Update on Zoo, Golf, Owens, Peoria PlayHouse Projects

Due to time limitations, detailed project updates were deferred. Staff advised that project updates would be provided as work progresses.

5.E. Capital Improvement Plan Timeline

Due to time constraints, this item will be discussed at the next Planning Committee meeting and upcoming Strategy Ad Hoc Committee meeting.

5.F. Potential Dog Park at War Memorial Dr and Sheridan Rd

Due to time constraints, this item will be discussed at the next Planning Committee meeting.

6. PENDING BUSINESS

None at this time.

7. OTHER BUSINESS

Arboretum Designation

Bob Streitmatter presented information regarding efforts to obtain Level II Arboretum designation for the Luthy Botanical Garden.

He explained that certification would increase visibility, educational programming opportunities, grant eligibility, and long-term stewardship of the Park District's tree collections.

Staff described a long-range vision of expanding beyond Luthy Botanical Garden into a district-wide multi-site arboretum incorporating Glen Oak Park, Donovan Park, Bradley Park, Detweiller Park, Trewyn, and other significant tree collections throughout the Park District.

Discussion included:
- requirements for Level II certification;
- educational programming;
- species inventories;
- long-term tree management;
- opportunities for grants;
- integration with existing Donovan Park efforts.

Committee members expressed strong support for pursuing the designation. Chair Harant stated the committee supported moving forward and requested the proposal be presented to the full Board when appropriate.

8. ACTION STEPS REVIEW
- Forward committee comments regarding alternate Rock Island Trail routes to the City of Peoria.
- Encourage City representatives to meet with neighborhood stakeholders regarding alternate trail alignments.
- Prepare a written summary of RiverFront DEE Amphitheater operational priorities and outstanding issues for future Board discussion.
- Continue coordination with City staff regarding amphitheater planning.
- Continue pursuing Level II Arboretum designation and develop a long-range multi-site arboretum plan.
- Present the Capital Improvement Plan timeline during a future Strategy Committee meeting.

9. ADJOURNMENT
At 11:00 am, Trustee Silver MOVED TO ADJOURN the meeting. Motion second by Executive Director Cahill and carried on unanimous voice vote.

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Respectfully Submitted by Alicia Woodworth
Executive Assistant and Board Secretary