

The regular meeting of the Parks and Recreation Commission was held on Tuesday, February 17th, 2026, at the Ishpeming City Hall Council Chambers. Chairperson, Craig Heikkila called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m.

Present: Commission members present were Chairperson, Craig Heikkila, Vice Chairperson, Claudia Demarest, Jason Chapman, Bob Antilla, Kevin Corkin, Amy Lerlie (6). Absent: Carrie Meyer (1). No vacant seats. Also, present was City Manager, Randy Scholz, Lexi Hart, Account DPW Clerk/ Deputy Clerk, and Parks Foreman, Kaleb Rundman.

PUBLIC COMMENT – No public comment.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A motion was made by Member Antilla supported by Member Chapman and carried unanimously to approve the minutes of January 20th, 2026, as presented.

OLD BUSINESS

a. Brasswire Campground: Cost Analysis, Marketing Strategy, and Seasonal Operating Schedule

City Manager Randy Scholz reported that the Brasswire Campground Interfund Loan has not yet begun repayment; however, it is being transferred to the General Fund, and payments will begin moving forward. He also noted the 2025 water-testing estimate for Brasswire Campground was in the amount of \$2,412.51. The campground continues to follow state campground operations and is open annually from May 15 through October 15.

The Commission discussed opportunities to increase exposure to the campground. Suggestions included utilizing social media, the City's website, the public television channel, press releases, and other low-cost methods to better engage the community and promote the facility. A few events are already scheduled to attract more users, and additional ideas for future events were explored. The Commission further discussed forming a subcommittee dedicated to marketing the campground and advancing promotional efforts for both the campground and its events. Additional discussion included potential partnerships with local businesses to develop a program offering campground users a coupon book to encourage support of nearby establishments.

The Commission also discussed the planned expansion of campground sites and strategies for handling overflow camping during major events. Member Chapman emphasized the importance of identifying ways to increase revenue, enhance the campground's appeal, and grow usage before considering any option involving the closure or sale of the campground.

b. Dog Park Discussion

A public comment, City resident Bill Barton expressed his interest in the City of Ishpeming establishing a dog park, noting the large number of residents who own dogs. He shared that he has spoken with Northern Veterinary Associates, who indicated potential interest in supporting the project. Mr. Barton stated that he will continue exploring additional donations and community or business support to assist with developing a dog park for residents.

Commission members noted that the primary challenges in establishing a dog park are the associated costs and determining an appropriate location. However, if funding and space could be secured, the addition of a dog park could be a significant asset to the community. One concern raised was liability in the event of an injury occurring at a city-owned dog park. City Manager Randy Scholz responded that the City can investigate liability considerations related to dog parks. Parks Foreman Kaleb Rundman noted that if an existing city-owned park were selected for the dog park, it would not significantly increase maintenance requirements.

c. Update on Al Quaal Lodge Renovations

City Manager Randy Scholz reported that he does not have any updates regarding the Upper Lodge. However, he noted a structural concern at the Lower Teal Lake Lodge, where a pillar has begun to separate, creating a safety issue. As a precaution, the front entrance has been closed, and a temporary trail has been created to access the rear entrance so the lodge can remain in use until repairs are completed. Mr. Scholz stated that he is in communication with the City's engineering firm, Chris Holmes, to determine possible solutions and next steps. Member Heikkila emphasized the importance of adhering to regular maintenance schedules at the lodges to prevent further issues from arising.

NEW BUSINESS

a. Recommendation to City Council on Tube Slide Ticket Pricing

City Manager Randy Scholz presented a cost comparison of the Ishpeming Tubing Hill with other tubing hills across the Upper Peninsula, along with current revenues and expenditures related to the facility. He reported that Ishpeming's ticket prices fall near the middle range when compared to similar operations. The Commission unanimously agreed to maintain the current ticket prices, noting that the tubing hill has been performing well under the existing structure.

b. Tube Slide: Current Usage Update and Possible Route Change

City Manager, Randy Scholz provided a brief overview of the tubing hill's current usage for the season. A brief discussion followed regarding a possible route adjustment to the tubing hill. Parks Foreman, Kaleb Rundman stated that rerouting the slide would be an extremely costly project.

c. Camping at Al Quaal Recreation Area

Parks Foreman Kaleb Rundman reported that if fewer than five campsites were established at the Al Quaal Recreation Area, the City would not be required to register the location as a formal campground. However, if five or more sites were created, the City of Ishpeming would need to register as a campground and comply with numerous additional regulations and operational requirements. City Manager, Randy Scholz, noted that allowing camping at Al Quaal would also require an amendment to Ordinance No. 2-900, Section 19.

The Commission agreed that utilizing the Al Quaal Recreation Area for camping would be beneficial and supported offering four campsites to avoid triggering campground registration requirements. It was decided to revisit the topic at a future meeting, at which time a map and recommended campsite locations will be provided for further review.

d. Parks and Rec. Priorities for 2026-2027 for City Council Consideration

City Manager, Randy Scholz, recommended that the Commission begin developing a priority list to present to City Council to establish a more focused strategic plan for Parks and Recreation initiatives. Commission members discussed potential items to include on the list, and Account Clerk DPW/Deputy Clerk Lexi Hart will prepare a draft for review at the next meeting.

e. Review of 2023 MMRMA Parks Risk Assessment

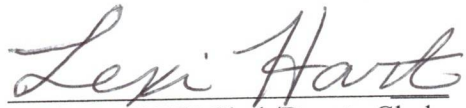
A brief discussion was held among Commission members regarding ways to improve the City's parks. Member Lerlie suggested that the city may have more parks than can reasonably be maintained based on the current population, and that strategically closing certain parks could allow resources to be concentrated on remaining facilities. This approach could make maintenance more manageable and result in higher-quality parks over time.

f. Discussion on Future Meeting Times

It was unanimously agreed to maintain the Parks and Recreation Commission's regular meeting time of 4:00 p.m. each month.

ADJOURNMENT

At 5:24 p.m. a motion was made by Member Demarest supported by Member Chapman and carried unanimously to adjourn.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Lexi Hart". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Lexi Hart, DPW Clerk/Deputy Clerk