The regular meeting of the Parks and Recreation Commission was held on Tuesday, August 18, 2026, at the Ishpeming City Hall Council Chambers. Council Representative Claudia Demarest called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m.

Present: Commission members present were Council Representative Claudia Demarest, Bob Antilla, Amy Lerlie, Kevin Corkin (4). Absent: Chairperson Craig Heikkila and Carrie Meyer (2). One vacant seat (1). Also, present was Lexi Hart, Account DPW Clerk/ Deputy Clerk, and DPW Director, Jake Roberts.

Member Lerlie, asked to amend the agenda. She requested to add (a) Discuss: Al Quaal, (b) Parks and Recreation Board Membership, (c) Parks and Recreation Folder, and (d) Parks Closure, to Old Business.

PUBLIC COMMENT – No public comment.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES
A motion was made by Member Lerlie supported by Member Corkin and carried unanimously to approve the minutes of July 21, 2026, as presented.

OLD BUSINESS
a. Discuss: Al Quaal
Member Lerlie stated that the only current action item is the upcoming open house at Al Quaal on September 15th. She inquired whether the Parks and Recreation Commission would meet prior to the event to discuss any additional details.

DPW Clerk Lexi Hart noted that the next regular Parks and Recreation Commission meeting is scheduled for September 15, 2026, at 4:00 p.m., the same day as the open house. Ms. Hart also reported that the second round of letters regarding the open house has already been sent out.

Member Lerlie stated that she will provide drinks and snacks for the open house. Member Antilla noted that he will be unable to attend the September 15 meeting.

After discussion, the Commission agreed that a meeting prior to the open house would not be necessary, provided members continue communicating regarding event preparations, including items being brought and expectations for the event.

b. Parks and Recreation Board Membership
Member Lerlie inquired whether anyone had contacted the school regarding the appointment of a new school representative to the Parks and Recreation Board.

DPW Clerk Lexi Hart reported that she had spoken with the City Clerk and was informed that it is unlikely the Board will receive a new school representative. Ms. Hart noted that this information is not yet confirmed and could change in the future.

The Commission discussed the matter and agreed that it is acceptable to proceed without a school representative at this time. Members noted that discussions are currently underway regarding reducing the size of the Parks and Recreation Board to a five-member board, which may eliminate the need for the vacant school representative position.

c. Parks and Recreation Folder
DPW Clerk Lexi Hart reported that she is currently developing a Parks and Recreation information folder for the Board. Ms. Hart stated that she has visited and photographed most of the City's parks, with only a few remaining that she was unable to locate.

Ms. Hart indicated that she expects to have the folder completed and available for review by the next Parks and Recreation Commission meeting. She also reported that she is working on creating an updated and improved map showing all City parks.

d. Parks Closure

Member Lerlie requested an update regarding the recommended park closures discussed and approved by the Commission at its previous meeting. The recommendations included closing the Salisbury Playlot and removing the grill at the Juniper Street Playlot.

DPW Director Jake Roberts stated that he plans to present these recommendations to the City Council once the Parks and Recreation information folder has been completed. Mr. Roberts explained that the folder will provide Council with additional context and supporting information to help explain the Commission's rationale for recommending these changes.

NEW BUSINESS

a. Penchura Update

DPW Director Jake Roberts reported that Penchura had provided pricing information for a merry-go-round and several other pieces of park equipment. However, Mr. Roberts noted that he had accidentally left the pricing information printouts in his office.

DPW Clerk Lexi Hart distributed several printouts containing example pricing for various park equipment options. Mr. Roberts also explained that Penchura handles the design, layout, and installation planning associated with park equipment projects.

b. Replacement Equipment: Pricing

The Commission noted that equipment pricing had already been discussed during the Penchura update.

Several Board members discussed potential opportunities for raising additional funds for park improvements and whether other organizations could assist with fundraising efforts. Member Lerlie stated that the Board should remain focused on fundraising efforts for Al Quaal until that project is completed, emphasizing the importance of concentrating on one park at a time.

Member Demarest reported that Forging Futures, a local nonprofit organization, is currently raising funds for improvements at Bruce Asgaard Park. She further noted that, once fundraising efforts for that project are complete, the organization intends to move on to another park project.

c. Update: Solar Panels at Brasswire

The Commission received a brief update regarding the solar panel project at Brasswire.

The commission reported that a recent City Council agenda included an additional estimated cost of $3,000 for the UPPCO electrical connection. Member Lerlie noted that approximately $5,000 remains in the project fund, and that $3,000 of those funds would need to be spent.

Member Antilla commented that it was encouraging to see increased public use of the Brasswire area. Member Lerlie added that activity at the site is expected to increase further with the upcoming bike races.

The Commission also discussed ways to promote events occurring at Brasswire. Members suggested utilizing Facebook and other communication methods to increase public awareness and encourage participation.

d. Discussion: Possible Fundraisers/ Grants for Park Improvements

Member Demarest reported that City Manager Randy Scholz had applied for a grant through the Cleveland-Cliffs Foundation for improvements to the Al Quaal Lodge. However, a response was received indicating that municipalities are not eligible to apply directly for the grant. The Foundation advised that a qualifying nonprofit organization could partner with the City and serve as the applicant on behalf of the project.

The Commission discussed potential options for pursuing future grant opportunities, including the possibility of establishing a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. Members acknowledged that, while this approach is not uncommon, creating and maintaining such an organization would be challenging.

Following discussion, the Commission agreed that further guidance should be sought from City Manager Randy Scholz before determining the best course of action. Member Lerlie volunteered to assist with preparing grant application materials if needed. It was also noted that utilizing a 501(c)(3) organization may provide a cleaner process than entering a private partnership arrangement.

The Commission further discussed fundraising efforts and agreed that no fundraising activities should begin until the crowdfunding page has been established. Members noted that funds raised through the crowdfunding platform may be eligible for matching funds, whereas donations collected before the page is established would not qualify.

Additional discussion followed, during which the Commission reiterated that the regular Parks and Recreation Board meeting scheduled for September 15, 2026, will be canceled.

ADJOURNMENT

At 4:30 p.m. a motion was made by Member Demarest supported by Member Lerlie and carried unanimously to adjourn.

Lexi Hart

Lexi Hart, DPW Clerk/Deputy Clerk