NORTH LITTLE ROCK PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION MINUTES

April 20, 2026

The North Little Rock Parks and Recreation commission meeting was called to order by Mrs. Vicki Stephens at 5:00 p.m. on April 20, 2026 at the North Little Rock Community Center.

Mrs. Stephens stated she would like to welcome the new commissioner, John Owens to the Parks and Recreation Commission. Mrs. Stephens stated Mr. Owens has lived in North Little Rock for a long time and has served on many commissions. He is the former head of the chamber. Mr. Owens stated he was thrilled to be part of the commission.

Commission Members Present: Randall Bradley, Neil Bryant, Laura Juels, Stephen Bentley, Otistene Smith, John Owens, and Vicki Stephens.

Vote for Excused or Unexcused Absences: All commissioners were present.

Staff Members Present: Kenny Stephens, Jennifer Fields, Betty Perkins, Greg Zonner, Amy Fields, Jamie Pettit, Joe Ralston, Daniel Cornelison, and Casey Canady.

Others Present: Sandy Decoursey, Scott Shellabarger, Patrick O'Bryant, Lisa Ferrell, Josh Furgerson, Nathan Hamilton, Terry Hartwick, Officer Neeley, and Jana Cohen.

Mayor Terry Hartwick stated he would like to make a remark. Mayor Hartwick asked everyone in attendance to stand and give a standing ovation to Mrs. Stephens in recognition of her final commission meeting following 33 years of service. Mayor Hartwick stated he has known Mrs. Stephens since the ninth (9th) or tenth (10th) grade and expressed his appreciation for her many years of dedication and service. Mrs. Stephens thanked Mayor Hartwick.

Mrs. Stephens stated serving the citizens of North Little Rock has been one of her greatest privileges. Mrs. Stephens stated she deeply loves the City of North Little Rock, noting it has been very good to her family, and in return she has devoted forty (40) plus years to volunteer civic service. Mrs. Stephens stated she appreciates each member for their dedication to the Parks and Recreation Department and added their support has made her role more meaningful and rewarding. Mrs. Stephens stated she wishes everyone the best and will truly miss you all.

Disposition of Minutes: Mrs. Stephens presented minutes from the March 16, 2026 Parks and Recreation commission meeting. Mr. Bryant made a motion, seconded by Ms. Juels, to accept the March 16, 2026 minutes. All voted aye and the motion passed unanimously.

Financial Report: Commissioner Laura Juels presented the financial report for the first quarter of the year 2026. Ms. Juels stated as of March 31, the Parks and Recreation Department's revenue was $1,060,363.71. The department expenditures were at 9.81% of the budget used. Total revenues for Burns Park Golf Course were $265,050.47. Total revenues for Arkansas Inland Maritime Museum were $37,463.76. Burns Park Tennis Center court fee revenues were $28,126.99. Community Center room rental revenues were $24,436.26. Summer and Afterschool program revenues were $11,388.03. North Little Rock fitness revenues were $18,213.73.

Conversion of Red Ball Courts at Burns Park Tennis Center: Daniel Cornelison, Tennis Director, presented the conversion of red ball courts at Burns Park Tennis Center. Mr. Cornelison stated they

Conversion of Red Ball Courts at Burns Park Tennis Center Continued: have a bid to repair the red ball courts, which runs through next Sunday and closes in one (1) week. Mr. Bryant asked if anything is being done to improve the lights at the tennis center. Mr. Cornelison stated he and Director Kenny Stephens are discussing it, noting they have lost a few teams due to poor lighting. Mrs. Stephens stated the Commission needs to evaluate the revenue loss compared to the cost of new lighting and determine how long it would take to recover that cost, adding this information would allow the Commission to begin moving in a direction. Mr. Bentley stated the Burns Park Tennis facility is much better than the Rebsamen facility and that tennis players would prefer to play in North Little Rock. Mr. Bryant stated Mr. Bentley's comments were accurate except for the issue with the lights needing repair. Mr. Cornelison stated they previously had seventy-eight (78) teams, and last year they were down to thirty (30) in the spring season.

Trail Committee Update: Commissioner Stephen Bentley presented updates for the Trail Committee. Mr. Bentley stated the committee has been very active and is making progress. He stated Tina Taylor has expressed interest in joining the Trail Committee, noting she is an equestrian and part of a horse riding group, and was recommended by City Clerk, Diane Whitbey. Mr. Bentley stated the committee is excited to welcome her and looks forward to learning more about equestrian trail use to ensure it is done properly.

Mr. Bentley stated the committee met with Kyle Key, Grant Manager, Chief Financial Officer, Ember Strange, and City Engineer, David Cook, on March 31st regarding grant opportunities, and they are currently in the process of applying for a grant. He stated the top priorities for the Trail Committee include developing an off-road trail from Clinton Bridge to the Big Dam Bridge and establishing a trailhead in downtown Argenta. The trail includes a pavilion, parking, and a space for bicyclists to gather. Mr. Bentley stated the committee has also presented signage proposals to Director Kenny Stephens and would like to install new signs along the River Trail to help prevent visitors from becoming lost. He noted Trail Committee member Scott Shellabarger, has contributed significant work in preparing the signage proposal.

Mr. Bentley stated the committee is also working on a trail in the quarry, which has been laid out at approximately four (4) miles. He stated future workdays will be scheduled, though the project is not yet at the clearing stage. He added the trail will offer views of the Arkansas River and is planned as a green trail suitable for biking and mountain biking. Mr. Bentley stated the committee intends to complete this trail before moving forward with finishing the levy trail, noting the group prefers to complete one (1) project at a time.

Mrs. Smith asked why the trail around Remount is being delayed. Mr. Bentley stated the work is being completed by volunteers and emphasized the importance of finishing the first trail correctly before returning to additional projects. He added the committee has considered making some trail extensions gravel trails, noting their growing popularity.

City Attorney Amy Fields stated that with both Mr. Bentley and Commissioner John Owens serving on the Trail Committee, there may be implications under the Freedom of Information Act for a committee that meets regularly. She stated this matter requires further discussion, including whether both commissioners should remain on the committee, as such meetings could be subject to public meeting requirements. She noted Commissioner Owens had recently been sworn in and had attended meetings prior to taking office. Mr. Bentley stated Mr. Owens would be a valuable member

Trail Committee Update Continued: due to his knowledge of North Little Rock. Mr. Bryant stated that notice to the press is required prior to meetings, specifically at least three (3) days in advance, and that meetings must be recorded.

Bonzai BMX Requirements: Jamie Pettit, Special Events Coordinator, presented updates regarding the Bonzai BMX requirements. Mrs. Pettit stated Park Superintendent, Pat Isbell, has obtained quotes to both restore the area as a BMX track and to convert it into a velocity park. Mr. Isbell stated he has not yet received pricing for the velocity park option, but estimated a complete rebuild of the BMX area could range from $400,000 to $500,000, based on information from American Ramp Company, the same company that constructed the pump track. Mr. Isbell stated he believes the velocity park option may be the better approach. Mrs. Stephens stated that funding at that level could instead be used for much needed lighting improvements.

Mrs. Pettit stated there would be no significant economic impact from rebuilding the BMX track, noting the City of Cabot advised it was not a worthwhile investment. She added that Cabot Parks and Recreation spends approximately $30,000 every two (2) years to maintain their BMX track, while the City of North Little Rock has only generated approximately $400 annually in revenue from its BMX track.

Mrs. Stephens stated additional information is needed before a decision can be made and recommended the item remain on the agenda under unfinished business.

Big Dam Bridge 100 Fee Reduction: Jamie Pettit, Special Events Coordinator, presented a request for a fee reduction for the Big Dam Bridge 100 event. Mrs. Pettit introduced Big Dam Bridge 100 representative, Jana Cohen. She stated the organization requested use of Riverfront Park at no cost for its event on September 26. She stated the event has received all required approvals. She added the application requires submission of a budget.

Mr. Bryant asked if this was the first year of the event. Mrs. Pettit stated it was not. Ms. Cohen stated this will be the twenty-one (21) year. Mrs. Pettit stated this is the first request for a fee reduction.

Mrs. Stephens stated the Director does not recommend approval. She cited financial constraints. She stated waiving fees could set a precedent. City Attorney Amy Fields advised caution. She stated granting such requests could create a precedent among nonprofit organizations. She noted potential legal implications.

Mr. Bryant asked why the request was being made after many years. Ms. Cohen stated event expenses have increased. She stated proceeds support the Big Dam Bridge Foundation, which helps maintain the bridge. She added the event attracts approximately 3,500 participants. She stated many stay in North Little Rock.

Mrs. Smith stated North Little Rock Tourism has budgeted $7,500 for the event. Mrs. Pettit confirmed this. She stated she verified the amount with North Little Rock Tourism.

Mrs. Stephens stated the submitted budget reflects total income of $354,000. She stated the organization made a $5,500 donation to the Big Dam Bridge. She stated commissioners who are cyclists may choose to vote or abstain.

Big Dam Bridge 100 Fee Reduction Continued: Mr. Bentley stated he has experience organizing cycling events. He noted the challenges involved. He stated the event draws strong local and out-of-state participation. He stated because the event already receives Tourism funding, the fee should be paid.

Mr. Bryant made a motion, seconded by Mr. Bradley, to charge the $3500 fee and the refundable deposit be applied to the Big Dam Bridge. All voted aye and the motion passed unanimously.

Non-Profit Cultivation Station Potential Contract: Jamie Pettit, Special Events Coordinator, presented the Non-Profit Cultivation Station potential contract. Mrs. Pettit introduced Patrick O'Bryant, founder of the Cultivation Station. Director of Neighborhood Services Dan Scott previously approached the Commission regarding the organization's potential use of the space, formerly occupied by the Hunger Relief Alliance. The Hunger Relief Alliance did not renew their contract. Mrs. Pettit stated the agreement has since been revised, reviewed, and approved by City Attorney Amy Fields, and is now being presented for approval.

Mrs. Pettit stated that on page six (6) of the contract, Mr. O'Bryant requested clarification regarding the termination clause. He asked whether language could be added to allow the organization to harvest any planted crops in the event of termination. Mrs. Stephens stated this would not be an issue. She thanked Mr. O'Bryant for his willingness to utilize the garden space.

Ms. Juels made a motion, seconded by Mr. Owens, to approve the Non-Profit Cultivation Station contract. All voted aye, and the motion passed unanimously.

Event Approval and Rental Fee for 4k Luxe Design and Events Luxury Picnics: Casey Canady, Parks Generalist, presented a request for approval and a rental fee for 4K Luxe Design and Events Luxury Picnics. Mr. Canady stated the request is unusual, which is why it was brought before the Commission. He explained the company decorates picnic areas for clients. He stated staff initially questioned whether the company was conducting business in the park. He stated it was later determined the company is not openly selling in the park. He stated the concern is whether the company is advertising Burns Park as an approved location or simply decorating for individual clients. He stated he has not received a response from the owner of 4K Luxe Design and Event Luxury Picnics in one (1) week. He stated the requested location is between Catfish Drive and the Arkansas River near the soccer complex. Mr. Canady noted the area is open for general use and no standard fee is currently charged.

Director Kenny Stephens stated he understood the company planned to charge clients $250. Mr. Canady confirmed this. Director Stephens noted he does not see how this would benefit the Parks and Recreation Department.

Mrs. Stephens stated the company should coordinate with staff to ensure space availability. She stated a rental fee should be required. Mrs. Stephens asked about cleanup. Mr. Canady stated the company would set up and clean up the area. He stated there are two (2) small pavilions nearby that are not part of the rental system. Mr. Owens asked if the company intended to use those pavilions.

Mr. Canady explained they are small and contain only one (1) or two (2) tables. Mr. Bentley asked about their origin. Mr. Canady stated one (1) was constructed as an Eagle Scout or Boy Scout project. He stated the company decorates based on client preferences. Director Stephens stated the activity constitutes a business.

Event Approval and Rental Fee for 4k Luxe Design and Events Luxury Picnics Continued: Mrs. Stephens stated she would only support the request if a fee is charged. Mr. Canady stated staff considered applying the retail vendor fee used at tournaments. Mrs. Stephens asked the amount. Betty Perkins, Recreation Superintendent, stated the vendor fee is $25. Mr. Bryant asked if the City receives a percentage of revenue. Mr. Canady stated it does not. Mrs. Stephens asked about applicable taxes. Ms. Perkins stated retail vendors do not pay the hamburger tax. She stated only food vendors pay advertising and promotion taxes. Mrs. Stephens stated the fee may need to be increased. She noted it is another business using park property for private operations.

Mr. Bryant made a motion to establish a $250 fee for any business use of park property. He stated this would apply broadly to avoid repeated consideration.

Mrs. Smith stated similar vendor opportunities at conferences often cost significantly more. She stated the company would likely pay the fee because it generates business. She stated the City should reevaluate current practices. Director Stephens agreed. Mrs. Smith stated the park has been perceived as available for free business use. She stated the City must protect its resources and noted current financial limitations.

Mrs. Stephens asked whether the request should be denied. Mr. Bryant stated a motion was already on the floor.

Mr. Bryant made a motion, seconded by Mr. Bentley, to charge a $250 fee for private companies to use park facilities. All voted aye, and the motion passed unanimously.

Land Swap with Parks and Recreation Department: Josh Furgerson and Lisa Ferrell presented a proposal regarding construction on park property. Mrs. Stephens informed the Commission the request is no longer a land swap. Ms. Ferrell stated she was representing her client, River Rock Estates, LLC, by Josh Furgerson. She stated the request involves approximately 10,000 to 11,000 square feet of park property at the end of River Road across from the skate park, where an upscale subdivision is being developed. She stated a turnaround is required for fire trucks. She explained the revised proposal is to construct a cul-de-sac on park property. She stated the property would remain park-owned, but be constructed and maintained by River Rock Estates LLC. She stated this would replace a nail-head turnaround previously planned on the developer's property, which is less efficient and would require removal of trees near a trail.

Ms. Ferrell informed the commission she spoke with Mayor Terry Hartwick, who indicated no objection. She stated the proposal would still require review by the Planning Department and Design Review Committee. She stated the request before the Commission is approval to allow construction on park property. She noted the area is currently rocky and not landscaped.

Mr. Bryant expressed concern about clearing activity on the property. Mr. Furgerson stated the cleared area follows a property line and is within a previously disturbed shell pit. Ms. Ferrell confirmed the area was in rough condition prior to the proposal.

City Attorney Amy Fields stated she discussed the matter with Ms. Ferrell and Mr. Furgerson. She stated the original land swap would have required a more complex legal process, including

advertising and compliance with Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) restrictions. She stated the current proposal presents no legal conflicts if subject to an agreement, City Council approval, and compliance with city standards. She stated the property would remain owned by the park, and

Land Swap with Parks and Recreation Department Continued: be maintained by the developer in perpetuity. She added the proposal provides potential safety benefits.

Mrs. Smith asked about future use and public access. Ms. Ferrell stated the property would remain open to the public while also serving as a turnaround. Director Kenny Stephens asked about access. Mr. Furgerson stated access to the development would remain through a previously approved twenty (20) foot private drive. He stated the cul-de-sac would better preserve the natural terrain and improve fire access.

Mrs. Smith asked about fire truck access to nearby homes. Mr. Furgerson confirmed access would be maintained. She asked about costs. Mr. Furgerson stated the developer would assume all costs. Director Stephens stated he supports the proposal after clarification. He noted the design would not limit access and noted similar configurations are common. Mr. Furgerson stated the goal is to preserve the natural ridge and minimize environmental impact by using the existing shell pit area.

Mrs. Stephens stated the proposal is clearer following discussion and thanked Mr. Furgerson and Ms. Ferrell. Mr. Bentley commented on the condition of the nearby trail and noted limited use. Mr. Furgerson stated his goal is to preserve the natural landscape.

Mr. Owens made a motion, seconded by Mr. Bentley, to approve the proposal to construct a cul-de-sac on approximately ten thousand to eleven thousand (10,000–11,000) square feet of park property, with the property to remain park-owned and maintained by the developer. All voted aye, and the motion passed unanimously.

Director Reports: Betty Perkins, Recreation Superintendent, reported for Recreation. Ms. Perkins informed the Commission that all community centers hosted Easter egg hunts. Due to bad weather, the events were moved indoors. She noted the Easter egg hunt at Funland was conducted as a drive-through event and approximately 250 people participated. Ms. Perkins advised the Commission they were in the process of preparing the splash pad for operation. She explained it had been turned on a few days earlier and everything appeared to be functioning properly. They were waiting for chemicals to arrive before fully operating the splash pad. Ms. Perkins stated the splash pad and train were scheduled to open May 1, provided everything continued as planned. She explained the splash pad would operate during the evenings until school was dismissed for summer break, after which it would operate seven (7) days a week. She reported the train had been completely overhauled. Maintenance staff inspected the track, completed major repairs, and double-checked operations.

Ms. Perkins stated community centers had been doing well with room rentals. She added concessions had been extremely busy with senior baseball and noted soccer activities would begin the following month. Mrs. Smith asked about the status of opening the swimming pools and hiring lifeguards. Ms. Perkins explained applications for lifeguards had been posted online. She reported the first round of hiring resulted in two (2) lifeguards and stated the application process had been reopened in hopes of attracting additional applicants. Ms. Perkins stated if everything progressed as planned, the pools would open Memorial Day weekend. She added the Glenview splash pad was also ready to open. Ms. Perkins informed the Commission that a water fountain at Sherman Park Community Center had to be replaced along with additional bathroom repairs.

Mrs. Smith asked about the cost of the train overhaul and track repairs. Director Kenny Stephens explained the department did not use outside funding for the project. He stated staff mechanics repaired the train in-house and maintenance crews poured new foundations along portions of the

Director Reports Continued: track. Director Kenny Stephens informed the Commission he instructed maintenance staff to run the train 20 times around the track each day for testing purposes. He added the train would operate on the hour during the upcoming season.

Mrs. Smith requested an update on the concession stand project. Director Kenny Stephens explained he spoke with J Con LLC, earlier that day. He advised the Commission they were waiting on engineering items to be finalized. He noted electrical and water preparations were complete and stated they hoped engineering approvals would be finished by Friday. Director Kenny Stephens estimated construction would likely take two (2) to two and one-half (2.5) months. Mrs. Smith asked whether he expected the cost to increase. Director Kenny Stephens replied that he hoped the project would actually cost less. He explained the department received a $100,000 grant and the estimated concession project cost was approximately $400,000. He noted the final design included a 750-square-foot building with two (2) restrooms, an office area, and a canopy covering four (4) to six (6) picnic tables.

Daniel Cornelison, Tennis Director, reported for the Burns Park Tennis Center. Mr. Cornelison informed the Commission tennis activities had become very busy with the arrival of warmer weather. He reported the facility recently hosted a Level Four (4) junior tennis tournament over the weekend. He added pickleball participation and league play continued to increase. Mrs. Smith asked whether the pickleball court foundation was still cracked. Mr. Cornelison explained there were still some hairline cracks, but they were minor.

Mr. Bryant asked Mr. Cornelison to explain padel. Mr. Cornelison described padel as a combination of tennis, squash, pickleball, and racquetball. He commented it was currently the fastest-growing sport in the world and was growing faster than pickleball in California. He explained the sport is played on a smaller court with astroturf, different paddles, and softer tennis-style balls. Mr. Cornelison stated he had played the sport several times in Dallas and described it as a lot of fun.

Mr. Bryant asked whether Mr. Cornelison was proposing converting the junior courts into padel courts. Mr. Cornelison explained the current plan was to first have the courts resurfaced and then return to the Commission to discuss whether the area should be used for pickleball, padel, or tennis. He explained the larger concept was to create flexible-use space with movable nets. Mr. Cornelison noted the area could potentially be rented for events requiring approximately 35,000 to 45,000 square feet, and a covering could be added for meetings or other uses. Mr. Bryant asked whether padel courts would work within a flexible-use design. Mr. Cornelison replied he would need to research that further. He added if the Commission moved in the direction of padel, he would recommend including a mix of padel courts, pickleball courts, and tennis courts.

Mr. Bryant referenced a projected revenue loss of approximately $35,000 in Mr. Cornelison's report. Mr. Cornelison confirmed the figure was correct and explained the loss was projected for 2026 due to teams relocating to Rebsamen Tennis Center because of Burns Park's lighting issues. He advised the Commission that Rebsamen Tennis Center was currently resurfacing all courts, had installed new lighting, and was reportedly exploring indoor tennis courts. Mr. Cornelison noted if Rebsamen added indoor courts, it would nearly match Burns Park in court capacity while also offering upgraded facilities. He emphasized Burns Park remained on track to maintain its services and stated he was not concerned about losing overall operations. He also informed the Commission that Rebsamen Tennis Center was temporarily closed during resurfacing.

Director Reports Continued: Mr. Bryant commented that Little Rock appeared to be investing significant funding into its parks compared to North Little Rock. Director Kenny Stephens responded that the department was discussing installing lights on an additional soccer field as well as adding lighting throughout the park system. He noted lights for softball field two (2) were scheduled for installation in May. Mr. Bentley asked whether grant opportunities existed to help fund lighting improvements. Director Kenny Stephens responded that the grant manager was currently researching possible grant funding opportunities. He added the park system needed additional lighting throughout the facilities.

Patrick Isbell, Park Superintendent, reported for park maintenance. Mr. Isbell stated staff had been working extensively on the Funland train and preparing the facility for its May 1 opening. He informed the Commission he was scheduled to meet with City Council Member Nicole Hart regarding playground borders. He explained City Council Member Linda Robinson agreed to pay for the playground borders using her board funds and planned to meet on-site the following day with Ms. Hart. Mr. Isbell explained the department had been spending significant amounts on concrete work around playgrounds and estimated the border project alone would cost approximately $3,000.

Mrs. Smith asked where Northshore Park was located. Mr. Isbell responded it was located on Lynch Drive. He further reported staff removed playground equipment from the former School Street Park and installed it at Northshore Park because the equipment was in better condition than the existing Northshore playground.

Mr. Isbell updated the Commission regarding North Heights Community Center flooring repairs. He explained the contract was currently with Assistant City Attorney Marie Miller and the department was waiting for the finalized contract to be returned. He noted staff had obtained three (3) quotes for the flooring work. Mr. Isbell also reported the Glenview Community Center kitchen project had been completed. Mr. Isbell added the department had completed many community center upgrades in-house.

Mrs. Smith asked whether the leaning pole previously discussed had been straightened. Mr. Isbell confirmed the work had been completed approximately one week after the issue was raised. He reported maintenance crews were mowing grass, staying on schedule for events, and assisting park police operations. Mrs. Stephens asked whether staff had been able to obtain fertilizer and weed control products. Mr. Isbell replied they had and noted the first round of fertilizer for athletic fields had already been applied. Mr. Owens complimented the maintenance crews and remarked that the trails looked excellent. Director Kenny Stephens informed the Commission interviews for park ranger positions were scheduled for Thursday.

Jamie Pettit, Special Events Coordinator, reported for Special Events. Ms. Pettit informed the Commission baseball and softball leagues began that month. She advised the Commission Burns Park would host the Heartland Christian Athletic Association tournament Friday through Sunday, with activities beginning Thursday and championship games scheduled for Saturday. Ms. Pettit referenced a previous discussion regarding field lighting and reported that a quote to install lighting on soccer field nine (9) ranged from $240,000 to $255,000. She explained electrical tie-ins already existed at that field, meaning lighting installation at other fields would likely cost even more.

Mrs. Smith asked whether the Busch organization had completed its work. Ms. Pettit explained the organization's tournament was scheduled for July. She added lights for softball field two (2) were

Director Reports Continued: expected to be completed in May and noted no additional updates had been provided. Director Kenny Stephens explained the current lighting equipment from field two (2) would be relocated to field five (5) so that field would also have lights.

Greg Zonner, Arkansas Inland Maritime Museum Director, reported for the Arkansas Inland Maritime Museum. Mr. Zonner stated the museum experienced a very busy month and noted activity levels had improved over the previous month. He explained the museum hosted numerous school groups and submarine overnight events. Mr. Zonner informed the Commission that American Cruise Lines selected North Little Rock as a future stop location for river cruises. He stated the company's first cruise stop was scheduled for November near the area beyond the President's Bridge. Mr. Zonner explained the company was still searching for a permanent docking location and planned to schedule three (3) to four (4) cruises annually through North Little Rock. He stated museum staff had been assisting with identifying attractions and destinations for visitors during overnight stays.

Mr. Bentley asked whether the cruises were river cruises. Mr. Zonner confirmed they were similar to European-style river cruises and described the vessel as a 300-foot ship with approximately 150 cabins. Mr. Owens asked where the ship would dock. Mr. Zonner explained the temporary docking location was near the former construction access area beyond the President's Bridge and had been leased through November. He added the company hoped to eventually dock near Riverfront Park. Mr. Owens asked whether the city would charge docking fees. Mr. Zonner confirmed the company would pay fees and construct its own facilities. He explained the cruise company also transported its own buses, which would travel ahead of the ship and transport passengers throughout the city after arrival. Mr. Zonner commented the arrangement would benefit the city economically. Ms. Juels asked where the cruise company was based. Mr. Zonner replied the company was headquartered in Connecticut. Ms. Juels then asked where the cruise originated. Mr. Zonner explained the cruise itinerary would begin in Memphis and continue to Tulsa, Oklahoma. He added the November cruise had already sold out. Mr. Zonner concluded by stating he would miss Mrs. Stephens on the Commission.

Joe Ralston, Golf Director, reported for Burns Park Golf Course. Mr. Ralston stated operations had remained busy and noted the golf course was performing better than the previous year, despite last year being a record-setting year. He explained revenue in March was down approximately $3,300, but during the first 20 days of April, revenues increased by more than $20,000. Mr. Ralston informed the Commission the golf course hired a new crew member. He explained both golf courses had been maintained with only six (6) employees and the addition of another employee increased staffing to seven (7). He further noted another new hire was expected later that week. Mr. Ralston stated the golf course hosted a high school and middle school tournament that day involving 76 students and reported participants had many positive comments about the condition of the golf course.

Calendar of Events: Mrs. Stephens stated the agenda deadline for the next meeting is Tuesday, May 5, 2026 at 2:00 pm. The May Commission Meeting is scheduled for Monday, May 18, 2026 at 5:00 pm at the North Little Rock Community Center.

Election of Officers: Mrs. Stephens explained the Commission needed to elect officers, including a chairman, vice chairman, secretary, and treasurer. She opened the floor for chairman nominations. Mrs. Smith nominated Mr. Bentley for chairman and commented that she was familiar with his

Election of Officers Continued: background serving on commissions and his ties to the Mayor. Mr. Bentley responded that he still worked a full-time job and traveled frequently, adding that if he were retired, he would be one hundred percent on board. He asked how much time the position would require. Mrs. Stephens replied that the role could involve as much time as he wanted to dedicate. She noted she also worked a job and explained that with a strong vice chairman, someone could step in during meetings when he was unavailable. She added that if the position was not convenient for him, the Commission certainly understood and could open the floor for another nomination. Mr. Bentley remarked that he had only served on the Commission for four (4) months. Mrs. Stephens asked whether he would like to serve as chairman. Mr. Bentley replied that if he accepted the role, they were going to be successful and get after it. He informed the Commission he would have to miss the May 18 Commission meeting. Mrs. Smith commented that it did not matter he had only served four (4) months because he had already gotten his feet wet. Mr. Bentley accepted the chairman position.

Mrs. Smith made a motion, seconded by Ms. Juels, to nominate Stephen Bentley as Parks and Recreation Commission Chairman. All voted aye and the motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Bentley advised the Commission he would need someone to chair the Trail Committee. Mr. Owens agreed to serve as chair of the Trail Committee.

Mrs. Stephens announced the Commission would move on to nominations for vice chairman. Mrs. Smith asked whether Mr. Bryant was interested in continuing in the vice chairman position. Mr. Bryant replied that he was not interested. Mrs. Smith then asked Ms. Juels whether she would be willing to serve as vice chairman. Ms. Juels responded that she would be interested in the position.

Mrs. Smith made a motion, seconded by Mr. Bryant, to nominate Ms. Juels as Parks and Recreation Commission Vice Chairman. All voted aye and the motion passed unanimously.

Mrs. Stephens informed the Commission they next needed to nominate a secretary. Ms. Juels commented that Mrs. Smith was currently serving as secretary and did an excellent job. Mrs. Stephens asked whether Mrs. Smith would like to continue serving in that role. Mrs. Smith answered that she would. Mrs. Stephens praised Mrs. Smith as a great historian and noted she did an excellent job.

Ms. Juels made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Stephens, to nominate Mrs. Smith as Parks and Recreation Commission Secretary. All voted aye and the motion passed unanimously.

Mrs. Stephens then announced the Commission needed to elect a treasurer. Ms. Juels nominated Mr. Owens for the position. Mr. Owens remarked that he would need someone to explain the financial statements to him. Mrs. Stephens joked that former commissioner Toby Burkett had also tried to understand them.

Ms. Juels made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Smith, to nominate Mr. Owens as Parks and Recreation Commission Treasurer. All voted aye and the motion passed unanimously.

Mrs. Stephens informed the Commission that the packet included a job description City Attorney Amy Fields had prepared some time ago. She explained the Commission was governed by state law and operated under a statute. She emphasized the Commission was not merely advisory and had an actual role it was required to perform. Mrs. Stephens noted the packet contained a summary of the commissioners' responsibilities and encouraged everyone to review it periodically. She explained the

Election of Officers Continued: commission no longer had responsibility for submitting quarterly reports because the Finance Department now handled those reports and was supposed to provide them to the Commission quarterly. She added the Commission was also no longer responsible for submitting audits because the Finance Department handled those as well. Mrs. Stephens stressed it was very important for the Commission to participate in the budget process.

Mr. Owens asked whether Chief Financial Officer Ember Strange would be the appropriate person to meet with regarding the budget process. Mrs. Stephens confirmed that Ember Strange would be the appropriate contact. She added Assistant Chief Financial Officer Anita Worley was the Commission's primary contact within the Finance Department. She explained the Commission had typically met with Ember Strange in the past to better understand the role commissioners were expected to play.

Mr. Bentley asked whether there would be any issue with meeting with Grant Manager Kyle Key now that he was a member of the Commission. Mrs. Stephens answered that it would not be an issue and reminded him he was now an appointed commissioner. She explained the Freedom of Information Act prohibited commissioners from openly or privately discussing Commission matters together outside the proper process. City Attorney Amy Fields advised that she had a summary of the Freedom of Information Act presentation she gave a few months earlier and could email it to him. She explained Mr. Bentley was welcome to meet with Mr. Key, but he should not take another commissioner with him unless the proper process of notifying the press had been followed. She noted he could meet one-on-one with Ember Strange without issue. Mr. Owens asked whether commissioners could still meet socially as long as Commission business was not discussed. Mrs. Stephens and Amy Fields both confirmed that social gatherings were acceptable under those circumstances.

Director Kenny Stephens presented Mrs. Stephens with a personalized retirement clock. He expressed appreciation for the 33 years she dedicated to the City of North Little Rock Parks and Recreation Commission and commented that she would truly be missed. Mrs. Stephens admired the clock and described it as gorgeous. Mrs. Smith gathered everyone together for photographs with Mrs. Stephens during her final Commission meeting.

City Council Member Nathan Hamilton asked to speak before pictures were taken. He recalled that approximately a year and a half earlier, Mrs. Stephens attended a City Council meeting to advocate for parks, with many people attending to support her. He observed that it takes courage to stand up and speak publicly and remarked that if she had not done so, he would not have known what was happening within the Parks Department or recognized the need for action. Mr. Hamilton commented that throughout more than 40 years of service, Mrs. Stephens consistently demonstrated a clear understanding of her responsibilities and said he truly appreciated her dedication and service.

Adjournment: Ms. Juels made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Smith, to adjourn at 6:25 p.m. All voted aye and the motion passed unanimously.

Public Comments/Visitors: Mrs. Stephens opened the meeting for public comments. There were none.

APPROVED BY: Stephen Bentley
Chair, Stephen Bentley 6/15/26

SUBMITTED BY: Otistene Smith
Secretary, Otistene Smith