

Jennings County Parks and Recreation Board

Meeting Minutes

Date: August 25, 2026

Time: 5:30 PM

Location: Conference Room – Jennings County Government Center

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 5:35 PM by Kristin Wiley.

Roll Call

Present Board Members:

- Elizabeth Eaken (EE)
- Emily Thompson (ET)
- Bill Ertel (BE)
- Johnathan Garrett (JG)
- Kristin Wiley (KW)

Present Staff:

- Seth Jones (SJ)

Absent:

- None.
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Approval of Previous Minutes

A motion was made by BE to approve the minutes of the July 28, 2026, meeting. ET seconded the motion.

BE, ET, JG, and EE were in favor and signed the approval form.

Old Business

Master Plan Update:

- The second Steering Committee meeting was held on August 10. A key finding was that the Parks and Recreation Department is significantly understaffed compared with communities of comparable size in the Midwest.
- Next steps include two focus group meetings with key stakeholders and community members. A proposed focus group list was provided.
- As part of the Master Plan process, need to determine term dates for KW and BE.

New Business

Key West for a Cause Sponsorship:

FC Tucker requested that JCPR support the September Key West for a Cause charity event. A flyer listing the sponsorship levels and benefits was provided. The Board selected the “Friends of the Cause” sponsorship level of \$250.

A motion to approve \$250 from non-reverting funds was made by JG and seconded by EE.
Vote: JG, EE, KW, ET, and BE – yes. Motion carried.

Eco Lake Park Dump Station Pump Replacement Approval:

On August 10, 2026, SJ requested Board approval via email to use \$5,510.60 in non-reverting funds to replace the failed pump at the Eco Lake Park dump station. Board members KW, BE, ET, and EE approved the request via email to allow the repair to proceed without waiting until the next scheduled Board meeting.

A copy of the Covalen quote was provided to the Board for the record.

Director's Report

Personnel:

- The Eco Lake campground host submitted a two-week notice on August 7. Although a replacement was not initially being actively pursued for the remainder of the season, two individuals expressed interest. Interviews are scheduled for August 31.
 - The Muscatatuck Park campground hosts had planned to leave but have since confirmed that they are able to remain.
 - Alex Wallace sprained his ankle while removing downed trees from the trails. Required workers' compensation documentation was submitted to County HR, and he is recovering.
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Office and Administrative:

Master Plan:

- See Old Business.

Key West for a Cause:

- See New Business.

Phone and Internet:

- Due to persistent internet issues that have made the current service unreliable for business purposes, the park plans to transition from Frontier to Metronet. A small fee will be incurred for early termination of the current contract.
- SJ is currently using his personal cell phone as an internet hotspot while service issues continue.

Town of Vernon – Safe Streets for All:

- SJ attended an August 18 stakeholder meeting regarding the Town of Vernon's Safe Streets for All federal highway grant and proposed improvements to Highway 3 through Vernon.
- The project is relevant to JCPR because it may include a sidewalk or walking path between North Vernon and Vernon that would pass by Muscatatuck Park. The concept is similar to the project being pursued by the Active Transportation Committee.

2027 Budget Review and Approval by County Council:

- SJ met with the County Council on August 18 regarding the 2027 budget request.
- The requested increase to the Tires and Tubes account was approved, increasing the annual allocation from \$449 to \$1,000.
- The requested increase to the Garage and Motor account was approved, increasing the annual allocation from \$561 to \$1,500.
- The County Council will eliminate the splash pad budget in 2027 due to persistent operational issues and concerns regarding its long-term usefulness.

A copy of the approved budget was provided.

Additional County Council Budget Discussion:

- The County Council requested that the Non-Reverting Fund be renamed "Project Funds." SJ explained how the funds are generated and the process for depositing revenue into the account.
- The County Council indicated that JCPR may spend up to \$55,000 annually from the Non-Reverting Fund and calculated that more than \$70,000 had been spent this year. SJ explained that a \$30,000 donation intended to cover restroom renovation costs was deposited into the Non-Reverting Fund rather than a pass-through account. After accounting for the donation, actual expenditures are approximately \$44,000. The County Financial Advisor will make the appropriate accounting adjustments.
- The County Council requested that the Custodial Fund be renamed "Custodial Supplies." SJ explained the purpose of the account.

- The County Council suggested eliminating the Picnic Tables account. SJ explained that building replacement picnic tables is an ongoing park activity, particularly during the winter, with approximately 10 to 12 tables constructed annually to replace older or damaged tables.
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Grounds – Muscatatuck Park

Splash Pad:

- The Board discussed the long-term viability of the splash pad, particularly in light of the County Council's decision to eliminate budget funding for the splash pad beginning in 2027. Although the splash pad remains a popular community amenity, SJ expressed concerns regarding the significant staff time and financial resources required for ongoing maintenance and repairs, as well as recurring operational issues.
 - Recent issues included a malfunctioning float that contributed to an approximately \$4,500 water bill and sewage backup issues involving the dining hall overflow tank.
 - The Board discussed whether the time and financial resources currently required to maintain the splash pad could be better utilized elsewhere within the park.
 - Discussion also included the availability of a splash pad at the city park and whether maintaining a splash pad is consistent with Muscatatuck Park's natural and rugged character.
 - A potential alternative for the splash pad area would be conversion to a shaded pavilion adjacent to the playground.
 - The Board discussed whether funds no longer needed for splash pad operations could potentially be redirected to support a paid campground host position. Discussion included the potential benefits of increased campground oversight and the resources that would be required to support a paid position.
 - The Board agreed not to make additional splash pad repairs at this time. Further discussion regarding the future of the splash pad was tabled until the September meeting.
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Grounds – Eco Lake

Hazard Tree Removal:

- Two large hazard trees located near power lines and above water spigots were removed on July 30.
- \$1,150 will be paid from the Buildings and Grounds Fund. The invoice is pending.

Dump Station:

- Repairs to the dump station floats and support brackets, previously approved for \$1,410 in non-reverting funds, have been completed. The invoice is pending.
 - One of the two pumps failed. The Board approved \$5,510.60 in non-reverting funds for pump replacement via email (see New Business). The repair is awaiting scheduling.
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Equipment

- Two weed eaters and one backpack leaf blower were repaired, and the repair invoice has been paid.
 - The Blue Dodge Ram fuel sensor repair has been completed and paid. The fuel tank may require replacement within the next few years.
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Financial Report

- Non-Reverting Fund: \$259,233.05 (as of August 4, 2026)
 - Non-Reverting Fund Net Change for August: \$9,575.93 (as of August 25, 2026)
 - 2026 Outlook: Projected remaining income of \$44,350.00 and a projected year-end balance of \$282,783.05.
 - Year-over-year income and monthly transactions were reviewed.
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Events

- INDOT Company Picnic – September 23 (approximately 300–400 attendees expected)
 - Hoosier Beemers – September 24–27
 - JCMS Cross Country – September 10, 14, and 28
 - JCHS Cross Country – September 19
 - NICA – October 2–4
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Comments from Guests

No comments from guests were recorded.

Board Discussion

- The air conditioning at the Muscatatuck Park Dining Hall stopped working due to a failed capacitor. It has been repaired and backup capacitors have been purchased.
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Next Meeting

September 22, 2026

Adjournment

A motion to adjourn was made by JG and seconded by BE.
The meeting was adjourned at 6:19 PM.
