

**Special Wahpeton City Council Meeting
With Wahpeton Park Board
December 17, 2025
5:00 p.m. – Hughes Shelter**

City Council Present: Mayor Brett Lambrecht, Council Members: Shannon Schillinger, Chad Perdue, Dr. David Woods, Jason Goltz, Tiana Bohn, Kelly McNary, and Cory Unruh. **Absent:** None

Park Board Present: President Brian Watson, Park Board Members: Casey Formanek, Zach Hatting and Tyler Gripentrog. **Absent:** Deb Tobias

City Staff Present: Darcie Huwe, Dennis Miranowski, Todd Johnson, Cheryl O’Meara, City Attorney Brittany Hatting, and Assistant City Attorney Will Budke

Park Board Staff Present: Brad Edwardson, Connie Metcalf, Brittney Myhra, and Kathy Diekman.

Others Present: Dr. Rod Flanigan and Reggie Jackson of NDSCS, Michael Kaiser and Jake Kubela of the Wahpeton Public School Board, Adam Barnett of JLG Architects, Manesha Reddy-Daily News and approximately 30+ members of the public were also present.

CALL TO ORDER

Meeting called to order by Park Board President Watson at 5:00 p.m. The Pledge of Allegiance was then recited.

Statement of Park Board Needs Regarding a Recreation Center & Wellness Facility – Watson explained the Park Board appreciates the opportunity to provide an overview of what the Park Board sees as the needs and responsibilities of the proposed new rec center. Parks and Recreation Director Brad Edwardson provided a presentation reviewing park district needs, facility size and locations, funding constraints, and phases of construction.

Park District Needs – primary needs were stated as court space, a walking track and an indoor playground.

Gymnasium/Court space: Edwardson reviewed the scheduling of volleyball, basketball, and pickleball stating the facility needs not less than four full size basketball courts. **Walking/Running Track:** Current facilities require thirty laps to walk one mile; it is speculated the walking track would be the most frequently used amenity in a new facility. **Playgrounds:** Edwardson explained the new facility should include a playground for pre-school to early elementary age children and a more challenging playground for older children/adults. **Pickleball:** The demand for pickleball court time far exceeds availability (currently at approx. 25 hours per week). Edwardson recommends a minimum of one dedicated pickleball court and up to four courts total to meet the demand for open recreation, pickleball leagues and tournaments. **Party/Meeting Rooms, Art Room and Community Meeting Space:** Edwardson explained there is consistent traffic at the Community Center for small group meetings, art classes and community events, and should be included in the plans for a new facility. **Kitchen/Concessions:** Edwardson explained the Park Dept. served over 16,000 meals to school aged children in the ten weeks of summer vacation in 2025, over 80% of the meals were hot meals. Edwardson said the Summer Food Program has grown 1,000+ meals per year. The ability to prepare and serve food and concessions will provide meals, convenience and revenue. **Projects Lab:** Edwardson explained multiple non-profit organizations look for space to work on group projects, the area could provide basic tools, short term storage and teaching opportunities. **Group Fitness/Cardio & Weight Machines:** Edwardson suggested two group fitness rooms that could be rented by instructors to provide a variety of fitness classes like yoga, tai-chi, meditation, etc. Cardio and weight equipment would be very basic and without duplication of existing private exercise facilities. **Locker Rooms:** Edwardson stated current facilities do not have any locker rooms, they will need to be well planned in the new facility. **Storage:** Both building equipment and recreation equipment will require purpose-built well-planned storage spaces. **Offices and Conference Room:** Edwardson recommended at least five offices, a reception area, office workroom/storage and a conference room to accommodate board and committee meetings. **Facility Size and Location:** Edwardson suggests a minimum of 54,000 square feet on the main floor (not including the second

level/walking track). Court space will require approximately 30,000 square feet to include two-row bleachers on one side of each of the courts for tournament play. The proposed playground space will require a minimum of 3,300 square feet. Edwardson provided illustrations to accommodate courts, walking track and playground facilities, with potential expansion areas. The illustrations included schematic building layouts at the NDSCS 14th Ave. Site, on vacant land adjacent to Tiny Tykes Daycare on 11th St. N., west of Wahpeton High School and in Chahinkapa Park. Edwardson reviewed pros and cons of each site, stating in summary the Chahinkapa Park site would have excellent visibility with 40,000 – 50,000 visitors to the Zoo annually and it serves as a hub of community recreation now. **Funding Constraints:** Edwardson explained the Wahpeton Park Board currently maintains over 130 acres of land, 30+ buildings, 7 playgrounds, 15 fields & courts and 3 swimming pools with a \$2,000,000 annual operating budget. Edwardson and Watson explained the proposed facility needs to fit within the new 1% sales tax, with amenities that will work within a realistic financial operating plan. Both stated the Park Board is committed to maintaining current facilities and programming, financial commitments cannot eliminate occasional funding requests of the golf course, park, pool, zoo, baseball, etcetera. **Phases of Construction:** Edwardson and Watson recommend initiating the first phase of the project to address immediate needs (court space, a walking track and an indoor playground). The initial phase will allow time to establish a viable operations plan that supports subsequent construction phases. Additional amenities such as turf and aquatics can be planned and added as resources become available. Edwardson and Watson explained their position stated tonight is based on actual feedback and participation of individuals and user groups; although they prefer a Chahinkapa Park location, they look forward to being involved in the planning and operations of the new recreation center at any location.

Public Comment: Watson asked for input and discussion. Comments included frustration with perceived delays in the planning process, communications about the budget, amenities, phases and location. Council president Goltz reminded all in attendance this is the first time the Council and Park Board have met together since the sales tax was approved in April. Adam Barnett of JLG Architects stated the Wahpeton Park Board will definitely have a seat at the table in the design of the facility, Barnett suggested creation of a project oversight committee of approximately 8 officials from the council and park board that meets monthly, provides collective input and regularly reports back to each entity. Dr. Flanigan of NDSCS stated if the city chooses the NDSCS location, the lease will be signed, and project planning may proceed. City Attorney Hatting explained the draft lease includes language terminating the agreement if construction does not occur. Mayor Lambrecht said the council will continue to review the land lease; the building bidding environment and borrowing rates have improved over recent months and new building technologies have been presented for consideration. The project timeline will start to move more quickly in the upcoming months. Hatting said when the Council previously approved the lease concept, it was intended additional site information would be provided prior to the agreement being signed. Next steps in the process will include council discussion on site selection, base project budget, base project amenities, and a project timeline. These items will be included on the January 5th, 2026, Council agenda.

Motion by Casey, seconded by Zach, to adjourn the meeting at 6:43 p.m.

Brian Watson, Park Board President

Connie Metcalf, Park Board Clerk