

RECREATION AND PARK COMMISSION FOR THE PARISH OF EAST BATON ROUGE

CITY-BROOKS PARK MASTER PLAN + LAKES VISION SPECIAL COMMITTEE

Minutes

The City-Brooks Park Master Plan + Lakes Vision Special Committee met at 4:00 p.m. on Monday, June 29, 2026, at the Eugene A. Young Administrative Offices at Milton J. Womack Park, Room 1800, 6201 Florida Blvd., Baton Rouge, Louisiana.

I. Call to Order – The meeting was called to order by BREC Chair Commissioner Mike Polito, at 4:01 p.m.

II. Roll Call

Committee Members present: Mike Polito, Carl Stages, Cricket Gordon, Rob Stuart, Christina Melton, Chris Meyer, Jason Andreasen, Randy Alvarez, and Janet Simmons.

Committee Members absent: Zach Corbin and Mike Raby.

BREC Staff present: Angela Harms, Natalie Hollis, Maurice Velaquez, members of Sasaki and the public were also present.

III. Review and Adoption of Prior Meeting Minutes

- a. Resolved, That the reading of the minutes of the City-Brooks Park Master Plan and Lakes Vision Special Committee Meeting of April 22, 2026, be dispensed with, and that they be approved as written.

Carl Stages proposal the minutes be amended to include the two proposals from the consultants on the conservancy models, including a conservancy model and a conservancy for City Park.

Motion Amended by C. Stages; Second by J. Andreasen; BREC Chair Commissioner Mike Polito called for the vote with all in favor, none opposed. Approved by unanimous consent.

IV. Information Items/Presentations

- a. Review of Feedback

i. Vest-interest Group Meetings

Lan of Sasaki provided an update on community engagement completed to date for the City-Brooks Park master planning process. Engagement efforts included outreach beginning in February, followed by 14 targeted interest group meetings between mid-April and mid-May, culminating in the June 11 public meeting. The team noted that the public survey received more than 3,000 responses, but participation was concentrated among users of the east side of the park. To ensure a more representative planning process, they intentionally conducted meetings with diverse stakeholder groups, including young professionals, elected officials, nonprofits, and community organizations. Additional outreach to schools and other organizations is still underway. Friends of City Park emphasized preserving the park's existing character, supporting only limited new amenities while minimizing additional development and protecting open space. Envision Baton Rouge supported expanding non-golf recreational amenities, improving park connectivity, reconfiguring portions of the golf course for broader public use, and adding waterfront attractions such as a playground, beer garden, and gathering

spaces to create a destination within the park.

ii. Community Meeting

Lan of Sasaki summarized June 11 Community Meeting of key stakeholder feedback includes, whether the golf course should remain in its current form, noting that it serves relatively few users compared to the amount of land it occupies. Others supported maintaining golf while expanding recreational opportunities for the broader community. Neighborhood organizations emphasized the importance of in-person engagement, particularly for older residents, and expressed concern that Brooks Park has historically received less investment than City Park. They advocated for maintaining Brooks Pool as a full-service swimming facility. Community organizations supported creating a park for everyone, with waterfront amenities, improved lake access, cafés, restaurants, and family-oriented recreation. Tourism representatives encouraged developing a stronger identity connecting Brooks Park with the lakes to create a regional destination. Neighborhood residents raised concerns about traffic impacts, pedestrian safety, parking, and access. LSU representatives stressed that City Park and Brooks Park should function as one connected park system while honoring the area's history and culture. Councilwoman Carolyn Coleman supported locating the gymnasium, pool, and recreation facilities together at Brooks Park, with amenities that are accessible to families and residents of all ages. City Park representatives emphasized that proposed improvements should be realistic to maintain and operate. LSU students identified safety concerns, particularly for women, and noted that the railroad creates a barrier between the two parks while Brooks Park remains underserved. Cultural organizations highlighted the importance of integrating nearby museums, galleries, and businesses into the master plan.

b. Announcement of Community Meeting for Question & Answer Session

Mike Polito announced a public meeting on July 14 at BREC Independence Theatre to get feedback from the community.

c. Discussion of the Conservancy Governance Model

The chair explained that a conservancy would function as an independent nonprofit organization responsible for fundraising, partnerships, and long-term management through Cooperative Endeavor Agreements (CEAs), while ownership of park property would remain with existing public entities. Members emphasized that any conservancy must remain publicly accountable, with oversight ultimately provided by the BREC Commission. Several noted that successful parks in other cities use dedicated governance organizations to provide consistent leadership, fundraising, and long-term planning. Representatives from existing park organizations stressed that current CEAs and operational autonomy must be protected. They requested involvement in drafting any future agreements and asked for clarity on how a conservancy would affect programming, revenue generation, and decision-making. LSU representative stated they are still evaluating their future maintenance responsibilities and were not prepared to endorse including the LSU Lakes within a conservancy until additional information is available. Members discussed the current University Lakes LLC governance structure for the dredging project and agreed that a long-term management structure will be needed once that project concludes. Several committee members noted that every conservancy

is unique and that Baton Rouge should develop a model tailored to its own partners and governance needs rather than simply copying another city's approach. The committee generally agreed that; a dedicated governance entity could provide stronger focus, fundraising, maintenance, and long-term stewardship, existing partnerships and legal agreements should be preserved, ,more detailed information is needed regarding governance, finances, board composition, and responsibilities before any formal recommendation can be made, and the conservancy discussion should continue alongside development of the master plan rather than after it is completed.

d. Discussion of Next Steps

The committee concluded the meeting by reviewing the project's timeline, next steps, and remaining deliverables with next steps include; staff will distribute presentation materials from previous meetings, including the current presentation, for committee review, the next public meeting is scheduled for July 14, where additional community feedback will be collected and following that meeting, Sasaki will refine the preferred master plan based on public input. The preferred master plan will then be presented to the public for final review before being submitted to the BREC Commission for approval.

Sasaki reported that it is developing a comprehensive business model alongside the master plan to include the following: existing operational and financial conditions, future operating costs associated with the preferred plan, implementation phasing, and potential funding sources and revenue strategies. The business model and preferred master plan are expected to be completed together, with a target of October.

V. New Business – NONE

VI. Committee Member Questions

VII. Adjournment

Motion to adjourn at 5:22 p.m. by C. Meyer; Second by C. Gordon; BREC Chair Commissioner Mike Polito called for the vote with all in favor, none opposed. Approved by unanimous consent

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Angela Harms", followed by a horizontal line extending to the right.

Angela Harms
BREC Director of Planning & Engineering