

**RECREATION AND PARK COMMISSION
FOR THE PARISH OF EAST BATON ROUGE**
Regular Meeting – 5:00 p.m.
BREC Administration Building
6201 Florida Boulevard
Baton Rouge, Louisiana
Commission Minutes
February 26, 2026

Call to Order

A regular meeting of the Recreation and Park Commission for the Parish of East Baton Rouge (BREC) was held at BREC's Administrative Offices on February 26, 2026. The meeting was called to order at 5:00 p.m. by Chairman Mike Polito. Commissioner Carl Stages offered the invocation and Commissioner Wade Evans led the Pledge of Allegiance. Roll was taken and a quorum of Commissioners was present, including Mike Polito, Chair; Wade Evans, Vice-Chair; Carl Stages, Treasurer; Dr. Murelle Harrison, Lon Vicknair, David McDavid, Marshall Ortego and Dustin Yates. Commissioner Collis Temple III arrived at 5:37 P.M. Staff members present were Janet Simmons, Interim Superintendent; Aneatra Boykin, Chief Administrative Officer; Maurice Velasquez, Interim Chief Operating Officer; Johanna Landreneau, Interim Chief Human Resources Officer; Corey Luttrell, Rhonda Williams, Tia Edwards, Jim Fleshman, Angela Harms, Steven Knight, RaHarold Lawson, Robyn Lott, Katrina Coots-Ward, Dina Duplantis, and Brendan Nestor. Murphy Foster, legal counsel, was also in attendance. The rest of the audience consisted of other BREC staff, media, and the public.

Public Comment

Chairman Polito announced that public comment would be allowed prior to a vote being taken on any agenda action item and explained the process to be observed.

Adoption of Minutes

Resolved, that the reading of the minutes of the Regular Recreation and Park Commission Meeting of January 22, 2026, be dispensed with, and that they be approved as written.

Motion by Mr. Yates

Second by Mr. Ortego

There being no discussion, Chairman Polito called for the vote with the following results:

Yeas: 8

Nays: 0

The motion was approved unanimously.

Consent Calendar

Under the Consent Calendar, Chairman Polito read the following resolution:

Resolved, that the Commission review and accept the Routine Personnel Transactions from January 6, 2026 through February 2, 2026.

Motion by Mr. Evans

Second by Mr. Stages

There being no discussion, Chairman Polito called for the vote with the following results:

Yeas: 8

Nays: 0

The motion was approved unanimously.

Presentations

The BREC video showcasing upcoming activities for the month of March was played.

Chairman Polito informed the audience that Interim Superintendent Simmons was celebrating her birthday and led everyone in singing to her.

Interim Superintendent Simmons recognized former Commissioners Dwayne Rogers, Clarice "Cricket" Gordon, and Donna Collins Lewis for their service to the Commission and to BREC. She noted that the Commissioners were unable to attend but their plaques would be delivered to them. Also recognized was Sydney Parish, who received the Louisiana Recreation and Park Association (LRPA) Young Professional Award.

Reports of Officers and Standing Committees

Interim Superintendent Simmons presented the January 2026 attendance report and provided updates on community engagement meetings. She informed the Commission that the Zoo generated \$3.147 million dollars in revenue in 2025, the highest ever.

Ms. Simmons also recognized Information Systems Director Steven Knight, who discussed how BREC is utilizing artificial intelligence (AI) capabilities through already established software (Microsoft Co-Pilot) to assist in both project management and employee evaluations.

Ms. Simmons concluded her report by highlighting the radio show, "BREC Room", airing Mondays at 5:30 PM on Talk 107.3, prior events held at BREC facilities, and gave a reminder of BREC's March events.

Ms. Simmons recognized Rodney Combs from EisnerAmper, who gave an update on BREC's 2024 Audit. He stated that the 2025 Audit is scheduled to begin May 4, 2026, but Interim Superintendent Simmons would like to move that date up to mid-April.

Chairman Polito congratulated the audit firm and staff on a job well done. He also asked Mr. Combs if there was any fraud detected during the audit. Mr. Combs replied that based on the audit performed, there was no fraud being reported.

Standing Committee Reports

Finance

Chairman Polito recognized Commissioner Stages, chair of the Finance Committee. Commissioner Stages thanked the Commission for appointing the committee members who ask great questions and perform their due diligence on the committee.

Finance Director Rhonda Williams stated that there was no fraud detected in this year's audit for the first time in years. She presented the December 31, 2025, which is the end of the fiscal year, and January Monthly Budget Status Reports.

Chairman Polito read Item a under Finance:

Resolved, that the Commission accept the unaudited monthly Budget Status Report for the month ending and fiscal year-to-date ending December 31, 2025, as presented.

Motion to approve by Mr. Evans

Second by Mr. Temple

There being no discussion, Chairman Polito called for the vote with the following results:

Yeas: 9

Nays: 0

The motion was approved unanimously.

Chairman Polito read Item b under Finance:
Resolved, that the Commission accept the unaudited monthly Budget Status Report for the month ending and fiscal year-to-date ending January 31, 2026, as presented.

Motion to approve by Mr. Yates

Second by Mr. Vicknair

There being no discussion, Chairman Polito called for the vote with the following results:

Yeas: 9

Nays: 0

The motion was approved unanimously.

Chairman Polito called for a motion to accept the 2024 Audit report.

Motion to accept by Mr. Evans

Second by Mr. Stages

There being no discussion, Chairman Polito called for the vote with the following results:

Yeas: 8

Nays: 0

The motion was approved unanimously.

Human Resources

Chairman Polito recognized Commissioner Harrison, who requested that Items a, b, and c be combined.

Chairman Polito read Items a, b, and c under Human Resources:

Resolved, that the Commission approve the position of Security Operations Center (SOC) Surveillance Manager at a pay grade of 10, with Minimum Pay of \$54,306.10 and Maximum Pay of \$86,889.71.

Resolved, that the Commission approve the position of Security Operations Center (SOC) Surveillance Supervisor at a pay grade of 8, with Minimum Pay of \$44,880.99 and Maximum Pay of \$71,809.71.

Resolved, that the Commission approve the position of Security Operations Center (SOC) Surveillance Agent at a pay grade of 6, with Minimum Pay of \$37,778.62 and Maximum Pay of \$60,445.84.

Motion to approve by Mr. McDavid

Second by Mr. Vicknair

There being no discussion, Chairman Polito called for the vote with the following results:

Yeas: 9

Nays: 0

The motion was approved unanimously.

Chairman Polito read Item d under Human Resources:

Resolved, that the Commission approve the position of Chief Information Officer for Information Systems at a pay grade of 17, with Minimum Pay of \$126,420.74 and Maximum Pay of \$202,273.14.

Motion by Dr. Harrison

Second by Mr. Evans

Chairman Polito asked for an explanation regarding this position. Human Resources Director Corey Luttrell stated that this position would be an upgrade of the Director of Information Systems position due to the increase in responsibility and level of work involved.

There being no further discussion, Chairman Polito called for the vote with the following results:

Yeas: 9

Nays: 0

The motion was approved unanimously.

Chairman Polito read Item e under Human Resources:

Resolved, that the Commission approve a Cost-of-Living Adjustment (COLA) increasing the pay for all full-time and part-time employees, in pay grade 0009 and lower, by one dollar (\$1.00) based upon the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) Living Wage Calculator assessment for Baton Rouge, Louisiana. Average wages will increase from \$19.74 to \$20.74.

Motion to approve by Mr. Temple

Second by Mr. McDavid

Commissioner Harrison stated that the committee strongly approved the motion.

Mr. Luttrell stated that the resolution was in line with what was discussed in a previous meeting in regard to employee compensation.

Commissioner Evans mentioned the difficulty of supporting a family, even with the MIT living wage, and agreed with and supported the resolution.

Commissioner Stages asked about the average amount of the increase per employee per year. Mr. Luttrell stated that it would depend on the status of the employee: full-time versus part-time. Full-time employees would receive about \$2,080.00 per year; part-time employees, presuming 1,040 hours, would receive \$1,040.00 per year, but this amount would depend on the number of hours worked. The average increase would be anywhere from three to five percent.

Commissioner Stages asked about the timeline of the next compensation study. Mr. Luttrell stated that the plan was for next year, but he would like to do it sooner and make it more comprehensive, looking at more internal data as opposed to the market comparisons.

Commissioner Stages asked about financial impact to the agency. Mr. Luttrell stated that it would cost about \$1.6 million. Commissioner Stages asked Mrs. Williams if BREC could cover the raises in this year's budget. She said yes.

Chairman Polito asked how much of the raise is benefits. Mr. Luttrell stated that it depended on the coverages selected by the employee, but fifty percent was estimated to keep it level across all payroll.

Chairman Polito stated that he would like for the Human Resources Advisory Committee and BREC Human Resources staff professionals to begin to look at getting BREC "above market" in order to attract the best people and reward current employees for their hard work. Mr. Luttrell stated that BREC benefits run higher than most in the market so there is a variance between total comp versus base comp. He stated that most people are looking at base comp. Mr. Polito stated that most people want money in their pocket.

There being no further discussion, Chairman Polito called for the vote with the following results:

Yeas: 9

Nays: 0

The motion was approved unanimously.

Planning and Park Resources

Chairman Polito read Item a under Park and Planning Resources:

Resolved, that the Commission approve the Perkins Road Community Park Master Plan as presented.

Motion to approve by Mr. Evans

Second by Mr. Yates.

Ms. Angela Harms, Director of Project Development, reviewed the Perkins Road Community Park Master Plan.

Commissioner McDavid asked if there would be (artificial) turf at Olympia Stadium. Ms. Harms said was not in the current plan, but there had been discussions and they would look into it.

Chairman Polito inquired about the standard to which the stadium would be built. Ms. Harms stated that it would be built to mid-tier. Joseph Furr, from Joseph Furr Design Studio, joined the discussion and stated that there were several ways to design the stadium, all at different price points. He also explained the different things that would have to be looked at, such as concessions, drainage, parking, sustainability, and future expansion. The design takes into consideration that the stadium would be a multi-purpose facility with the ability to host various other team sports in addition to football.

Chairman Polito noted that as an organization, we need standards for all of our ball fields. Dr. RaHarold Lawson, Director of Park Operations, stated that those standards are being addressed; however, he is not a fan of artificial turf stadiums due to the injuries associated with playing on turf and because a turf fields heat up very fast due to high temperatures in Louisiana. Additionally, there are no long-term cost savings using artificial turf. The main advantage for recreational usage would be that it drains well and could be ready for use sooner.

Commissioner Temple stepped out of the meeting.

Commissioner Stages asked which of the BREC millages are used to fund projects such as this. Ms. Harms stated that this project comes from the Capital Improvement Fund, which is dedicated to paying for park improvements.

There being no further discussion, Chairman Polito called for the vote with the following results:

Yeas: 8

Nays: 0

The motion was approved unanimously.

Recreation

Chairman Polito recognized Dr. Dina Duplantis, Director of Equine Operations, who presented the Farr Park Strategic Plan, and invited Commissioners to visit the Park.

Commissioner Temple returned to the meeting during the presentation.

Commissioner Evans left the meeting.

Selection of Professionals

Chairman Polito read Item a under Selection of Professionals:

Resolved, that the Commission approve award of RFQ 238 Construction Management at Risk Contractor (CMAR) for a new Contemporary Arts Center at City-Brooks Community Park to Cangelosi Ward - Broadmoor Joint Venture for pre-construction services in consultation with the design professional for a fixed fee of \$100,000.

Motion by Mr. Stages

Second by Mr. Temple

There being no discussion, Chairman Polito called for the vote with the following results:

Yeas: 8

Nays: 0

The motion was approved unanimously.

Chairman Polito read Item b under Selection of Professionals:

Resolved, that the Commission approve a contract with Duplantis Design Group, PC to provide the topographic survey, H&H study, geotechnical report, environmental permitting, design, construction documents, bidding, TAP bridge design, and construction administration services for the Scotlandville Greenway Phase 1 Project for a lump sum fee of \$336,750.00 and a not-to-exceed amount of \$10,000.00 for reimbursable expenses; authorize Superintendent to execute appropriate documents.

Motion to approve by Mr. Ortego

Second by Dr. Harrison

There being no discussion, Chairman Polito called for the vote with the following results:

Yeas: 8

Nays: 0

The motion was approved unanimously.

Chairman Polito read Item c under Selection of Professionals:

Resolved, that the Commission approve an amendment to Contract 2023000169 with CSRS for additional civil engineering and surveying services including planning and zoning submittals, Stormwater Management Plan, Drainage Impact Study, Water Quality Impact Study, Offsite Drainage Assessment, H&H Modeling, Flood Plain Fill Mitigation Analysis, Sewer Loading and Sewer Capacity Reservation, Traffic Study Update, Environmental Due Diligence for an amount not to exceed \$78,500. With the amendment, the new contract total will be \$188,790.

Motion to approve by Mr. Yates

Second by Mr. Vicknair

There being no discussion, Chairman Polito called for the vote with the following results:

Yeas: 8

Nays: 0

The motion was approved unanimously.

Chairman Polito read Item d under Selection of Professionals:

Resolved, that the Commission approve an amendment to Contract 2022000214 with TBG for additional master planning services including plan layout variations, community engagement presentations, civil engineering and preliminary hydrologic studies for an additional amount of \$12,500. With this amendment, the new contract total will be \$1,174,629.

Motion to approve by Mr. Stages

Second by Dr. Harrison

There being no discussion, Chairman Polito called for the vote with the following results:

Yeas: 8

Nays: 0

The motion was approved unanimously.

Chairman Polito read Item e under Selection of Professionals:

Resolved, that the Commission approve awarding RFP 241 – “Liberty Lagoon Waterpark Waterslide Refurbishment” to ARC – Amusement Restoration Companies in the amount of \$228,805, which includes initial refurbishment cost of \$152,370 and a 4-year preventative maintenance plan of \$76,435.

Motion to approve by Mr. Ortego

Second by Dr. Harrison

There being no discussion, Chairman Polito called for the vote with the following results:

Yeas: 8

Nays: 0

The motion was approved unanimously.

Chairman Polito read Item f under Selection of Professionals:

Resolved, that the Commission approve the amended and extended Contract 2025000384 with Clearly Managed Consulting LLC for safety emergency training, including fire drills, situational awareness, and incident response for an amount not to exceed \$80,000. Previous amount was for \$40,000.

Motion to approve by Mr. Yates

Second by Mr. Temple

Commissioner Temple asked for clarification on the amount of the contract. Interim Superintendent Simmons explained that this was an extension of the previous contract, and that the \$40,000 would be for this year.

There being no further discussion, Chairman Polito called for the vote with the following results:

Yeas: 8

Nays: 0

The motion was approved unanimously.

Chairman Polito read Item f under Selection of Professionals:

Resolved, that the Commission approve the amended and extended Contract 2025000355 with Contingency Consulting, LLC for Security Operations Center integration and workforce alignment for an amount not to exceed \$80,000. Previous amount was for \$40,000.

Motion to approve by Mr. Temple.

Second by Dr. Harrison.

Chairman Polito asked if this was similar to the previous contract. Interim Superintendent Simmons stated that it was similar.

There being no further discussion, Chairman Polito called for the vote with the following results:

Yeas: 8

Nays: 0

The motion was approved unanimously.

Reports of Special Committees

Chairman Polito recognized Ms. Harms, who gave an update on the steering committee meeting for the newly-named “City-Brooks Master Plan and Lakes Vision Project”, which includes

the City-Brooks Community Park master plan, the study of the Lakes governance system, and the Wampold Beach concept design. She stated that the next public meeting will be April 22, 2026, and that the committee is on schedule.

Chairman Polito stated that there was a card for public comment and asked Aneatra Boykin, Chief Administrative Officer, if public comment was allowed since there would not be any action taken. Ms. Boykin stated that there was no requirement to allow public comment, but if the Chairman wished to grant speaking privileges, he could do so.

Chairman Polito recognized Peter Davis to speak from a written statement. Chairman Polito paused Mr. Davis during the reading of his statement to clarify that BREC employee layoffs were not as a result of financial pressures but were an effort to spend public dollars appropriately. Mr. Davis asked if the Commission had been approached to assume long-term responsibility of the Lakes and whether BREC had the capacity to sustain that obligation without affecting existing services. Chairman Polito polled the Commissioners to ask if anyone had been approached to assume Lakes responsibility. No Commissioner had been approached in such a manner.

Special Orders

None

Unfinished Business and General Orders

None

New Business

Chairman Polito read Item A under New Business:

Resolved, that the Commission, in accordance with R.S. 38:2212.1F, approve the use of the State Procurement Code by BREC for the purchase of supplies, services, and major repairs with other public or private entities; where such purchases and vendor transactions, where applicable, will be through cooperative and/or joint purchasing with the State (State contracts).

Motion to approve by Mr. Yates

Second by Mr. Temple

Commissioner Stages asked for an explanation of the resolution. Ms. Boykin stated that this was a "housekeeping" resolution; in order to utilize State contracts, there would need to be a resolution to adopt the Procurement Code.

There being no further discussion, Chairman Polito called for the vote with the following results:

Yeas: 8

Nays: 0

The motion was approved unanimously.

Chairman Polito read Item B under New Business:

Resolved, that the Commission authorize BREC leadership to retain a third-party consultant to conduct a study of zero-based budgeting and its potential application to BREC's fiscal planning process in lieu of the traditional flat budget approach.

Motion to approve by Mr. Ortego

Second by Dr. Harrison

Chairman Polito stated that the purpose of this item was to generate discussion to discover the real need of the organization in spending taxpayer dollars.

Commissioner Stages asked for a timeline in implementing the new budgeting method since the budgeting process begins in June, and the Finance department is in the middle of finding a consultant which will take approximately three months. Chairman Polito stated that the ultimate goal of the new budgeting process is to inform the public of what the actual millages should be so that the appropriate amount of public funds would be spent. The consensus was that this process would be in place for the 2027 budget

Commissioner Yates stated that there are fifty mills of property tax assessed throughout the parish across various organizations, and that one mill is approximately \$6.1 million for a total of \$300 million generated. He also stated that he believes that parish residents are demanding that we look at things differently, and that the parish does not have a money problem but an allocation problem. He supported and applauded the effort of the Chairman to move toward this budgeting method and strongly encouraged all organizations to consider doing the same.

Commissioner Vicknair agreed with Commissioner Yates that actual costs should be discovered, and that this budgeting method would yield some surprises. He stated that we have a duty and responsibility to be good stewards of the resources we've been entrusted with, and this would expand our transparency in how these resources are being utilized.

Commissioner Stages stated that he would like the Finance Committee to take the lead on this change. Chairman Polito agreed and asked if that needed to be made a part of the resolution. Ms. Boykin stated that it was not necessary.

There being no further discussion, Chairman Polito called for the vote with the following results:

Yeas: 8

Nays: 0

The motion was approved unanimously.

Chairman Polito read Item C under New Business:

Resolved, that the Commission authorize the engagement of a qualified, independent forensic audit firm to evaluate BREC financial controls and compliance.

Motion to approve by Mr. Ortego

Second by Mr. Vicknair

Chairman Polito stated that this item's purpose was also to generate discussion. He stated that the wording of the resolution was a little soft in that it did not specifically state how deeply the audit would look to find any potential fraud, which was the spirit behind the resolution.

There being no further discussion, Chairman Polito called for the vote with the following results:

Yeas: 8

Nays: 0

The motion was approved unanimously.

Chairman Polito read Item D under New Business:

EXECUTIVE SESSION – The Recreation and Park Commission for the Parish of East Baton Rouge ("BREC") anticipates calling an Executive Session pursuant to: LSA-R.S. 42:17(A)(2), for the purpose of discussing strategy regarding litigation.

Motion to approve by Mr. Yates

Second by Mr. McDavid

The motion was approved unanimously.
The Commission retired to Executive Session at 6:53 p.m.

The Commission returned from executive session and Mr. Vicknair made a motion to reconvene. Mr. Temple seconded, and the Chairman called the meeting back to order in open session at 7:00 p.m. without objection.

Chairman Polito read Item E under New Business:
Resolved, that the Commission approve a settlement of litigation on the recommendation of legal counsel.
Motion to approve by Mr. Ortego
Second by Mr. Temple
There being no discussion, Chairman Polito called for the vote with the following results:
Yeas: 8
Nays: 0
The motion was approved unanimously.

Adjournment

Chairman Polito called for a motion to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner Yates made a motion, Commissioner Temple seconded, and the meeting was adjourned at 7:02 p.m. without objection.

Janet C. Simmons, Interim Superintendent
and Ex-Officio Secretary

Mike Polito, Chairman

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