

**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
July 24, 2025

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 July 24, 2025. The meeting was called to order at 5:00 p.m. by Chairwoman Donna Collins Lewis. Commissioner Dwayne Rogers offered the invocation and Commissioner Clarice Gordon led the Pledge of Allegiance. Roll was taken and a quorum of Commissioners was present, including Donna Collins Lewis, Chair; Clarice Gordon, Vice Chair; Kenneth Pointer, Treasurer; Mike Polito; Dwayne Rogers; Lon Vicknair; Wade Evans, David McDavid, Carl Stages and Dustin Yates. Commissioner Collis Temple III was absent. Staff members present were Janet Simmons, Interim Superintendent; Reed Richard, Assistant Superintendent of System Planning; Aneatra Boykin, Chief Administrative Officer and General Counsel; Maurice Velasquez, Interim Chief Operating Officer; Don Johnson, Chief Financial Officer; Shanda Crosby, Robyn Lott, Jim Fleshman, Angela Harms, RaHarold Lawson, Mike Raby, and Steven Knight. Murphy Foster, legal counsel, was also in attendance. The rest of the audience consisted of other BREC staff, sign language interpreters, media, and the public.

Public Comment

Chairwoman Lewis 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.

Additional Announcements

Chairwoman Lewis acknowledged the presence of 10 sitting Commissioners at the meeting. She stated that the Attorney General's Office recommended that all 10 Commissioners present participate in the discussion and vote on agenda items. She requested that each Commissioner clearly state their name into the microphone when voting, as she is still becoming familiar with the newly appointed members.

Chairwoman Lewis also reminded the Commission that, in accordance with Robert's Rules of Order, a motion must be made and seconded before a recorded vote could be taken.

Adoption of Minutes

Chairwoman Lewis read the following resolution:

Resolved, that the reading of the minutes of the Recreation and Park Commission Special Meeting of July 8, 2025, be dispensed with, and that they be approved as written.

Motion by Mr. Evans

Second by Mr. McDavid

The minutes were approved unanimously.

Consent Calendar

Resolved, that the Commission approve the routine Personnel Transactions from June 11, 2025 to July 14, 2025.

Motion by Ms. Gordon

Second by Mr. Pointer

Yeas: 10

Nays: 0

The Consent Calendar was approved unanimously.

Presentations

The Commission viewed a brief video highlighting various upcoming events throughout the parish during the month of August.

Reports of Officers and Standing Committees

Chairwoman Lewis read the first item under Administrative Matters, as follows:

Resolved, that the Commission hereby approves the amended agreement with Junbi, LLC, represented by Janet Simmons, where she shall serve in the capacity of Interim Superintendent for a term not to exceed 18 months with the option to renew for one year after termination of the initial term. At the conclusion of the extension, the agreement may be further extended for an additional two years upon the mutual consent of the parties. The total compensation for the six-month period shall not exceed \$99,800, to be paid in monthly installments of Sixteen Thousand Five Hundred Dollars and Thirty-three Cents (\$16,633.33), payable on the 15th of each month.

Motion by Mr. Evans

Second by Mr. Vicknair

Commissioner Rogers moved to defer Items 1a and 1b under Administrative Matters for 30 days, stating that he had just received the contracts earlier that afternoon. He expressed that he had several questions and needed more time to review the documents before casting a vote.

Chairwoman Lewis asked for clarity on the next steps. Commissioner Evans noted that there was already a motion and second on the current motion to approve. Murphy Foster, legal counsel, provided clarification on the procedure. He stated that there was a motion and second on the original motion to approve, which allows for discussion. However, if a substitute motion has been made, as he believed was done by Commissioner Rogers, and it receives a second, then the body must proceed with discussion and a vote on the substitute motion first. If the substitute motion fails, the Commission will return to discussion and vote on the original motion.

Chairwoman Lewis thanked legal counsel for the clarification, stating that she believed there were two motions on the floor. She then asked if there was a second to Commissioner Rogers' motion to defer. Commissioner Gordon confirmed the second.

The Commissioners continued with discussion on the substitute motion. Addressing concerns raised in the discussion, Mr. Foster noted that before there is a discussion on the original motion, the substitute motion must first fail. He offered that the Commissioners should vote down the substitute motion to go back to the original motion and discussion. He added that at that time, a subsequent motion could be made to defer.

Commissioner Gordon made a comment on her second of the substitute motion stating that according to Special Rules of Order that are part of the Commission's Bylaws, Commissioners are to receive the agenda at least five days before the meeting via mail or email which that did not happen. She stated that she is also not opposed to a discussion.

Commissioner Polito called for a roll call vote on the substitute motion to which Chairwoman Lewis agreed.

The results are as follows:

Yeas: 2 Ms. Gordon, Mr. Rogers

Nays: 8 Ms. Lewis, Mr. Pointer, Mr. Polito, Mr. Vicknair, Mr. Evans, Mr. McDavid,
 Mr. Stages, Mr. Yates

Abstained: 0

Absent: 1 Mr. Temple III

The substitute motion failed.

Commissioner Evans stated that he asked that the contracts be added to the agenda. He acknowledged his past criticisms of BREC and expressed concern that Interim Superintendent Simmons would not be able to complete the necessary improvements in six months. He added that Interim Superintendent Simmons also acknowledged the need for additional time.

Commissioner Evans noted that he participated in interviews with proposed headhunter firms for the superintendent search. He emphasized that selecting a new superintendent without first addressing the agency's internal challenges would be a disservice and that the extension would provide the future superintendent with a clean slate.

Commissioner Polito asked Mr. Foster if he has any concerns about the term or anything else with the amended contract.

Mr. Foster shared his concerns regarding the term of the Interim Superintendent's contract. He noted that the current contract is for six months. Given that the Interim Superintendent is serving in a role usually filled by an employee, the Commission needed to look at it as if an employee was taking this position. He stated that an employee would not be given an 18-month contract. He further pointed out that the current contract does not specify who has the option to renew. He clarified that any renewal clause must reflect mutual agreement between both parties. While he expressed support for including an option to renew for an additional six months with Commission approval, he advised that the term should be no longer than a year.

Commissioner Rogers expressed concern about a provision in the contract that grants the Interim Superintendent the ability to take any trips that can connect to BREC, with minimal restrictions and oversight. He stated he could not support that.

Chairwoman Lewis expressed concern regarding the proposed contract extension. She recalled that when former Superintendent Wilson declined to renew his contract and departed, the Commission's agreed-upon plan was to engage a search firm and with the goal to have a new superintendent selected within six months. She stated that, in her view, BREC is not significantly off track from that timeline. Chairwoman Lewis disagreed with the suggestion that the process has stalled, noting that she personally reviewed and scored each RFQ from the prospective search firms. One firm scored 99 points, and based on that process, the Commission chose to interview the top three. She emphasized that the decision to move forward with that process was made by a body of Commissioners who are still serving, and to now delay that timeline by one to two years was absurd. Chairwoman Lewis also raised financial concerns, pointing out that BREC is still paying former Superintendent Wilson, in addition to paying the Interim Superintendent an added \$100,000, nearly equivalent to the former superintendent's salary. She stated that the proposal to add another individual at a similar rate for six months appears to be fiscally irresponsible and sounded like a money grab. She concluded by stating that she cannot support the extension at this time. However, she would be open to a 30, 60, or 90 day extension if a new superintendent has not been identified by October or November.

Chairwoman Lewis recognized Don Johnson to give an update on the audits.

Mr. Johnson stated that the 2023 audit should be issued by the end of this month, and the 2024 audit will be started and completed by the end of the fiscal year, making BREC current with all audits.

Chairwoman Lewis emphasized that financials and audits were among the most crucial priorities for BREC. She shared that this may be her last meeting, as she is not seeking reappointment and does not believe she will be reappointed. Commissioner Lewis reaffirmed her belief that a newly hired superintendent should be capable of handling the operational responsibilities of BREC, especially if the agency is fiscally sound and audits are in place.

Commissioner Pointer stated that he agreed with Chairwoman Lewis. While he acknowledged and understood Commissioner Evans' perspective on extending the Interim Superintendent's contract, he also emphasized his appreciation for the work Interim Superintendent Simmons has done thus far. He expressed that BREC should continue moving forward with the process of hiring a permanent superintendent. He believes the new superintendent should be given the opportunity to bring their own vision to the agency and stated that prolonging the process would not be in BREC's best interest.

Commissioner Gordon expressed her appreciation for Commissioner Evans' passion and his efforts to get the organization in order. She also extended her gratitude to BREC staff for their continued hard work and dedication, stating that their efforts are clearly visible and contribute greatly to BREC's success. She shared that she is not fully aware of all the internal factors that may have prompted the proposed contract extension but acknowledged the complexities involved. She emphasized that the Commission's priority is to select the right superintendent for BREC. She stated that she didn't think the search should not be halted solely because it may take longer than expected to find the ideal candidate.

Commissioner Stages stated that he understood both perspectives presented during the discussion. He inquired whether, if the motion on the floor were to pass, the title of the position would change.

In response to Commissioner Stages' question, Mr. Foster clarified that approving the motion would not change the title of the position, it would only extend the term of the current contract. He further stated that it would be problematic to approve a renewal clause extending beyond one year without a formal vote by the Commission.

Commissioner Stages asked whether, if the Interim Superintendent remains in the role for longer than six months, the agency will then need to evaluate the position based on the qualifications outlined for the superintendent role. He referenced the current job description, noting that it specifies certain qualifications that must be met for someone to serve as Superintendent.

In response to Commissioner Stages' question, Mr. Murphy Foster explained that the interim position is not considered an employee contract, and therefore does not fall under the same qualification requirements. Mr. Foster added that the Interim Superintendent was given the authority of the Superintendent upon her appointment to the role. However, he emphasized that she remains subject to review and oversight by the Commission.

Commissioner Polito spoke about the Commission's new composition noting that it was

difficult to predict the direction or leadership of the future Commission and that this uncertainty makes it challenging to attract top-tier superintendent candidates. Mr. Polito further stated that if the Commission chooses to extend the Interim Superintendent's contract without actively conducting a search, then the position is no longer truly interim in nature. In that case, he suggested the board should formally consider removing the interim title and recognizing the role as a permanent Superintendent position which would then need to be reclassified as a W-2 employee.

Commissioner Polito asked if any other commissioners had comments on the current motion before he proceeded to make a motion to defer the item.

Commissioner Pointer disagreed with Commissioner Polito's suggestion to remove the interim title because in his opinion, Interim Superintendent Simmons does not meet the specific qualifications for the permanent Superintendent's position.

Chairwoman Lewis responded by emphasizing that while the future composition of the board is uncertain, the bid for the Superintendent search firm had been publicly advertised for at least 30 days, and a selection must be made within 90 days. She stressed that failing to begin the search would ultimately prevent the Commission from finding a qualified candidate within the necessary timeframe. She also strongly opposed the suggestion to remove the interim title and replace it with Superintendent, and that doing so would be unfair to the public and undermine the transparent Superintendent selection process to which the board had previously committed. Chairwoman Lewis clarified that her position is not a personal critique of Ms. Simmons, but rather a concern about qualifications and process. She pointed out that the job description emphasizes the importance of BREC experience and specific knowledge of BREC business operations, which Ms. Simmons does not possess. While she acknowledged that Ms. Simmons previously worked with a consulting firm that provided executive leadership training to BREC under former Superintendent Wilson, she stated that Ms. Simmons lacks the park and recreation expertise outlined in the job description. Chairwoman Lewis concluded by questioning whether it would even be legally permissible to place someone in the superintendent role without the necessary qualifications, instead of conducting a formal search.

Mr. Foster stated that the Commission could not do that without undoing all of the previous votes and policies passed that specifically state the Commission will hold a search for the new superintendent.

Commissioner Evans commented that BREC is behind on their audits. He added that we may have our 2024 audit completed by the end of 2025. He expressed that he couldn't imagine a new highly qualified superintendent wanting to take on the role knowing that BREC is behind on audits. He went on to note he might prefer to have someone in the role with more experience with business operations and personnel than parks and recreation, but he was not on the Commission at the time the job description was discussed.

Chairwoman Lewis asked if we were discussing making changes to the job description. Commissioner Evans stated his support for that.

After Chairwoman Lewis determined there were no further comments, Commissioner Polito asked to make a motion to defer it until the next scheduled meeting.

Mr. Foster stated that since the Commission had rejected the previous motion to defer, the original motion must now be voted on.

To Commissioner Polito's question regarding a friendly amendment or a substitute motion to the current motion, Mr. Foster responded that the cleanest way to handle this would be to vote down the original motion and offer a new motion to defer.

General Counsel Aneatra Boykin asked Commissioner Evans if he could restate his motion. To which he responded that his motion was to approve as written, which is as follows:

Resolved, that the Commission hereby approves the amended agreement with Junbi, LLC, represented by Janet Simmons, where she shall serve in the capacity of Interim Superintendent for a term not to exceed 18 months with the option to renew for one year after termination of the initial term. At the conclusion of the extension, the agreement may be further extended for an additional two years upon the mutual consent of the parties. The total compensation for the six-month period shall not exceed \$99,800, to be paid in monthly installments of Sixteen Thousand Five Hundred Dollars and Thirty-three Cents (\$16,633.33), payable on the 15th of each month.

Chairwoman Collins Lewis called for a roll call vote. The results are as follows:

Yeas: 1 Mr. Evans

Nays: 9 Ms. Lewis, Ms. Gordon, Mr. Pointer, Mr. Rogers, Mr. Polito, Mr. Vicknair,
Mr. McDavid, Mr. Stages, Mr. Yates

Abstained: 0

Absent: 1 Mr. Temple III

The motion failed.

Commissioner Polito made a motion to defer Item 1a under Administrative Matters until the next scheduled meeting. He expanded his motion by recommending that board counsel, staff counsel, and an ad hoc committee of three Commissioners convene to review the matter and work toward an agreement in principle that reflects what Commissioner Evans originally intended. Commissioner Polito initially stated that he would select the ad hoc committee members, but Ms. Boykin interjected to clarify that committee appointments are the responsibility of the Chair. He acknowledged the correction and requested that the Chair select the members of the proposed ad hoc committee. He recommended that Commissioner Evans be included and, when asked for additional recommendations, indicated he would volunteer.

Chairwoman Lewis questioned the practicality of forming a committee without knowing which board members would remain seated in the coming weeks. Commissioner Polito responded that the Metro Council had requested an opinion from the Attorney General and that the timing of that response was uncertain. Chairwoman Lewis expressed that she was not comfortable forming an ad hoc committee at the current meeting.

Commissioner Polito reiterated his motion to defer Item 1a under Administrative Matters and to create an ad hoc committee of three Commissioners to meet with board and staff counsel. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Evans.

Commissioner Stages inquired whether the recommendations from the ad hoc committee would be reviewed by the Selection of Professionals Committee. Ms. Boykin confirmed that any formal agreement resulting from the ad hoc committee would be forwarded to the Selection of Professionals Committee for review.

Commissioner Rogers voiced support for deferring the item but emphasized that the makeup and scope of the ad hoc committee should be finalized and clearly shared with the full Commission before any vote on its recommendations.

To clarify, Chairwoman Lewis asked if the motion was specifically to defer Item 1a under Administrative Matters and to establish an ad hoc committee. Commissioner Polito confirmed. At this point, Mr. Foster recommended including Item 1b in the motion, but Commissioner Polito declined, stating he preferred to focus solely on Item 1a.

Chairwoman Lewis called for a roll call vote. The results are as follows:

Yeas: 8 Ms. Gordon, Mr. Rogers, Mr. Polito, Mr. Vicknair, Mr. Evans, Mr. McDavid,
 Mr. Stages, Mr. Yates

Nays: 2 Ms. Lewis, Ms. Pointer

Abstained: 0

Absent: 1 Mr. Temple III

The motion passed.

Chairwoman Lewis continued to Item b under Administrative Matters reading the following resolution:

Resolved, That the Commission hereby approves the amended agreement with Real World, LLC, represented by Maurice Velasquez, whereby Mr. Velasquez shall serve as the Interim Chief Operating Officer for a 6-month term with termination effective December 15, 2025. The total compensation shall not exceed Ninety-Nine Thousand Dollars (\$99,000.00), to be paid as follows: an initial Fourteen-Thousand-dollar invoice (\$14,000.00) for services rendered from June 16, 2025, through July 15, 2025, followed by five (5) monthly installments of Seventeen Thousand Dollars (\$17,000.00) each, payable on the 15th of each subsequent month.

Motion by Mr. Evans

Second by Mr. Yates

The Commission members had an extensive discussion covering several aspects of the contract including the proposed cost of the contract, indemnification language (which was removed), and pay range for the Chief Operating Officer (COO) position if employed by BREC.

Commissioner Gordon expressed her desire to defer the item for another month to allow adequate time to thoroughly review the new contract. She also noted that the original contract referenced 80% effort from Mr. Velasquez, which she no longer saw in the revised version. Mr. Foster stated that the language was no longer present in the current version. Ms. Boykin then confirmed that the clause had been intentionally removed. Commissioner Gordon thanked Ms. Boykin for the clarification and reiterated that she had not been given sufficient time to review the contract in detail and with full consideration.

Commissioner Polito referred to legal counsel Mr. Murphy Foster to share any legal concerns regarding the proposed contract.

Mr. Foster stated that he initially had concerns, but those were prior to receiving the newly amended contract, which he had only received a few hours before the meeting.

Commissioner Pointer inquired about the pay range for the Chief Operating Officer (COO) position.

Ms. Boykin responded with the following breakdown for a six-month term:

Minimum salary: \$63,210 / Mid-point salary: \$82,173.42 / Maximum salary: \$100,136.57

She added that this equates to the following annualized salary range:

Minimum: \$126,420.74 / Mid-point: \$164,346.83 / Maximum: \$200,273.14

Ms. Boykin stated that BREC's pay scale for the COO position ranges from approximately \$126,000 to \$200,000 annually.

Commissioner Pointer asked if \$200,000 represented the top of the pay scale. Ms. Boykin confirmed that it does for an annual salary.

Commissioner Evans interjected, stating that \$200,000 is not the ceiling for the total compensation of a statutory employee. He noted that when factoring in benefits and legacy costs, the true cost to BREC would be closer to \$260,000 annually.

Ms. Boykin clarified that the \$200,000 figure includes salary and benefits, and that benefits alone account for roughly 37% of the total compensation.

Chairwoman Lewis called for a roll call vote. The results are as follows:

Yeas: 6 Mr. Rogers, Mr. Polito, Mr. Vicknair, Mr. Evans, Mr. McDavid, Mr. Yates

Nays: 4 Ms. Lewis, Ms. Gordon, Mr. Pointer, Mr. Stages

Abstained: 0

Absent: 1 Temple, III

The motion passed.

Chairwoman Lewis announced that she was leaving the meeting to attend a previously scheduled engagement. Commissioner Gordon chaired the remainder of the meeting.

Vice Chair Gordon continues under Administrative Matters announcing that Item 1c has been removed from the agenda.

Vice Chair Gordon then reads Item d under Administrative Matters:

Resolved, That the Commission move to terminate the requirement that a Special meeting be held by the Commission on the second Tuesday of each month until December 31, 2025. In the alternative, the Commission may amend the schedule to change the date of the Special meetings to a time and date that is convenient for all Commissioners.

Motion by Evans

Seconds by Vicknair

Commissioner Evans offered his perspective on the scheduled special meetings. He stated that the second Tuesday of each month conflicts with other municipality meetings. He says that he is open to pushing the meetings to the second Thursdays of each month. Vice Chair Gordon opened the floor to discuss the new meeting date.

After discussion, Commissioner Evans made a motion to amend the scheduled special meetings from the second Tuesday to the second Thursday of each month until December 31, 2025. His motion was seconded by Commissioner Vicknair.

Yeas: 9

Nays: 0

The motion to amend the scheduled special meeting date to the second Thursday of each month until December 31, 2025, passed.

Interim Superintendent Simmons then provided a detailed report on the work she has done over the past six weeks since assuming office. She shared that the Attorney General's Office informed her that there are currently eight illegal contracts in effect and an update will be provided upon completion of his review.

She went on to describe an intense internal review of the Human Resources department, its policies, and the overall organizational culture. She highlighted the work of the Task Force reviewing compensation rates and stated that the review has uncovered significant disparities. To address broader concerns, an Employment Handbook Committee has been established to review and modernize employee policies. A new draft handbook is scheduled to be completed by December 30, 2025.

In terms of structural changes, she announced the removal of a redundant executive role, which will allow BREC to redirect resources toward system-wide priorities. The positions previously under that role in communications, marketing, and partnerships will be elevated to senior level roles, to promote a more cohesive agency-wide strategy. This reorganization is set to be fully implemented by August 15, 2025.

Ms. Simmons addressed the subject of contracts and agreements, stating that many lack standardized protocols, leading to a waste of resources and a breakdown in accountability. A full contract audit is underway, with a goal of centralizing and standardizing the process by September 15, 2025. There are numerous expired contracts that remain active and are currently under review. Some will be terminated while others will be renegotiated by October 1, 2025. Agreements with one-sided terms that require BREC to make substantial payments without receiving equitable contributions in return are being revised to ensure fair and balanced terms, with updates expected by September 30, 2025.

Ms. Simmons stated that an extensive audit of all departments is underway to assess appropriate staffing levels and identify unnecessary positions. She also addressed a longstanding issue of maintenance neglect across BREC facilities. Ms. Simmons visited the Airline Highway Park where she found the grass knee-high and reported that the poor condition of the site prevents the use of the ballfields. She referred to abandoned infrastructure and explained that she and the Task Force are currently developing a rubric system to assess the condition of every park in the system.

Ms. Simmons explained that many employees shared their experiences with her during off-site meetings. These employees reported unequal treatment and inconsistent disciplinary practices.

She noted a lack of collaboration between departments. However, she has seen improvement in interdepartmental cooperation following efforts to encourage teamwork and identify root issues. Additionally, she pointed out the existence of unauthorized external agreements which will be addressed with a centralized communications protocol that will be implemented and overseen by the Interim COO beginning August 1, 2025. This initiative is part of the Rapid Response Tracking System that was developed by IT roughly a year ago but has never been implemented.

Ms. Simmons discovered that there has been unauthorized recording of meetings. She stated that after holding in-depth conversations with several staff members in one of the departments, she later learned that those conversations had been both audio and video recorded without her knowledge. She has since directed IT to disable all audio recordings. While visual surveillance will remain in place, audio recordings of meetings, hallway conversations, and similar interactions have been terminated. She reported that at the time of her discovery, 1,500 cameras across the organization were recording on a 24-hour basis.

Ms. Simmons closed her report by stating that based on what she has discovered so far,

it is clear that BREC must do better. She assured the Commission that she had the credentials to operate the agency like a business, which is what she said was needed.

Commissioner Rogers responded to the report by stating that in his two years of service on the board, he had consistently faced resistance when requesting information. He revisited concerns he had raised while serving as Treasurer regarding a contract with Sustainability Partners, LLC which was determined to have violated state law and asked Ms. Simmons if this was one of the contracts currently under review. She confirmed that it was. He also commended her for addressing the issue of locked bathrooms, explaining that he had been trying to get answers from Park Operations about that for some time as well.

Commissioner Rogers then spoke directly to the employees of BREC, saying he sympathized with what they had experienced. He recalled his time as Treasurer, when the Director of Finance had been instructed not to speak with him, and staff members feared losing their jobs if they did. He apologized to the employees for the unfair treatment they had endured.

Ms. Simmons then asked if she could respond, and Commissioner Rogers gave her the floor. She shared that during her first internal town hall meeting, three employees approached her asking what would happen when she left. She encouraged them to speak to Commissioners, but they told her that they were not allowed to speak to Commissioners. Ms. Simmons told them that if an employee is a resident of the parish, they have the right to speak to Commissioners. Commissioner Rogers thanked her for standing up for the employees but clarified that the only employee the Commission directly oversees is the Superintendent, and while they cannot intervene in employee matters, they are responsible for adopting policies and ensuring that they are followed.

He then shifted to a recommendation about the surveillance systems. Rogers acknowledged Simmons' decision to disable all audio recordings and urged her to consult security professionals before making a blanket deactivation, especially considering that some parks are located in high-crime areas.

Commissioner Polito followed by thanking Ms. Simmons for stepping into the role and expressed his belief that her leadership will ultimately benefit East Baton Rouge Parish. He emphasized that she has the Commission's support moving forward.

Commissioner Vicknair thanked Ms. Simmons for her willingness to take on difficult situations. He stated that the employees are the most valuable resource to the organization and expressed confidence in the new systems and processes that are being put in place.

Commissioner McDavid voiced concerns about park maintenance and stated that if the parks are going to exist, they must be properly maintained. He also emphasized that employees who are committed and want to work should be rewarded. He also stated that the organization must strive to do the right thing in order to be the best it can be.

Commissioner Yates told Ms. Simmons that her presentation had demonstrated why the search for a long-term superintendent should follow a two-phased approach. He explained that the type of leadership she is providing is very specific, and the long-term superintendent search will require a different focus. What Ms. Simmons is doing, he said, is true change leadership, and her business experience is in line with what the organization needs at this time.

Commissioner Evans emphasized the importance of proactive engagement and

encouraged his fellow board members to connect with Ms. Simmons directly to better understand her background and qualifications. He stressed the need for the Commission and BREC leadership to practice better servant leadership. He expressed excitement about the opportunity to shift BREC's internal culture, explaining that a culture of fear suppresses potential. He said BREC is full of great people, and it is the Commission's job to make sure she is empowered to serve those employees so they can better serve the public.

Vice Chair Gordon recognized Mr. Johnson for the Finance Committee report. He reviewed the Budget Status Report and then read the following resolution:

Resolved That the Commission accept the unaudited monthly Budget Status Report for the month ending and fiscal year-to-date period ending June 30, 2025, as presented.

Motion by Mr. Rogers

Second by Mr. Polito

Yeas: 9

Nays: 0

The motion passed.

Mr. Johnson moved to the next item under Contracts and Bids reading the following resolution:

Resolved, That the Commission approve an amendment for an increase in costs of \$38,616.53 associated with the Commission-approved Sealed Bid No. 1842 (approved at the October 24, 2024, Commission meeting) - BREC Fuel Tank Stations II to the sole responsive bidder, Petro Plus Construction, Inc., for Items #1 through #12. The total bid amount, including these additional costs, is \$337,957.39.

Motion by Mr. Evans

Second by Mr. Polito

Commissioner Evans asked whether BREC had transitioned to using fuel cards. Mr. Johnson responded that fuel cards are currently used for company vehicles but not for lawn mowers and other gas-powered equipment. He explained that a new, internet-based program has been introduced to track fuel usage. This system aims to improve fuel inventory management and mitigate risks associated with manual tracking.

Commissioner Rogers acknowledged the value of the new system but shifted the conversation to a concern regarding contract modifications. He expressed frustration that when change orders are submitted, the Commission is not consistently provided with information detailing whether the changes are due to an omission on BREC's part or that of the vendor. He noted that the original contract had already increased by more than 10% and emphasized the need for greater transparency.

Mr. Johnson clarified that the contract in question was a sealed bid, and in this case, the adjustment was not technically a change order but rather a project modification. Commissioner Rogers followed up by asking whether the scope of work had not been properly defined by BREC or if the contractor had failed to fully assess the site prior to bidding. Mr. Johnson confirmed that a site visit was conducted and deferred to Dr. Lawson for additional details. Dr. Lawson explained that the original plan was to reduce project costs by installing dual pumps capable of dispensing both regular fuel and diesel. This modification, he clarified, was part of an intentional cost-saving measure incorporated during planning.

Vice Chair Gordon called the vote on the item. The results are as follows:

Yeas: 9

Nays: 0

The motion passed.

Commissioner Stages asked for clarification regarding the parameters listed under the Capital Outlay Purchases Over \$25,000 in the Information Items section. Mr. Johnson explained that, moving forward, capital outlay will also include acquisitions.

Commissioner Stages followed up by asking whether the \$25,000 amount was a limit or if purchases could exceed that amount. Mr. Johnson responded that purchases could potentially exceed \$25,000. However, if the item is not under a state contract and exceeds \$25,000 it could possibly be brought in advance of the purchase.

Commissioner McDavid then inquired whether BREC vehicles are leased or purchased. Mr. Johnson replied that the vehicles are currently purchased. After a brief discussion, Commissioner McDavid suggested that leasing may be a worthwhile option to consider, and Mr. Johnson agreed.

Vice Chair Gordon acknowledged Commissioner Polito to speak on the items under Selection of Professionals.

Commissioner Polito recommended that the Commission approve items a and b under Selection of Professionals.

Vice Chair Gordon read Item a under Selection of Professionals as follows:

Resolved, That the Commission approve the use of State Contract #4400022627 with Employ Bridge Holding Company (dba Westaff Temporary Staffing Services) to hire temporary staff as needed to fill vacant positions for various BREC departments at the contracted hourly rates for an additional one year term from August 1, 2025 through July 31, 2026, and an increase in funding of \$825,000; not to exceed a total contract amount of \$1,525,000.

Motion by Mr. Evans

Second by Mr. Yates

For clarity, Commissioner Evans explained that Item a is for staff augmentation. Mr. Johnson expounded that the initial contract ran through July 2025, and this is a renewal it for an additional year. This gives the Zoo and Recreation department the option to hire laborers.

Vice Chair Gordon called for the vote with the following results:

Yeas: 9

Nays: 0

The motion passed.

Vice Chair Gordon continued under Selection of Professionals reading the resolution of Item b as follows:

Resolved, That the Commission approves the use of EmployBridge Holding Company (dba Westaff Temporary Staffing Services) for the purpose of hiring a Call Center Supervisor, and a Call Center Agent, for a not-to-exceed (NTE) amount of \$75,000.

Motion by Evans

Second by Rogers

Commissioner Evans explained that the contract in question is to employ personnel to operate the Rapid Response call center.

Commissioner Polito noted that the reason BREC needs to contract with Westaff is due to time constraints, citing a clause in the HR manual that requires all new positions to be approved by the Commission before being filled. He requested an overview of this process so the Commission can consider revisiting it. While he acknowledged confidence in Westaff's ability to recruit, he pointed out that BREC already has an internal HR department capable of handling recruitment, which would be more cost-effective.

Ms. Boykin responded that an overview of the process could be provided. She emphasized that the decision to contract with Westaff was driven by two key factors: the urgency of the staffing need and the advantage of Westaff's existing recruitment database, which allows for immediate access to candidates. In contrast, BREC's internal HR team would require time to conduct a recruitment search from scratch.

Commissioner Polito responded by stating that BREC should focus on strengthening the internal recruitment database to reduce reliance on outside recruiters. He added that recruitment is a core function of HR and suggested incentivizing current staff to make referrals as an alternative solution.

Vice Chair Gordon called for the vote with the following results:

Yeas: 9

Nays: 0

The motion passed.

Commissioner Stages inquired about the status of standing committees and any existing vacancies. Vice Chair Gordon acknowledged that there are also vacant liaison positions that need to be filled. Ms. Boykin stated that appointments for both the standing committees and liaison roles will be added to the agenda for the next special meeting.

Reports Of Special Committees

None

Special Orders

None

Unfinished Business And General Orders

None

New Business

None

Adjournment

Vice Chair Gordon then called for a motion to adjourn. The motion was made by Commissioner Rogers and seconded by Commissioner Vicknair. With no objections, the meeting was adjourned at 6:00 p.m.

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

Clarice Gordon, Vice Chair

DRAFT