

**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
September 25, 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 September 25, 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 Kenneth Pointer 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; Dwayne Rogers, Mike Polito, Collis Temple III, Lon Vicknair, Wade Evans, David McDavid and Carl Stages. Commissioner Dustin Yates 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; Johanna Landreneau, Interim Chief Human Resources Officer; Rhonda Williams, Katrina Coots Ward, Tia Edwards, Jim Fleshman, Angela Harms, Steven Knight, RaHarold Lawson, Robyn Lott, and Ebony Allen. 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.

Adoption of Minutes

Resolved, That the reading of the minutes of the Special Recreation and Park Commission Meeting of September 11, 2025, be dispensed with, and that they be approved as written.

Motion by Mr. Evans

Second by Mr. Temple

There being no discussion, Chairwoman Lewis called for the vote with the following results:

Yeas: 10

Nays: 0

The motion was approved unanimously.

Consent Calendar

Resolved, That the Commission approve the Routine Personnel Transactions from August 20, 2025, to September 17, 2025.

Motion by Mr. Pointer

Second by Mr. Vicknair

There being no discussion, Chairwoman Lewis called for the vote with the following results:

Yeas: 10

Nays: 0

The motion was approved unanimously.

Presentations

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

Reports of Officers and Standing Committees

Chairwoman Lewis recognized Interim Superintendent Janet Simmons to present the Superintendent's Report.

Chairwoman Lewis recognized Interim Superintendent Simmons, who presented the August 2025 attendance report. Interim Superintendent Simmons also reported on her meetings and engagements with community members and organizations. She highlighted the success of the Rapid Response Call Center launched on September 9, noting that as of September 24, 376 tickets had been received and 318 of them resolved. She congratulated the BREC team that made the initiative possible. In response to Chairwoman Lewis' inquiry, Interim Superintendent Simmons confirmed that the tickets are being tracked and categorized.

Interim Superintendent Simmons further reported that she and several department heads attended the NRPA Conference in Orlando, Florida, and that they are compiling notes to prepare a report summarizing what was learned. She also attended the AZA Conference in Tampa, Florida, where she observed BREC Zoo Director Jim Fleshman present the Baton Rouge Zoo Master Plan and noted the honor of seeing him represent BREC on a national stage.

She recognized Ms. Dominique Barlow for representing BREC at the Louisiana Health Equity Partnership. She also noted that the recent Commissioner retreat was a success and that sparked the idea of hosting an Executive Team retreat for BREC staff in the near future.

Interim Superintendent Simmons highlighted the Farr Park Volunteer Clean-Up Day, reporting that all 44 stalls were cleaned and that the effort was well received by the patrons. She also recognized Ms. Dodi Falcon for the Volunteer Resource Fair, which saw double the number of attendees compared to previous years.

Interim Superintendent Simmons concluded her report with a Month at a Glance for October.

Chairwoman Lewis recognized Rhonda Williams, Director of Finance. Ms. Williams thanked Interim Superintendent Simmons for the opportunity to lead the department and highlighted the progress made toward the prompt completion of the 2024 Financial Audit.

Commissioner Evans asked whether the department could also begin working on 2025 financial audit items to have it completed on time. Ms. Williams responded that the department is working toward that goal, noting that she is developing templates to help make it possible. She further reported that the department is working with internal managers on the 2026 budget, reviewing departmental needs in comparison to the previous year, and that she will be meeting with Interim Superintendent Simmons on the progress. Ms. Williams noted that the budget currently appears flat, with a possible decrease of one million dollars compared to the previous year.

Commissioner Stages asked for clarification as to whether revenue would be flat next year. Ms. Williams stated that it appeared to be the same overall, with the primary difference being that Planning and Engineering had anticipated \$9,000,000 in grants the previous year, while this year \$5,000,000 is anticipated. Commissioner Stages further asked whether the reduction of millages by \$5,000,000, as previously voted on by the Commission, had been accounted for. Ms.

Williams stated that she would be speaking with Interim Superintendent Simmons regarding that matter.

Commissioner Stages suggested that a budget workshop would be helpful for the Commission. Chairwoman Lewis agreed, stating that one could be arranged in coordination with Ms. Williams. Commissioner Evans asked when the budget is adopted. Chairwoman Lewis referred the question to Ms. Williams, who stated that it is adopted in November. Ms. Williams added that she would like to provide the Commission with a draft budget at the next meeting.

Commissioner Evans stated that if a draft could be produced, then a budget workshop could be held during the second week of October. Chairwoman Lewis suggested conducting a scheduling poll to confirm availability and ensure the Finance Department could be present.

Ms. Aneatra Boykin clarified that the budget is adopted in December. Chairwoman Lewis confirmed with Commissioner Evans that he heard the clarification.

Commissioner Rogers congratulated Ms. Williams on her leadership of the Finance Department, stating that he had no doubt in her ability to achieve the department's goals given their prior experience working together. He further noted that in previous years, the Commission had difficulty finalizing the budget on time, emphasizing that the delays were not the fault of BREC staff but rather the recommendations from the Commission. He agreed that a budget workshop would help to ensure the budget is completed on schedule.

Chairwoman Lewis then asked if there were any further questions. Commissioner Stages inquired about Capital Outlay Purchases over \$25,000 regarding the purchase of 20 bushhog mowers. Ms. Williams referred the matter to Dr. RaHarold Lawson, Director of Park Operations, who explained that the mowers were purchased for large-area mowing. Commissioner Stages asked about the related agenda item to approve additional mowing equipment. Dr. Lawson clarified that the agenda item pertained to mowing parts, not additional equipment.

Commissioner Stages also asked about a Recreation Consultant contract under \$50,000. Ms. Williams referred the matter to Ms. Katrina Coots-Ward, Director of Recreation, who stated that she was unaware of the contract and would need to review the matter further before responding.

Chairwoman Lewis concluded by congratulating Ms. Williams on the opportunity to lead once again.

Chairwoman Lewis 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 August 31,2025.

Motion by Mr. Temple

Second by Mr. Rogers

There being no discussion, Chairwoman Lewis called for the vote with the following results:

Yeas: 10

Nays: 0

The motion was approved unanimously

Chairwoman Lewis stated that the next item was under Planning and Park Resources, noting that there was a request to defer the item. She then read the following resolution:

Resolved, That the Commission declare that an approximate 6-acre portion of Industriplex Park is obsolete and not needed for public purposes, and authorized the Superintendent to begin the process of selling the property at a minimum of its appraised value of \$975,000, pending all legal review. The proceeds will be used to reinvest in parks and recreation facility improvements in the same service area. Authorize the superintendent to execute the necessary documents.

Motion to defer by Mr. Stages

Second by Mr. Evans

There being no discussion, Chairwoman Lewis called for the vote with the following results:

Yeas: 10

Nays: 0

The motion to defer until next regular meeting was approved unanimously.

Chairwoman Lewis stated that the next item was Selection of Professionals and read the following resolution:

Resolved, That the Commission approve the selection of the top four candidates for RFP No. 233, Baton Rouge Sewer and Drain Services, Baton Rouge Plumbing, LLC, Louis Mechanical Contractors, and Central Plumbing, as vendors to provide on-call plumbing services on an as-needed basis, parish-wide across BREC facilities and properties, for a not-to-exceed amount of \$250,000.00.

Motion by Mr. Evans

Second by Mr. Temple

There being no discussion, Chairwoman Lewis called for the vote with the following results:

Yeas: 10

Nays: 0

The motion was approved unanimously.

Reports of Special Committees

None

Special Orders

None

Unfinished Business and General Orders

Chairwoman Lewis read the following resolution:

Resolved, That the Commission approve the Cooperative Endeavor Agreement (CEA) between BREC and the Civic Collaborative Foundation, including BREC's funding commitment, the Foundation's responsibilities, and the anticipated benefits of the Master Plan for City-Brooks Park and the University Lakes system.

Chairwoman Lewis stated that there were several comment cards and then acknowledged Christina Melton, Executive Director of Knock Knock Children's Museum, who provided public comment expressing her interest in being an active participant if the CEA were approved. Chairwoman Lewis then recognized Edmund Giering, General Counsel for the Baton Rouge Area Foundation (BRAAF) and officer of the Civic Collaborative Foundation, who referenced the memo shared with the Commission regarding the CEA and offered to answer questions.

Chairwoman Lewis recognized the following members of the public whose comments in opposition to the CEA: Peter Davis, member of Friends of City Park of Baton Rouge; R. Bryan McDaniel, member of Friends of City Park of Baton Rouge; Linton Naquin, longtime Baton Rouge

resident; and Coleman Brown, Baton Rouge resident. Chairwoman Lewis also noted that two online comments in opposition were received from Lilly Gallagher and Phillip Lillard.

Commissioner Evans provided a comment in support of developing a plan to enhance City Park but raised concerns regarding the CEA's terms. He asked which parties were committed to the plan and whether the CEA was available for review. In discussion, Commissioner Evans noted that certain terms, including "reasonable updates," were too subjective and asked for clarification on BREC's expected commercial efforts under Section 5. He also asked whether the BRAF would earn fees as project manager. Mr. Giering responded that they would not and noted the CEA was still under negotiation. Commissioner Evans concluded that he wanted to ensure BREC did not relinquish control.

Commissioner Rogers raised a point of order to ask if there was a motion on the floor. A motion to approve the CEA was made by Commissioner Polito and seconded by Commissioner Evans. Chairwoman Lewis noted, upon advice of counsel, that since the contract remained under negotiation, the CEA should not be approved as currently written. Commissioner Polito withdrew his motion, and Commissioner Evans withdrew his second. Commissioner Polito then moved to give the Chair authority to sign the CEA with minor changes in the Commission's best interest, but the motion failed for lack of a second. Commissioner Polito then moved to place the item on the floor for discussion, seconded by Commissioner Evans.

Commissioner Temple asked about the timeframe and level of detail expected in adjustments to the CEA. Mr. Giering indicated that once the draft CEA is approved by BREC, the agreement would be ready. Commissioner Gordon stated that her research indicated the Civic Collaborative Foundation was essentially a shell company for the Baton Rouge Area Foundation. Mr. Giering clarified that Civic Collaborative functions as a supporting organization to work with federal, state, and local partners to streamline financial documentation. Commissioner Gordon stated she could only locate a 2023 audit and raised concerns that the Civic Collaborative's mission was not aligned with BREC's. Mr. Giering responded that the Foundation had updated its mission to align with community partners. Commissioner Gordon further expressed concern that several entities, such as LSU, were not included in the CEA, which weakened its collaborative nature.

Commissioner Rogers stated that conflicting accounts regarding who initiated meetings had raised concerns, noting that an email suggested BREC initiated the discussions, while staff denied this. He added that in the plan adopted last year, BRAF committed to financially supporting a master plan for the Lakes System, but the current CEA places the bulk of financial responsibility on BREC. Mr. Giering clarified that the prior commitment referred to a study conducted last year, but he could not speak to all specifics. Commissioner Rogers stated he could not support the CEA at this time.

Commissioner Vicknair noted that earlier in the week he had asked Chris Meyer (President and CEO of BRAF) for a copy of the CEA with specific language, which he had not yet received, and therefore he could not make a decision at this time.

Chairwoman Lewis then made a motion to deny the CEA due to the confusion surrounding the agreement. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Gordon. Commissioner Evans requested the floor be opened for public comment on the new motion.

Chairwoman Lewis acknowledged the following public comments: R. Bryan McDaniel, who expressed appreciation for the Commission's attention to the details of the CEA; Linton

Naquin, who challenged Commissioner Evans' perspective on change; and Jackie Hoffman, who expressed her opposition to Commissioner Evans' earlier comments about those opposing changes to City Park. Commissioner Evans clarified his position, stating that his responsibility as a Commissioner is to ensure residents receive the best recreational experience, and that his support for enhancing City Park is grounded in that duty rather than historical considerations.

Commissioner Polito stated that he felt the Commission was "putting the cart before the horse" and emphasized the importance of community involvement in the master planning process. Addressing the audience, he stated that he wanted residents to have input on what they envision for City Park. He further requested that Mr. Giering and Ms. Boykin provide an updated draft of the CEA prior to the Special Commission Meeting.

Murphy Foster, legal counsel, then clarified the status of the current motion and outlined the available options for moving forward.

Mr. Polito made a substitute motion to defer the CEA adding to the motion that Interim Superintendent Simmons and Ms. Boykin produce a copy of the draft by the next week. Mr. Evans seconded the motion.

Ms. Lewis called for a roll call vote with the following results:

Yeas: 5 Mr. Rogers, Mr. Polito, Mr. Vicknair, Mr. Evans, Mr. McDavid

Nays: 5 Ms. Lewis, Ms. Gordon, Mr. Pointer, Mr. Temple, Mr. Stages

Abstain: 0

Absent: 1 Mr. Yates

The motion failed.

Chairwoman Lewis referred to Mr. Foster for guidance on the next steps following the failed motion. Commissioner Rogers then called for a point of order, seeking clarification on whether a vote to deny the CEA would prevent an updated agreement from being produced. Mr. Foster confirmed that it would not.

Ms. Lewis called for a roll call vote on the initial motion to deny the CEA with the following results:

Ms. Lewis called for a roll call vote with the following results:

Yeas: 9 Ms. Lewis, Ms. Gordon, Mr. Pointer, Mr. Rogers, Mr. Temple, Mr. Vicknair,
Mr. Evans, Mr. McDavid, Mr. Stages

Nays: 1 Mr. Polito

Abstain: 0

Absent: 1 Mr. Yates

The motion passed.

New Business

Chairwoman Lewis read the following resolution under New Business:

Resolved, That the Commission hereby certifies that the information provided in the Louisiana Audit Questionnaire for the 2023 audit has been reviewed and is, to the best of its knowledge and belief, true and accurate.

Motion by Mr. Stages

Second by Ms. Gordon

There being no discussion, Chairwoman Lewis called for the vote with the following results:

Yeas: 9

Nays: 0

The motion was approved unanimously.

Commissioner Evans left the meeting prior to the vote on the resolution.

Commissioner Polito interjected to add that the terms of the Commissioners are incorrect. He added that since the current Commissioners no longer have terms, the terms need to be removed.

Ms. Boykin clarified the questionnaire was for the 2024 audit and that there was an issue with the term dates and that it would be appropriate to have the terms revised.

After discussion with Mr. Foster and Ms. Boykin and due to the need to make corrections, Chairwoman Lewis chose to reconsider the previously approved item without objection.

Mr. Polito made a motion to defer the questionnaire.

Second by Mr. Vicknair

There being no discussion, Chairwoman Lewis called for the vote with the following results:

Yeas: 9

Nays: 0

The motion to defer was approved unanimously.

Ms. Lewis continued under New Business reading the following resolutions:

Resolved, That the Commission approve the increase of Purchase Order No. 20250128 with Gautreaux's Lawn Equipment from \$50,000.00 to a not-to-exceed amount of \$100,000.00 to ensure the ability to purchase parts and equipment, through December 31, 2025.

Motion by Mr. Pointer

Second by Mr. Vicknair

There being no discussion, Chairwoman Lewis called for the vote with the following results:

Yeas: 9

Nays: 0

The motion was approved unanimously.

Resolved, That the Commission approve the increase of Purchase Order No. 20250378 with United Rentals from \$50,000.00 to a not-to-exceed amount of \$250,000.00 to meet the growing demand for rental equipment, including comfort stations, portable air conditioning units, light towers for BREC facilities, reach lift trucks for forestry projects, as well as emergency repairs and facility upgrades, through December 31, 2025.

Motion by Mr. Pointer

Second by Mr. Rogers

There being no discussion, Chairwoman Lewis called for the vote with the following results:

Yeas: 9

Nays: 0

The motion was approved unanimously.

Resolved, That the Commission approve the increase of Purchase Order No. 20250232 with Trane A/C Supply from \$47,000.00 to a not-to-exceed amount of \$97,000.00 to accommodate increased demand for HVAC repairs, preventative maintenance, and system

upgrades across multiple sites, with the total not-to-exceed \$97,000.00 through December 31, 2025.

Motion by Mr. Rogers

Second by Mr. Temple

There being no discussion, Chairwoman Lewis called for the vote with the following results:

Yeas: 9

Nays: 0

The motion was approved unanimously.

Resolved, That the Commission approve Change Order No. 3 to increase Purchase Order No. 20250240-002 with Grainger Supply from \$46,000.00 to a not-to-exceed amount of \$65,000.00 to ensure uninterrupted access to necessary supplies, including safety equipment, facility repair items, and seasonal inventory replenishment needed to maintain service expectations, through December 31, 2025.

Motion by Ms. Gordon

Second by Mr. Temple

There being no discussion, Chairwoman Lewis called for the vote with the following results:

Yeas: 9

Nays: 0

The motion was approved unanimously.

Resolved, That the Commission approve Amendment No. 1 to increase Contract No. 2024000069 with Wallace Collins from \$50,000.00 to a not-to-exceed amount of \$87,000.00 for general contracting services, including pressure washing of park structures, roofing repairs and maintenance, interior and exterior painting, line striping for parking lots and recreational areas, and boardwalk and decking repairs for ongoing and upcoming projects across BREC facilities, through December 31, 2025.

Motion by Ms. Gordon

Second by Mr. Pointer

There being no discussion, Chairwoman Lewis called for the vote with the following results:

Yeas: 9

Nays: 0

The motion was approved unanimously.

Resolved, That the Commission approve Change Order No. 2 to increase Purchase Order No. 20250169-001 with Petit-Johnstone A/C Supply from \$50,000.00 to a not-to-exceed amount of \$100,000.00 to ensure continued procurement of air conditioning parts and materials necessary for the maintenance and repair of HVAC systems across all BREC facilities, through December 31, 2025.

Motion by Mr. McDavid

Second by Mr. Vicknair

There being no discussion, Chairwoman Lewis called for the vote with the following results:

Yeas: 9

Nays: 0

The motion was approved unanimously.

Resolved, That the Commission discontinue the special meetings scheduled on the

second Thursday of each month at 5:00 PM, from May through December 2025, where meetings were scheduled "in order to support effective communication, oversight, and deliberation during the leadership transition, including candidate interviews for the Superintendent position and engagement with the search firm."

Motion by Mr. Pointer

Second by Mr. Temple

Commissioner Polito stated that he believed the special meetings needed to continue.

Ms. Lewis called for a roll call vote with the following results:

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

Nays: 5 Mr. Rogers, Mr. Polito, Mr. Temple, Mr. Vicknair, Mr. McDavid

Abstain: 0

Absent: 2 Mr. Yates, Mr. Evans

The motion failed.

Adjournment

Chairwoman Lewis called for a motion to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner Vicknair made a motion, Commissioner Pointer seconded, and the meeting was adjourned at 6:34 p.m. without objection.

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

Donna Collins Lewis, Chairwoman