

**RECREATION AND PARK COMMISSION
FOR THE PARISH OF EAST BATON ROUGE**
Special Meeting – 5:00 p.m.
BREC Administration Building
6201 Florida Boulevard
Baton Rouge, Louisiana
Commission Minutes
October 9, 2025

Call to Order

A special meeting of the Recreation and Park Commission for the Parish of East Baton Rouge (BREC) was held at BREC's Administrative Offices on October 9, 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 Mike Polito led the Pledge of Allegiance. Roll was taken and a quorum of Commissioners was present, including Donna CollinsLewis, Chair; Clarice Gordon, Vice Chair; Kenneth Pointer, Treasurer; Mike Polito, Collis Temple, III, Dwayne Rogers, Lon Vicknair, Wade Evans, David McDavid, Carl Stages and Dustin Yates. Staff members present were Janet Simmons, Interim Superintendent; Reed Richard, Assistant Superintendent of System Planning; Aneatra Boykin, Chief Administrative Officer; Maurice Velasquez, Interim Chief Operating Officer; Johanna Landreneau, Interim Chief Human Resource Officer; Corey Luttrell, Robyn Lott, Jim Fleshman, Angela Harms, RaHarold Lawson, Mike Raby, Steven Knight, Tia Edwards 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 Regular Recreation and Park Commission Meeting of August 28, 2025, and Regular Meeting of September 25, 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: 11

Nays: 0

The motion was approved unanimously.

Commissioner Polito made the motion to move item IX.A, under Unfinished Business and General Orders, to be addressed prior to the Reports of Officers and Standing Advisory Committees. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Evans.

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

Yeas: 11

Nays: 0

The motion was unanimously approved.

Unfinished Business and General Orders

Chairwoman Lewis read the following resolution:

Resolved, That the Commission approve the newly proposed draft of the BREC and Civic Collaborative Foundation agreement.

Motion by Mr. Polito

Second by Mr. Evans

Chairwoman Lewis requested clarification from legal counsel, Murphy Foster, regarding how to proceed.

Mr. Foster stated that since there was a motion and a second on the agenda item, public comment must be held prior to Commission discussion.

Chairwoman Lewis then opened the floor for public comment, beginning with comments received by email.

The following individuals expressed opposition to the cooperative endeavor agreement (CEA) via email:

Myrtis Fontenot, Don Zito, Paulette Hargroder, Blake Panepinto, Vincent Fornais, Marques Leger, Phillip Lillard, Bill Huey, Kyle Landrem, Matthew Melsheimer, Jay Lastrapes, Liz Centanni, Barry Landry, John Johnson, III, Jordan Stage, Stephanie Potts, Bill & Jill Jones, and Kim Faulk.

Also via email, Dan Boudreaux proposed that the CEA be deferred to the next meeting.

Chairwoman Lewis then announced the members of the audience who submitted public comments but did not wish to speak, all of which were in opposition to the CEA: Lynn Simon, Larry Jonas, Ji Ji Jonas, and Debi O'Neal.

Chairwoman Lewis then acknowledged the members of the audience who wished to speak, noting that each speaker would be allotted two minutes.

Peter Davis, representing Friends of City Park, expressed opposition to the CEA. Coleman Brown, representing East Baton Rouge Parish Chamber (Small Business), expressed opposition to the CEA.

Brian D. McDaniel expressed opposition to the CEA.

Gi Gi Grimes requested clarification about the conservancy and ultimately expressed opposition to the CEA.

Commissioner Polito called a point of order, requesting that Chairwoman Lewis advise speakers to limit comments to the master plan, noting that it does not involve a conservancy.

Stan Spring, representing Friends of City Park, expressed opposition to the CEA.

Susan E. Dixon expressed opposition to the CEA.

Brian Dubreul expressed opposition to the CEA.

Christina Melton, representing Knock Knock Children's Museum, stated that regardless of

the outcome, as an integral part of City-Brooks Park, the Museum should be informed of and included in any future planning decisions.

Chairwoman Lewis then opened the floor for discussion by the Commissioners.

Commissioner Polito asked Chairwoman Lewis for permission to read a comment he had received. Chairwoman Lewis granted the request.

Commissioner Polito then read a message from Rob Stewart, Head of the LSU Foundation, expressing support for the CEA.

Commissioner Evans commented that the CEA does not assign any property or establish a future operation that BREC is bound to. He emphasized that it is a master plan for the entire City-Brooks Park area. He further stated that this is an opportunity to come together to create something great for the future, noting that the \$300,000 investment is small compared to what BREC has spent in the past on plans that were never implemented.

Commissioner Polito asked Reed Richard, Assistant Superintendent of System Planning, if he was part of the decision to hire Sasaki for the creation of the master plan. Mr. Richard confirmed that he was.

Commissioner Polito then inquired about Mr. Richard's edits to the CEA and his goals in making those changes. Mr. Richard explained that the edits stemmed from concerns about maintaining the lakes. He noted that the original master plan from 2016 stated that Baton Rouge Area Foundation (BRAAF) would be creating a conservancy, and in Fall 2024, partners were approached regarding how to sustain and maintain the lakes after completion. At that time, there was no discussion about the park, only the lakes project. He added that the conversation about a master plan was separate, as BREC plans to construct a contemporary arts center and improve connectivity within City Park.

Commissioner Polito asked Mr. Richard if he was stating that there is a need for a master plan to interconnect the area. Mr. Richard confirmed that he was. Commissioner Polito then responded that his edits to the CEA did not appear to address those concerns and again asked Mr. Richard to clarify his goal in making the edits. Mr. Richard stated that his primary goal was to ensure that management control remained with BREC. Commissioner Polito asked Mr. Richard if, based on his edits, he was attempting to restrict the master planner. Mr. Richard responded no.

Commissioner Gordon asked Mr. Richard if, at any point in BREC's history, another non-profit organization had been hired to manage a master plan without BREC maintaining total control. Mr. Richard responded no.

Commissioner Gordon then read a personally drafted statement expressing her commitment to working collaboratively on behalf of BREC to meet the community's needs. She stated that the current CEA does not reflect a truly collaborative approach.

Commissioner Rogers expressed concern regarding the urgency to execute the CEA. Commissioner Rogers then asked Mr. Richard if a master plan for City-Brooks Park already exists. Mr. Richard responded no, noting that the previous plan had been completed and was no longer active.

Commissioner Vicknair stated that the community's concern was that the park would be taken over and BREC would relinquish control. He clarified that the CEA contains no such language. He further explained that the concerns expressed were related to improvements, design updates, and changes to the park, and confirmed that the purpose of the CEA is to accomplish those goals.

Commissioner Yates commented on stakeholder involvement in the master plan process. He stated that there is nothing in the CEA that prohibits groups from participating in the development of the master plan. He emphasized that this is not a unilateral takeover and that BREC is not relinquishing control.

Commissioner Pointer asked Mr. Foster if, in his opinion, entering into this agreement with BRAF would be good business for BREC.

Mr. Foster responded that the decision ultimately rests with the Commission, not with him. He added that the Commission should first clarify which CEA they are voting on, as the version submitted by BRAF and the version edited by Mr. Richard are two different agreements. He further explained that BREC is not obligated to implement the plan once developed; the vote would simply authorize BRAF to produce a plan on behalf of BREC.

Commissioner Yates then asked Mr. Foster whether the stakeholders listed in the CEA constitute an exhaustive list. Mr. Foster confirmed that it is an exhaustive list and noted that, while BREC is a participant, the agreement gives BRAF full authority to make final decisions and does not require BRAF to consider input from others.

Commissioner Stages stated that a potential compromise would be for BREC to fund the entire study and provide it to the community as a basis for moving forward. He then expressed his intent to make a substitute motion.

Commissioner Temple, III asked the public in attendance if their opinions would change, knowing that golf would be a priority.

Susan Dixon approached the podium and stated that she would remain in opposition. Brian Dubreul also expressed continued opposition.

Commissioner Temple, III added that he had been presented with reimagined designs for golf and noted that he is hearing from the community that they do not want those changes.

Commissioner Polito raised a point of order regarding whether the agenda item under discussion was Mr. Richard's edited version of the CEA.

Aneatra Boykin, Chief Administrative Officer, confirmed that two versions of the CEA were attached to the agenda and the Commission would need to designate which version they are approving.

Commissioner Polito then clarified his motion: he intended to move forward with the unedited version of the CEA submitted by BRAF the previous week. He proposed removing the words "and Conservancy Model" from the Preamble and adding to Article 3.1 that BREC would have input into the methods and procedures used to collect input from the community. Commissioner Evans seconded the revisions to the motion.

Commissioner Rogers raised a point of order, asking whether Commissioner Polito's clarification nullified his original motion or was simply a clarification. He added that Commissioner Stages had attempted to make a substitute motion at the appropriate time but had not been able to, and asked which motion should be addressed first.

Mr. Foster provided guidance, stating that Commissioner Polito's clarification of his motion, after learning that multiple versions of the CEA with differing language exist, was proper.

Chairwoman Lewis asked for clarification of what Commissioner Polito's change was meant to do. Commissioner Polito explained that the conservancy model language was causing confusion and should be removed, as establishing a conservancy is not the goal.

Chairwoman Lewis asked whether the removal of the conservancy language applied throughout the agreement or only in the Preamble. Commissioner Polito clarified that his proposal applied only to the Preamble.

Ms. Boykin approached the podium to read Commissioner Polito's clarified motion, referencing the original CEA submitted by BRAF, page one, last paragraph.

Chairwoman Lewis asked why the language was being removed from one place and not elsewhere in the document.

Commissioner Polito responded that he wasn't asked to. He further stated that the version of the CEA he had did not contain the same language.

Chairwoman Lewis noted that he was reading a version of the CEA that was not attached to the agenda.

Commissioner Evans asked how it was possible to have two CEAs on the agenda.

Ms. Boykin explained that BRAF submitted two CEAs on Friday, and on Monday, Mr. Richard revised the CEA, which was then sent to the Commission the same day.

Commissioner Evans questioned why Mr. Richard was making edits to the CEA if he was not BREC's Partnerships and Development Manager.

Ms. Boykin explained that Mr. Richard is an expert in master planning and has always been involved in that area. She deferred to Mr. Richard, who confirmed that statement and added that he had been part of the initial conversations with BRAF in April 2024.

Commissioner Evans asked whether the original CEA submitted by BRAF designated them as the manager of the master plan and whether Mr. Richard would have the time to manage it himself.

Mr. Richard stated that he would not have time to manage it, which is why BREC would hire a consultant.

Commissioner Evans asked if paying Sasaki \$600,000 would allow BREC to maintain control of the master plan. Mr. Richard clarified that the payment would be for developing a master plan specifically for City Park, not the entire area.

Commissioner Gordon asked Mr. Richard the cost of the master plan. Mr. Richard explained that it was approximately \$400,000.

Chairwoman Lewis asked Ms. Boykin to read the motion on the floor.

Ms. Boykin stated that the motion provides, that wherever the term “conservancy” appears, it would be deleted from the agreement, and that Article 3.1 would be amended to include language providing for input from the community.

Commissioner Polito asked how many times the term “conservancy” appeared in the agreement.

Ms. Boykin then identified and notated each instance of the term.

Commissioner Polito noted that the term “conservancy” does not appear in the Friday document, but that he received an additional document with edits on Tuesday. He reiterated his motion to accept the BRAF agreement as submitted, with the inclusion of language providing input from the community.

Some confusion arose among the Commissioners regarding whether the CEA received on Friday, October 3rd, could be voted on, since it was not the version listed on the agenda.

Mr. Foster provided guidance, stating that the Commission may make edits during the meeting as long as they are germane to the item under consideration.

Commissioner Rogers confirmed that he also received the CEA on Friday, October 3rd, which did not include the conservancy language.

Commissioner Polito clarified that he is open to moving forward with the BRAF agreement that is on the agenda, rather than the Friday version, while retaining the previously proposed language regarding community input. He further emphasized that he does not want anyone to be excluded from the process.

For clarification, Ms. Boykin read Commissioner Polito’s clarified motion:

Resolved, That the Commission accept the version of the BRAF agreement included in the agenda packet, to remove the conservancy model language throughout the agreement and to include language in Article 3.1 that allows for community input that BREC directs.

Motion by Mr. Polito

Second by Mr. Evans

Mr. Foster asked if there were any questions regarding the motion currently on the floor.

Commissioner Stages made a substitute motion to reject the draft of the CEA before the Commission and that is proposed to be amended and to authorize BREC staff to hire Sasaki to conduct a master plan and do the study for City-Brooks Park and the Lakes District.

Second by Ms. Gordon

Chairwoman Lewis opened the floor for discussion on the substitute motion.

Commissioner Gordon commented that the substitute motion would address the issue of involving an intermediary, which has not been done before at BREC. She stated that BRAF is not

collaborative and emphasized that BREC is more effective working collaboratively on its own. She further added that she is inviting the City-Parish and LSU to partner with BREC in this collaborative effort.

Chairwoman called for a roll call vote on the substitute motion. The results are as follows:
Yeas: 7 Ms. Lewis, Ms. Gordon, Mr. Pointer, Mr. Rogers, Mr. Temple, Mr. McDavid,
 Mr. Stages
Nays: 4 Mr. Polito, Mr. Vicknair, Mr. Evans, Mr. Yates
Absent: 0
The substitute motion passed.

Commissioner Wade Evans left the meeting.

Reports of Officers and Standing Committees

Chairwoman Lewis acknowledged Interim Janet Simmons for the Superintendent's Report.

Commissioner Dustin Yates left the meeting.

Interim Superintendent Janet Simmons began her report by presenting the Obsolete Land List for the Commission to review and provide guidance on next steps.

Commissioner Stages asked what the process was on deciding how to dispose of the properties.

Interim Superintendent Simmons stated that she was unsure of the exact process but assumed the Commission would need to review each property to determine next steps. She noted that reducing the amount of property owned by BREC was a task identified in the IYP3 master plan.

Chairwoman Lewis inquired about Item 20 on the Obsolete Land List, asking if it was the property across the street from the church. Interim Superintendent Simmons confirmed that it was.

Commissioner Stages asked if Mr. Richard could provide detailed steps for the process. Mr. Richard explained that once the Commission approves the list, properties would either be returned to the city or school board. If a property is to be sold, BREC would introduce an ordinance, hold a public hearing at the following regular meeting to hear any opposition, and then, with Commission approval, proceed with advertising and receiving bids for the properties.

Commissioner David McDavid left the meeting.

Chairwoman asked if appraisals are done on the properties. Mr. Richard confirmed that they are and that BREC cannot sell them for less than what they are worth.

Chairwoman Lewis asked if there were any additional questions.

Commissioner Stages asked what the motion would be for this item.

Chairwoman Lewis read the following resolution:

Resolved, That the Commission review the proposed Obsolete Land List, Repurposed

Rec Center List, and Capital Project List presented by BREC staff.

Commissioner Rogers asked whether the Commission was adopting each of these lists.

Interim Superintendent Simmons clarified that the Commission was only reviewing the Obsolete Land List. She explained that multiple lists were submitted for review, but the process had not been completed. She added that AI software tracking foot traffic at BREC parks is being used to determine which parks may need to be added to the Obsolete Land List in the future.

Commissioner Stages noted an error on the agenda, stating that his resolution read: Resolved, That the Commission approve the proposed Obsolete Land List, Repurposed Rec Center List, and Capital Project List presented by BREC staff.

It was confirmed during the meeting that the resolution was an erroneous mistake and that no vote was taking place on the Obsolete Land List.

Adjournment

Commissioner Polito made a motion to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Gordon. Chairwoman Lewis adjourned the meeting at approximately 6:50 p.m. without objection.

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

Donna Collins Lewis, Chairwoman

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