

**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  
April 23, 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 April 23, 2026. The meeting was called to order at 5:00 p.m. by Chairman Michael Polito. Commissioner Wade Evans offered the invocation and Commissioner Murelle Harrison 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; Marshall Ortego; Andre Prejean, designee for Commissioner David McDavid; and Christopher Toombs, designee for Commissioner Lon Vicknair. Commissioners Collis Temple III and Dustin Yates were absent. Commissioner Lon Vicknair arrived at 5:48 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, Mike Raby, Robyn Lott, Katrina Coots-Ward, Dina Duplantis, and Brendan Nestor. 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 March 26, 2026, and the Special Commission Meeting of April 9, 2026 be dispensed with, and that they be approved as written.

Motion by Mr. Stages

Second by Dr. Harrison

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

Yeas: 7

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 March 10, 2026 through April 7, 2026.

Motion by Dr. Harrison

Second by Mr. Evans

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

Yeas: 7

Nays: 0

The motion was approved unanimously.

## **Presentations**

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

## **Reports of Officers and Standing Committees**

Interim Superintendent Simmons presented the March 2026 attendance report and provided updates on community engagement meetings, employee service award recipients, Liberty Lagoon opening, the BREC Athletic Council, summer camp registration, community concerns, internal Town Hall meeting to be held on April 30, 2026, and the City-Brooks Park master planning update.

Ms. Simmons recognized Dr. Evante Topp, BREC Foundation Executive Director, who provided an update on Foundation plans to increase outreach and fundraising opportunities.

Ms. Simmons also recognized Mr. Steven Knight, Chief Information Officer, who provided updates on BREC's Project Management Platform, which would allow for departments to track real-time activities on all projects.

Commissioner Evans applauded the efforts of the Information Systems Department in facilitating the process which would allow BREC to closely track costs and foster transparency and accountability to taxpayers. Mr. Knight thanked BREC staff for their openness and willingness to adopt the software and stated that he was proud to work alongside them. Commissioner Evans expressed similar sentiments, stating that he had the pleasure to work with some of the department directors and he was happy to see the buy-in.

Commissioner Stages inquired about costs to implement the software system. Mr. Knight stated that the planner licenses cost fifty dollars per person, with about thirty people utilizing them. Power BI licenses cost fifty dollars, with about fifty people utilizing those. He stated that the ability to create systems to improve departmental functionality is the reason he stayed with the organization.

Chairman Polito asked Mr. Knight to expound on his statement regarding thoughts of leaving BREC. Mr. Knight stated that he was brought to BREC fourteen years ago in the spirit of innovation; at some point they were pushed aside but he and his team continued to work in spite of challenges. He said that he was glad that he and his team were able to now bring the things that they have been working on to the forefront to improve the agency.

Chairman Polito stated that Mr. Knight's statement is a message that needs to be spread because this is how efficiencies are created. Ms. Simmons stated that one of the ways this has been accomplished is to ensure that departments are cross-functional instead of working in silos.

Commissioner Evans moved to accept the Superintendent's report, seconded by Mr. Toombs.

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

Yeas: 7

Nays: 0

The motion was approved unanimously.

Chairman Polito offered congratulations to Ms. Simmons and her staff on proving that integrating business sector solutions into governmental agencies can be successful.

## **Standing Committee Reports**

### **Finance**

Chairman Polito recognized Commissioner Stages, chair of the Finance Committee. Commissioner Stages recognized Finance Director Rhonda Williams, who presented the financial report for March.

Ms. Williams stated that a budget workshop is being planned for May 26, 2026 at the conclusion of the Finance Committee meeting. Some of the topics to be discussed include zero-based budgets, budget templates, fiscal accounting policies and procedures, budget timelines, and audits. She stated that the 2025 audit was currently underway and that she would keep the Commission posted on any developments.

Commissioner Stages asked about the Audit Questionnaire for 2024. Ms. Williams stated that she was informed by legal counsel that it was only a formality. Ms. Aneatra Boykin, Chief Administrative Officer and General Counsel, said that the document did not have to be approved by the Commission.

Chairman Polito asked for a motion to approve the following:  
Resolved, that the Commission accept the unaudited monthly Budget Status Report for the month ending and fiscal year-to-date ending March 31, 2026, as presented.  
Motion to approve by Mr. Stages  
Second by Mr. Evans  
There being no discussion, Chairman Polito called for the vote with the following results:  
Yeas: 7  
Nays: 0  
The motion was approved unanimously.

### **Planning and Park Resources**

A public hearing was held for the sale of the declared obsolete lands. Chairman Polito explained the process for public comments and asked Ms. Boykin to provide additional clarity on any decisions made during the hearing.

Ms. Boykin stated that any properties approved for sale at the Commission meeting did not mean that the sale would be immediate and any discussions regarding partnerships or other use of the properties with interested parties would still be allowed to take place. A “yes” vote would give BREC the authority to move forward but will not require BREC to move forward.

Chairman Polito read Item a under Park and Planning Resources:  
Resolved, that the Commission approve an ordinance in accordance with LA RS 47:2201 declaring Alexander Street Park to be obsolete and authorizing the Superintendent to sell this property at no less than its appraised value of \$550,000.00, subject to all required legal reviews. Proceeds from the sale shall be reinvested in parks and recreation facility improvements within the same service area.  
Motion to approve by Mr. Evans  
Second by Dr. Harrison

Chairman Polito asked if the service area had been defined. Ms. Boykin stated that the service area was still being determined.

Chairman Polito recognized several emails and a petition received in opposition to the

obsolete land sales.

Commissioner Stages asked for someone to give a brief overview of each property being discussed. Mr. Brett Wallace, Assistant Director of Planning and Development, presented criteria used to declare the land obsolete.

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

Yeas: 7

Nays: 0

The motion was approved unanimously.

Chairman Polito read Item b under Planning and Park Resources:

Resolved, that the Commission approve an ordinance in accordance with LA RS 47:2201 declaring Belfair Park to be obsolete and authorizing the Superintendent to sell this property at no less than its appraised value of \$30,000.00, subject to all required legal reviews. Proceeds from the sale shall be reinvested in parks and recreation facility improvements within the same service area.

Commissioner Evans moved to defer this item until the next Commission meeting in May, pending the outcome of state legislation, seconded by Commissioner Stages.

There was one audience member who spoke in opposition of the sale of Belfair Park.

Chairman Polito asked if the one month deferment would be sufficient; Ms. Boykin stated that two months would be preferable.

Commissioner Evans amended his motion to defer the item until the (regular) June Commission meeting pending the outcome of state legislation, seconded by Commissioner Stages.

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

Yeas: 7

Nays: 0

The motion to defer was approved unanimously.

Chairman Polito read Item c under Planning and Park Resources:

Resolved, that the Commission approve an ordinance in accordance with LA RS 47:2201 declaring Blueberry Street Park to be obsolete and authorizing the Superintendent to sell this property at no less than its appraised value of \$125,000.00, subject to all required legal reviews. Proceeds from the sale shall be reinvested in parks and recreation facility improvements within the same service area.

Commissioner Evans moved to defer the item until the (regular) June Commission meeting, seconded by Commissioner Ortego.

There were three audience members who spoke in opposition of the sale of Blueberry Street Park.

Commissioner Vicknair arrived at 5:48 p.m., and Mr. Toombs left the meeting.

Commissioner Evans asked Mr. Wallace to present the criteria used to declare the land obsolete.

Commissioner Evans stated that in a perfect world, he would have partners that operated every park in the parish to be self-sustaining and self-sufficient, and due to Louisiana law, BREC cannot gift property. He said that his issue with Cooperative Endeavor Agreements (CEAs) is that it keeps BREC in the “park business” in that area. He stated that he hopes the pending legislation will allow BREC to offload properties with stipulations. He thanked the speaker for his willingness to partner with BREC.

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

Yeas: 7

Nays:0

The motion to defer was approved unanimously.

Chairman Polito read Item d under Planning and Park Resources:

Resolved, that the Commission approve an ordinance in accordance with LA RS 47:2201 declaring Dover Street Park to be obsolete and authorizing the Superintendent to sell this property at no less than its appraised value of \$250,000.00, subject to all required legal reviews. Proceeds from the sale shall be reinvested in parks and recreation facility improvements within the same service area.

Motion to approve by Mr. Evans

Second by Mr. Vicknair

Mr. Wallace presented the criteria used to declare the land obsolete.

Commissioner Evans asked if the land had infill development potential that could improve the entire area. Mr. Wallace stated that the location and accessibility of the park presented issues. Chairman Polito stated that he visited the park and there was potential for home building, but he was unsure of the development potential. Commissioner Evans stated that the price of \$250,000.00 for four acres was a great price for decent real estate and clarified that there is an adjacent park into which BREC can invest resources.

Commissioner Stages inquired about potential partnerships for Dover Street Park. Ms. Boykin stated that there was interest but clarified that the vote would authorize BREC to move forward with a sale if the partnership did not come to fruition; he then asked if the item should be deferred to the June Commission meeting. Commissioner Evans stated that he was concerned that there would be an influx of persons wanting to enter into agreements if every park declared obsolete would be deferred until June. He asked for clarification regarding the number of properties with earnest negotiations. Ms. Boykin stated that there were three properties; however, none of the entities interested in the Dover property had been vetted since only requests and proposals had been received. Chairman Polito stated that the vote would not prevent BREC from speaking with anyone regarding a potential partnership but would allow for the process to continue and prevent further interruption. Commissioner Vicknair asked if the vote would lock them into a particular timeline for the sale; Chairman Polito stated that it would not.

There was one question from an audience member regarding the process for the sale of the property. Commissioner Evans stated that he did not like the public bid process because in his opinion the taxpayers do not receive the true value that they should from the properties and that it benefits those persons looking to purchase at a bargain. He stated that he would like for

BREC to have the ability to choose a real estate broker through an RFQ process to market the properties to bring the best value to the Commission and the taxpayers.

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

Yeas: 7

Nays: 0

The motion was approved unanimously.

Chairman Polito read Item e under Planning and Park Resources:

Resolved, that the Commission approve an ordinance in accordance with LA RS 47:2201 declaring Fortune Addition Park to be obsolete and authorizing the Superintendent to sell this property at no less than its appraised value of \$700,000.00, subject to all required legal reviews. Proceeds from the sale shall be reinvested in parks and recreation facility improvements within the same service area.

Commissioner Stages moved to defer the item until the June Commission meeting, seconded by Commissioner Ortego.

There were two audience members who spoke in opposition of the sale of Fortune Addition Park.

Chairman Polito stated that this area is the perfect example of why parks are being declared obsolete because there are three parks within a few hundred feet of each other in addition to an empty school, and BREC needs to do a better job of collaborating with the school system to utilize resources.

Commissioner Vicknair asked if there was any interest in this property; Ms. Boykin stated that there was. Chairman Polito stated that there were conversations with Lamont Cole, EBR Schools Superintendent, to figure the best path forward.

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

Yeas: 7

Nays: 0

The motion to defer was approved unanimously.

Chairman Polito read Item f under Planning and Park Resources:

Resolved, that the Commission approve an ordinance in accordance with LA RS 47:2201 declaring Lanier Drive Park to be obsolete and authorizing the Superintendent to sell this property at no less than its appraised value of \$250,000.00, subject to all required legal reviews. Proceeds from the sale shall be reinvested in parks and recreation facility improvements within the same service area.

Motion to approve by Mr. Evans

Second by Mr. Vicknair

Commissioner Evans inquired about the size of Lanier and stated that it was hard to believe the accuracy of the appraised value due to the drainage issues from the nearby canal. Mr. Wallace stated that the property was 3.2 acres. Chairman Polito asked if Mr. Wallace could verify the accuracy of the appraisals. Commissioner Evans agreed, stating that the Commission was moving to approve the sale of properties based on the valuations presented. Mr. Wallace

stated that he would verify and get back to them.

Chairman Polito asked what would happen if a property did not sell at the first offering. Ms. Boykin stated that the price of the property would be reduced by one-third of the appraised value and be resubmitted for bid, according to the statute.

Commissioner Evans stated that he believed the appraised value was too high on some of the properties and that the appraisals perhaps needed a second valuation as a counter.

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

Yeas: 7

Nays: 0

The motion was approved unanimously.

Chairman Polito read Item g under Planning and Park Resources:

Resolved, that the Commission approve an ordinance in accordance with LA RS 47:2201 declaring outparcel Lot 119, 0.27-acre at 9142 Corlett Drive (Sharon Hills Park) to be obsolete and authorizing the Superintendent to sell this property at no less than its appraised value of \$25,000.00, subject to all required legal reviews. Proceeds from the sale shall be reinvested in parks and recreation facility improvements within the same service area.

Motion to approve by Mr. Vicknair

Second by Mr. Ortego

There was a question from an audience member regarding the sale of the properties based on the possible inaccuracy of the valuation. Chairman Polito stated that there was no way of knowing. The properties would be sold based on how much the purchaser was willing to pay for them; however, the process of the sale is based on the law which must be followed.

Commissioner Evans stated that appraised value is not an exact science, and as a governmental entity we cannot purchase property based on appraised value. He then explained the process of purchasing property based on state law.

Commissioner Stages stated for clarification that Sharon Hills Park was not being sold, but an outparcel. Chairman Polito stated that he was correct and that there was some confusion and miscommunication being spread on social media regarding the property.

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

Yeas: 7

Nays: 0

The motion was approved unanimously.

Chairman Polito recognized emails received in opposition to the obsolete land sales.

Chairman Polito read Item h under Planning and Park Resources:

Resolved, that the Commission approve an ordinance in accordance with LA RS 47:2201 declaring Wenonah Street Park to be obsolete and authorizing the Superintendent to sell this property at no less than its appraised value of \$6,000.00, subject to all required legal reviews. Proceeds from the sale shall be reinvested in parks and recreation facility improvements within the same service area.

Motion to approve by Mr. Vicknair  
Second by Mr. Stages

Chairman Polito asked Vice-Chair Evans to assume leadership so that he could make his way to the podium.

Ms. Simmons recognized another email received in opposition to the obsolete land sales.

Commissioner Ortego asked for clarity regarding the property. Vice-Chair Evans stated that the property was never developed and unusable. He stated that the neighbor could possibly purchase the property to increase the size of their property.

There being no further discussion, Vice-Chair Evans called for the vote with the following results:

Yeas: 7

Nays: 0

The motion was approved unanimously.

### **Reports of Special Committees**

#### **City-Brooks Park Master Plan + Lakes Vision**

Chairman Polito gave an update on the steering committee meeting for the City-Brooks Park Master Plan and Lakes Vision project.

Commissioner Vicknair thanked Chairman Polito for the presentation and stated that they were all being inundated with emails and phone calls for information.

Commissioner Stages stated that he appreciates the consultants' recommendation for one conservancy, but it was important for the Commission to look at their fiduciary responsibility with the consultants providing as much robust information for a model that includes a separate conservancy for the Lakes with City Park still being managed by BREC. Chairman Polito stated that he did not realize how much effort would be involved in this process, and that the steering committee had not done a great job of concentrating on that aspect, but that they would add that as a focus going forward.

Vice-Chair Evans stated that BREC's job is to create the best recreational space it can, but they could only work with the people within the community that shared that sentiment. Community members that refused to co-mingle within a space was a larger problem that BREC was not able to fix.

### **Special Orders**

Chairman Polito took up the appointments to standing advisory committees as follows:

#### **Wade Evans, Mayor of Central**

Mike Longmire

Wayne Messina

Robert "Buddy" Wicker

Trey Wicker

Kim Powers

Norman Shiflett

Communications and Information Systems

Finance

Golf

Human Resources

Planning and Park Resources

Recreation

Kenrick T. Nixon	Zoo
<u>Darnell Waites, Mayor of Baker</u> Tony King	Planning and Park Resources
<u>Dr. Murrelle Harrison</u> Ed Pratt Tine Neames	Communications and Information Systems Finance
<u>Marshall Ortego</u> Kade Savoy Ben Ortego	Communications and Information Systems Recreation

The appointments were approved unanimously.

**Unfinished Business and General Orders**

Chairman Polito read Item A under Unfinished Business and General Orders:

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 a monthly amount of \$14,895.83 for a period of twelve months, not to exceed \$178,749.96. Previous amount was for \$40,000; subject to legal review.

Commissioner Stages moved to defer the item for one month and extend the contract for that same period, seconded by Commissioner Vicknair.

Commissioner Vicknair asked if this was a follow up to the previous meeting's discussion; Chairman Polito stated that it was.

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

Yeas: 7  
Nays: 0  
The motion to defer was approved unanimously.

Chairman Polito read Item B under Unfinished Business and General Orders:

Resolved, that the Commission approve the amended and extended Contract 2025000355 with Contingency Consulting, LLC for Security Operations Center integration and workforce alignment, for a monthly amount of \$17,041.67 for a period of twelve months, not to exceed \$204,500.04. The previous amount was for \$40,000; subject to legal review.

Commissioner Stages moved to defer the item for one month and extend the contract for the same period, seconded by Commissioner Harrison.

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

Yeas: 7  
Neas: 0  
The motion to defer was approved unanimously.

**New Business**

None

**Adjournment**

Chairman Polito called for a motion to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner Vicknair made a motion, Commissioner Ortego seconded, and the meeting was adjourned at 6:45 p.m. without objection.

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

\_\_\_\_\_  
Michael Polito, Chairman

**DRAFT**