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 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 July 23, 2026. The meeting was called to order at 5:02 p.m. by Chairman Michael Polito. Interim Superintendent Janet Simmons offered the invocation, and Commissioner Collis Temple III led the Pledge of Allegiance. Roll was taken and a quorum of Commissioners was present, including Michael Polito, Chair; Carl Stages, Treasurer; Dr. Murelle Harrison; Collis Temple III; Lon Vicknair; and Dustin Yates. Commissioner David McDavid arrived at 5:09 p.m. Commissioners Wade Evans and Marshall Ortego were absent. Staff members present were Janet Simmons, Interim Superintendent; Aneatra Boykin, Chief Administrative Officer and General Counsel; Steven Knight, Chief Information Officer; Dina Duplantis, Tia Edwards, Angela Harms, RaHarold Lawson, Robyn Lott, Corey Luttrell, Nicole Payne-Jack, Michael Raby, Ryan Reed, Wesley Sims, and Rhonda Williams. Chris Billings, legal counsel, was also in attendance. The rest of the audience consisted of other BREC staff, media, and the public.

Public Comment

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

Adoption of Minutes

Resolved, that the reading of the minutes of the Recreation and Park Commission Meeting of June 25, 2026 be dispensed with, and that they be approved as written.

Motion to approve by Mr. Yates
Second by Mr. Temple
There being no discussion, Chairman Polito called for the vote with the following results:
Yeas: 6
Nays: 0
The minutes were approved unanimously.

Consent Calendar

The next item was under the Consent Calendar as follows:

Resolved, that the Commission review and accept the Routine Personnel Transactions from June 9, 2026 through July 8, 2026.

Motion to approve by Mr. Temple
Second by Mr. Vicknair
There being no discussion, Chairman Polito called for the vote with the following results:
Yeas: 6
Nays: 0
The motion was approved unanimously.

Presentations

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

Reports of Officers and Standing Committees

Interim Superintendent Simmons began by honoring late BREC Commissioner and Louisiana State Senator Larry Selders with a moment of silence. She then presented the June 2026 attendance report and provided updates on community engagements and meetings attended. She recognized Sharon King, Assistant Director of Natural Resource Management, who gave a presentation on her division's recent work in pollinator gardens at several BREC parks.

Commissioner McDavid inquired about creating a butterfly conservatory similar to the one in New Orleans; Ms. King stated that since that is considered curating, that would be a project for the Zoo.

Commissioner Stages inquired about the number of trees lost due to drought; Ms. King stated that she did not know the exact number, but in 2024 at Kendalwood Conservation Area alone, over 100 trees were removed.

Ms. Simmons concluded her report by recognizing a few BREC employees for NRPA Parks and Recreation Professional Day; presenting an update on the recent City-Brooks Park community meeting; and thanking the community for the recent renewal of the tax millage. She ended with a teaser about an important press event on August 11, 2026 at the Inspiration Center.

Chairman Polito thanked Ms. Simmons for her hard work during her brief tenure at BREC, stating that she met the challenge and that the citizens of the parish owe her a great deal of gratitude. Ms. Simmons thanked her entire team for their assistance and said that she could not have done it alone. The audience gave her a round of applause.

Standing Committee Reports

Chairman Polito recognized Commissioner Stages, chair of the Finance Committee. Commissioner Stages stated that the Finance Committee met on July 21, 2026 and recognized Finance Director Rhonda Williams, who presented the monthly Budget Status Report.

Ms. Williams read Item a under Finance:

Resolved, that the Commission accept the unaudited monthly Budget Status Report for the month ending and fiscal year-to-date ending May 31, 2026, as presented.

Motion to approve by Mr. Stages

Second by Mr. Temple

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

Yeas: 7

Nays: 0

The motion was approved unanimously.

Ms. Williams read Item b under Finance:

Resolved, that the Commission accept the 2025 Audit Report.

Motion to approve by Mr. Stages

Second by Mr. Yates

Chairman Polito recognized Rodney Combs from EisnerAmper, who presented the 2025 Audit Report.

Commissioner Stages stated that there was a discussion during the Finance Advisory Committee meeting and noted that steps have been taken to ensure that these findings will not recur.

Mr. Combs thanked BREC for using EisnerAmper and welcomed the opportunity to assist again with BREC audits.

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 congratulated and thanked Ms. Williams for her work in completing all four audits.

Commissioner Stages suggested that the Commission hold a workshop to discuss a number of approaches to different things once the new Superintendent arrives, including the process involving capital outlay purchases and the approval of contracts under $75,000. Chief Administrative Office and General Counsel Aneatra Boykin stated that there is a training scheduled for the end of August/early September in which procurement, sovereign immunity, and other issues relevant to the Commission will be discussed.

Chairman Polito read Item a under Selection of Professionals:

Resolved, that the Commission approve the selected vendor, CRI, for RFQ 245 to provide forensic audit services for an amount not to exceed $185,000.00 This contract will be for a term not to exceed six months. Authorize the Interim Superintendent to execute appropriate documents upon final legal review.

Chairman Polito noted that the Selection of Professionals Committee did not meet because there was not a quorum, and all items will come before the Commission without that committee's recommendation. He reminded the Commission that securing forensic audit services is something the Commission tasked the staff with at a prior meeting.

Motion to approve Item a by Mr. Stages
Second by Mr. Temple
There being no discussion, the Chairman called for the vote with the following results:
Yeas: 7
Nays: 0
The motion was approved unanimously.

Chairman Polito read Item b under Selection of Professionals:

Resolved, that the Commission approves the renewal of State Contract #4400022627 with Westaff Temporary Staffing Services to hire temporary staff as needed to fill vacant positions for various BREC departments at the contracted hourly rates for a term from July 1, 2026 through January 31, 2027, for an additional amount of $600,000.00, bringing the total amount to $2,145,000.00. This contract was originally signed on August 1, 2024. Authorize the Interim Superintendent to execute the appropriate documents upon legal review.

Motion to approve by Mr. Yates
Second by Dr. Harrison

Commissioner Vicknair inquired about the amount of the contract actually being utilized and the areas of usage. Human Resources Director Corey Luttrell stated that there are some areas with naturally higher turnover, and this contract assists with costs associated with that issue; there will be hiring for some positions, but the contract will mainly be used for short-term projects.

Chairman Polito reminded the Commission that this issue was raised at last month's meeting, and asked Mr. Luttrell to explain. Mr. Luttrell stated that last month's extension was to get them through the end of the contract year and that the state contract was not renewed but extended on an emergency basis; this extension would be a match.

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 c under Selection of Professionals:

Resolved, that the Commission award SB #1867 – Annual Contract for Skilled/Certified Labor for Show/Stage Productions to Barney-Monk LLC for a period not to exceed December 31, 2026, in an amount not to exceed $150,000.00, with the option to renew for two (2) additional twelve-month periods under the same terms, conditions, and pricing. Authorize the Interim Superintendent to execute appropriate documents pending final legal review.

Motion to approve by Mr. McDavid
Second by Mr. Temple

Chairman Polito asked for an explanation; Recreation Director Ryan Reed explained that this contract provided for sound and lighting professionals to assist with facility rentals and programming at Independence Park Theatre. He stated that it was more cost effective to contract out the work as opposed to staffing those positions throughout the year and this contract was revenue-generating. The bulk of the cost is passed through to those renting the theatre.

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 d under Selection of Professionals:

Resolved, that the Commission approve the amendment to State Contract #4400018930 with Cintas to expand uniform and rug cleaning services in an amount not to exceed $160,000.00, bringing the total contact amount to $235,000.00. This contract should be set at the terms and conditions of the previous agreement. The previous contract amount was $75,000.00. This contract has been extended to meet additional needs within both Park Operations and Recreation. Park Operations has expanded to include carpentry and electrical workers, resulting in increased service requirements.

Motion to approve by Mr. McDavid
Second by Mr. Vicknair
There being no discussion, Chairman Polito called for the vote with the following results:
Yeas: 7
Nays: 0
The motion was approved unanimously.

Commissioner Stages stated that the Planning and Park Resources Committee met recently and that there will be a workshop on August 18, 2026 from 3:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. to discuss the functions of the different departments and their processes. He stated that based on feedback received during the community meeting he went to visit City-Brooks Park and noted that the facility was uninviting with equipment that needed to be replaced; BREC staff will develop a temporary, low-cost plan that will be implemented before the pool re-opens next year to address those issues. Chairman Polito thanked Commissioner Stages for his proactivity.

Reports of Special Committees

Chairman Polito recognized Planning and Engineering Director Angela Harms, who presented an update on the City-Brooks Park master plan.

Commissioner Stages inquired about the timeline. Ms. Harms stated that the committee will meet again in August followed by another public meeting in September with the preferred plan and final concept that may be presented to the Commission in September as well. Commissioner Stages asked if all feedback, including social media comments and print media articles, was being captured; Ms. Harms affirmed that it was being captured.

Chairman Polito asked if the McMakin plan was reviewed; Ms. Harms stated that it was reviewed and that she, along with other BREC executive leadership, had met with him. Chairman Polito informed the audience that the website contained all of the information regarding the City-Brooks project and that this process was very transparent.

Special Orders

None

Unfinished Business and General Orders

Chairman Polito read Item A under Unfinished Business:

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.

Motion to approve by Mr. Yates
Second by Mr. Temple

Commissioner Yates clarified that the approval of the resolution does not sell the property; it only authorizes the Superintendent to engage in the sale of the property; it also does not deter the organization from entering into agreements with other parties that have a desire to enter into partnership. He stated that this is the first step in the process that allows the other steps in the process to take place, and that this sentiment also goes for Item B.

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 Unfinished Business:

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.

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

Chairman Polito reminded everyone that Commissioner Yates' statement applied to this resolution.

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

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

Chairman Polito read Item C under Unfinished Business:
Hold a public hearing and adopt a resolution to levy the ad valorem tax millage for the 2026 parish-wide assessment for the Recreation and Park Commission for the Parish of East Baton Rouge for general operations and capital improvements.

Chairman Polito stated that there were two options being presented: the first option was to levy the tax at the current rate of 13.740 mills. The second option was to levy the tax at the maximum voter-approved rate of 14.463 mills.

Commissioner Yates asked for clarification of the current rate. Chairman Polito clarified that the current rate is 13.740 mills. Commissioner Yates then moved that the tax be levied at the current rate of 13.740 mills; the motion was seconded by Commissioner Vicknair.

Commissioner Stages opposed the motion, stating that the rate was set lower last year due to the repayment of the bond. He thanked the public for approving the renewal but stated there are several things that are unfunded. He stated that the Commission discovered during the Superintendent search that all the candidates stated that the amount of money budgeted for maintenance was woefully inadequate and a number of parks need additional dollars. He mentioned the expense of the recreation center realignment plan, centers without air conditioning, and Knock Knock Children's Museum as examples of where the money could be utilized, in addition to the Master Plan projects. He stated that there are about $65 million per year in projects, but only $25 million available to move the projects forward; he stated that these and many other reasons are why the maximum tax should be levied.

Commissioner Yates agreed with Commissioner Stages in theory, stating that a lot of things were promised to the public that there are currently no dollars for, and whether the levy is maximized or not, it would still be underfunded. He stated that there was a recent national search for superintendent, and the chosen candidate is believed to have the potential to be a dynamic leader; therefore, he should have the opportunity to come in, assess the organization, and make decisions on how to go about "closing the gap" in funding.

Commissioner Vicknair stated that just twelve months ago, the parish was considering breaking BREC up and the idea was that taxpayers were not getting the full value for what they were paying. He stated that he would have a hard time asking for more just when trust was being re-established. His stance was to not ask for more and take steps to learn to "do more with less." He stated that the organization may have "grown too big" and pointed to the decision to sell parks as a way to save money in one area to use in another. He agrees that the new superintendent will have ideas on how to be more efficient with resources.

Chairman Polito recognized Linton Naquin for public comment, and he spoke in opposition to levying the tax at the maximum rate.

There being no further discussion, Chairman Polito asked for a motion. Commissioner Yates moved that the tax be levied at the current rate of 13.740 mills; seconded by Commissioner Vicknair. The Chairman asked Ms. Boykin read the resolution to levy the tax at the rate of 13.740 mills. Ms. Boykin read the following:

RESOLUTION

Ad Valorem Tax Levy

BE IT RESOLVED by the Recreation and Park Commission for the Parish of East Baton Rouge (the "Commission"), in legal session convened, as follows:

There are hereby levied in the Parish of East Baton Rouge, the following described ad valorem tax millages on the 2026 tax roll on all property subject to taxation by the Recreation and Park Commission for the Parish of East Baton Rouge:

a tax authorized by the electorate in a special election conducted October 28, 1947, under the authority of Article 14, Section 3(b) of the 1921 Louisiana Constitution; ratified by Article 6, Section 31; for development, operations, and maintenance; and	**0.599** mills
a tax authorized by the electorate in a special election conducted June 22, 1954, under the authority of Article 14, Section 3(b) of the 1921 Louisiana Constitution; ratified by Article 6, Section 31; for development, operations, and maintenance; and	**0.399** mills
a tax authorized by the electorate in a special election conducted November 5, 2024, under the authority of Section 4570.4 B of Title 33 of the Louisiana Revised Statutes of 1950, as amended; to purchase, acquire, construct, develop, improve, operate and maintain public parks, playgrounds and recreational properties and facilities; and	**3.090** mills
a tax authorized by the electorate in a special election conducted November 5, 2024, for operations and maintenance and capital improvements; and	**3.895** mills
a tax authorized by the electorate in a special election conducted November 5, 2024, to provide funds for maintaining and operating its public parks, recreational properties, and facilities and making available funds for the operating budget; and	**1.995** mills
a tax authorized by the electorate in an election conducted November 8, 2016, to provide funds for maintaining and operating the public parks, recreational properties, and facilities and making available funds for the operating budget; and	**3.762** mills

the foregoing making a total tax of thirteen and seven hundred forty one-thousandths **(13.740)** mills on the dollar of assessed valuation to meet the established liabilities and expenses of the Commission used in acquiring, developing, maintaining and operating the public parks and recreational properties and facilities of the Commission and in making available funds for the operating budget, all as provided for in the respective propositions approved by the voters in the special tax elections above referred to.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the proper administrative officials of the Parish of East Baton Rouge, State of Louisiana, be and they are hereby empowered, authorized, and directed to spread said taxes, as hereinabove set forth, upon the assessment roll of said Parish for the year 2026, and to make the collection of the taxes imposed for and on behalf of the taxing authority, according to law, and that the taxes herein levied shall become a permanent lien and privilege on all property subject to taxation as herein set forth, and collection thereof shall be enforceable in the manner provided by law.

The foregoing resolution was read in full and was moved by Dustin Yates, seconded by Lon Vicknair.

The roll was called on the adoption thereof, and the resolution was adopted by the following votes:

Yeas: 6	Mr. Stages, Mr. Polito, Mr. Vicknair, Mr. McDavid, Mr. Yates, Dr. Harrison
Nays: 1	Mr. Temple
Abstained: 0	
Absent: 2	Mr. Evans, Mr. Ortego

The foregoing resolution was signed and approved by the Chairman, attested by the Interim Superintendent and Ex-Officio Secretary and declared to be adopted on the 23rd day of July, 2026.

Attest:

Michael Polito, Chairman

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

New Business

Chairman Polito stated that the next item was the adoption of the resolution canvassing the returns and declaring the result of the election held by the Recreation and Park Commission for the Parish of East Baton Rouge in the Parish of East Baton Rouge, State of Louisiana, on June 27, 2026, for the purpose of authorizing the renewal of the levy and collection of a 3.96 mills ad valorem tax.

The Board of Commissioners, as governing authority of the Recreation and Park Commission for the Parish of East Baton Rouge, has received the official results of the June 27, 2026 special election for the proposition to authorize the renewal of the levy and collection of a 3.96 mills ad valorem tax, which are as follows:

According to the official certified tabulation of votes cast at said Election, there was a total of 46,538 votes cast IN FAVOR OF the Proposition and a total of 27,798 votes cast AGAINST the Proposition, resulting in a majority of 18,740 votes cast IN FAVOR OF the Proposition. The Proposition was therefore duly CARRIED by a majority of the votes cast by the qualified electors voting at the Election.

The Chairman asked for a motion to approve the resolution canvassing the returns and declaring the result of the election held by the Recreation and Park Commission for the Parish of East Baton Rouge in the Parish of East Baton Rouge, State of Louisiana, on June 27, 2026, for the purpose of authorizing the renewal of the levy and collection of a 3.96 mills ad valorem tax.

Motion to approve the resolution by Mr. Yates
Second by Dr. Harrison

RESOLUTION

A resolution providing for canvassing the returns and declaring the results of the special election held in the Parish of East Baton Rouge on Saturday, June 27, 2026, to authorize the renewal of a special tax of the Recreation and Park Commission for the Parish of East Baton Rouge ("BREC").

BE IT RESOLVED by the Board of Commissioners of the Recreation and Park Commission for the Parish of East Baton Rouge (the "Governing Authority"), acting as the governing authority of the Recreation and Park Commission for the Parish of East Baton Rouge ("BREC"), that:

SECTION 1. Canvass. This Governing Authority does now proceed in open and public session to examine the official tabulations of votes cast at the special election held in the Parish of East Baton Rouge on SATURDAY, JUNE 27, 2026 (the "Election"), to authorize the renewal of a special tax therein pursuant to the following proposition (the "Proposition"):

PROPOSITION
(MILLAGE RENEWAL)

Shall the Recreation and Park Commission for the Parish of East Baton Rouge ("BREC"), continue to levy a special tax of 3.96 mills tax on all property subject to taxation in the Parish (an estimated $24,800,000 reasonably expected at this time to be collected from the levy of the tax for an entire year), for a period of 10 years, beginning with the year 2027 and ending with the year 2036, to provide funds for maintaining and operating the public parks and recreational properties and facilities of BREC, and making available funds for the operating budget of BREC?

This Governing Authority does further proceed to examine and canvass the returns of the Election thereof.

SECTION 2. Election Results. According to the official certified tabulation of votes cast at said Election, there was a total of **46,538** votes cast **IN FAVOR OF** the Proposition and a total of **27,798** votes cast **AGAINST** the Proposition, resulting in a majority of **18,740** votes cast **IN FAVOR OF** the Proposition. The Proposition was therefore duly **CARRIED** by a majority of the votes cast by the qualified electors voting at the Election.

SECTION 3. Promulgation of Election Result. The results of said election shall be promulgated by publication in the manner provided by law, after receipt from the Secretary of State's office of the actual costs of the election, as required by §18:1292 of the Louisiana Revised Statutes of 1950, as amended.

SECTION 4. Declaration. The foregoing results of the Election are hereby declared by this Governing Authority and shall be published as required by law.

SECTION 5. Procès Verbal. A *Procès Verbal* of the canvass of the returns of the Election shall be made and a certified copy thereof shall be forwarded to the Secretary of State, Baton Rouge, Louisiana, who shall record the same in her office; another certified copy thereof shall be forwarded to the Clerk of Court and *Ex-Officio* Recorder of Mortgages in and for the Parish of East Baton Rouge, who shall record the same in the Mortgage Records of said Parish; and another copy thereof shall be retained in the archives of this Governing Authority.

This resolution having been submitted to a vote, the vote thereon was as follows:

YEAS: 7 Mr. Stages, Mr. Temple, Mr. Polito, Mr. Vicknair, Mr. McDavid, Dr. Harrison, Mr. Yates
NAYS: 0
ABSENT: 2 Mr. Evans, Mr. Ortego

And the resolution was declared adopted on this, the 23rd day of July, 2026.

/s/ Janet C. Simmons	/s/ Michael Polito
Interim Superintendent and Ex-Officio Secretary	Chairman

Chairman Polito read Item B under New Business:
Resolved, that the Commission authorize BREC's legal staff to submit a petition to the City of Zachary, Louisiana, requesting annexation of Doyle's Bayou Park, Quarterhorse Park, and Beaver Creek Golf Course into the corporate limits of the City of Zachary.

Ms. Boykin requested that the matter be deferred until the next regular meeting.
Motion to defer by Mr. Stages
Second by Mr. Temple
There being no 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 New Business:
EXECUTIVE SESSION – The Recreation and Park Commission for the Parish of East Baton Rouge ("BREC") anticipates calling an Executive Session pursuant to: LSA-R.S. 42:17(A)(2), for the purpose of discussing prospective litigation and strategy.

Chairman Polito asked for a motion to enter Executive Session. Commissioner Vicknair made a motion, seconded by Commissioner McDavid, and the Commission entered Executive Session without opposition at 6:13 p.m.

Executive Session concluded. Chairman Polito called for the motion to reconvene the Regular Meeting.
Motion to reconvene by Mr. Vicknair
Second by Mr. Temple
There being no discussion, Chairman Polito called for the vote with the following results:
Yeas: 7
Nays: 0
The Commission reconvened the Regular Meeting without opposition at 6:43 p.m.

Chairman Polito read Item D under New Business:

Resolved, that the Commission authorize staff to draft and issue a letter to Friends of City Park (FOCP).

Motion to approve by Mr. Vicknair

Second by Mr. Yates

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

Yeas: 7

Nays: 0

The motion was approved unanimously.

Adjournment

Chairman Polito called for a motion to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner Vicknair made a motion, Commissioner Yates seconded, and the meeting was adjourned at 6:44 p.m. without objection.

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

Michael Polito, Chairman

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