



**City of St. Helena
Parks & Recreation Commission Regular Meeting
Monday, June 15, 2026 @ 5:30 PM
Carnegie Building
1360 Oak Avenue, St. Helena CA**

PLEASE NOTE: Any person who wishes to speak regarding an item on the agenda or make a comment under the "Oral Communication" portion of the agenda may do so, but please observe the time limit of four minutes.

Members of the public and other parties are welcome to email their comments to the Staff Liaison Ashley Sylvester at asylvester@cityofstheleena.gov. All public comments must be received three hours prior to the meeting. Public comments received after the deadline will be attached to the item the next business day or soon thereafter. Public comments will not be read out loud but will be publicly available and attached to the online agenda.

1. CALL TO ORDER

2. ROLL CALL

Commission Chair: Doug Boeschen

Vice Chair: John Thompson

Members: Julie Jenanyan, Denise Nelson, Stephanie Smithers

Staff Liaison: Ashley Sylvester, Director of Community Services

3. PUBLIC FORUM

3.1. Public Comment

4. REPORTS BY STAFF/COMMITTEE

Reports by staff and/or committee on items of general interest. Brief questions for clarification may be posed and answered, and Committee may request that items be placed on a future agenda. Except under certain circumstances, the Brown Act prohibits any other discussion or action by the Parks & Recreation Commission.

4.1. Park Maintenance Update

4.2. Community Services Update

4.3. Ad- Hoc Subcommittee Updates

5. CONSENT ITEMS

5.1. Parks and Recreation Commission Meeting Minutes for May 18, 2026

6. SCHEDULED ITEMS

6.1. Lewis Station Park

6.2. Public Art Discussion

6.3. Parks and Recreation Commission Priorities

7. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

8. ADJOURNMENT

The next Regular Parks and Recreation Commission meeting is scheduled for July 20, 2026.

This agenda was posted at City Hall, 1088 College Avenue, St. Helena on June 12, 2026

Ashley Sylvester, Director of Community Services

In Compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, if you need special assistance to participate in this meeting, please call the City Clerk's Office (707) 967-2792. Notification 72 hours prior to the meeting as required by Section 202 of the Americans with Disabilities Act will enable the City to make reasonable arrangements to ensure accessibility to this meeting.

FW: Public comment for tonight's Parks & Rec meeting

From Ashley Sylvester <ASylvester@cityofsthelena.gov>

Date Mon 6/15/2026 1:17 PM

To Andrew Bradley <abradley@cityofsthelena.gov>

Are you able to post this as a public comment for tonight?

Ashley Sylvester

Director of Community Services

City of St. Helena | Community Services Dept.

1574 Railroad Ave | St. Helena, CA 94574

Direct: (707) 967-2736 | Mobile: (707) 486-6428 | asylvester@cityofsthelena.gov

Celebrating St. Helena's Sesquicentennial: 150 Years of Service

Learn more about celebrations throughout 2026 at celebratessthelena.com

From: Elaine de Man <elainede@sbcglobal.net>

Sent: Monday, June 15, 2026 8:54 AM

To: Ashley Sylvester <ASylvester@cityofsthelena.gov>

Subject: Public comment for tonight's Parks & Rec meeting

Dear members of the Parks and Recreation Commission,

I wanted to give you an update on what has been happening at the corner of Pope Street and Chiles Avenue, the site of the heritage Valley oak that had to be removed because of Mediterranean Oak Borer disease. I would also like to request that this topic be placed on a future agenda for discussion.

When I last appeared before this Commission several months ago, I mentioned that I had found what I thought were about seven Valley oak seedlings emerging on the site and that I intended to flag them so they would not be accidentally destroyed during weed-abatement activities.

A few days later, when I returned to actually mark them, I discovered that not only was my estimate dramatically low, but new seedlings continued to emerge. I had purchased a pack of 100 flags, but ran out of them before I ran out of seedlings! So, what at first appeared to be a handful of seedlings turned out to be a remarkable natural regeneration event.

At the time, I felt a little self-conscious about all those blue flags every time I drove by. Then, just last week, I happened to be speaking with Firefighter Joshua Wilmoth about weed abatement in general, and that particular corner came up. He told me that his crew had already been there to knock down the dead grasses. I have to admit my heart sank when I heard that. But he went on to explain that they had seen the blue flags, understood what they represented, and instructed the crew to steer clear of the seedlings with their weed whackers.

So, it worked.

And many thanks to Mr. Wilmoth and the Fire Department for recognizing what was happening and finding a way to accomplish their important work while protecting the young oaks.

Since then, three of us—including Vice Mayor Deasy—have spent time at the site pulling weeds with the hope of reducing future fire hazards and helping the seedlings establish themselves. In the process, we discovered a fascinating mix of native species, invasive species, escaped ornamentals, and even volunteer garden plants, including a watermelon and three thriving pumpkin plants that appear to have been intentionally planted.

At the same time, we found California brome and other native plants growing naturally on the site, suggesting that at least some of the original understory species remain. We also removed numerous Tree-of-Heaven seedlings, pokeweed, and other undesirable plants while they were still small enough to manage easily.

These observations have reinforced my belief that this small corner of St. Helena presents a unique opportunity to restore a tiny piece of the native Valley oak woodland that once covered much of the valley floor.

A native woodland is already trying to establish itself here. The question is whether we will give it a chance to succeed.

In my view, the most appropriate course of action at this stage is simply to give these seedlings time. Over the next two years, natural competition will reduce their numbers and reveal which trees are healthiest and best positioned for long-term survival. At that point, informed decisions can be made regarding spacing, sidewalks, utilities, and other considerations. Our goal is not to decide today which seedlings should remain for the next hundred years, but to preserve the opportunity for a new generation of Valley oaks to establish itself naturally.

There may also be an opportunity here to encourage native bunchgrasses and other understory species historically associated with Valley oak woodlands. A mature woodland and native understory may ultimately require less intensive management than the annual cycle of weeds that now dominates this and many other disturbed sites throughout the valley. It is also one place where we might be able to keep invasive species such as Tree-of-Heaven (which appears to be becoming increasingly common throughout the city) at bay. But that's another issue for another time.

We've also been encouraged by the public interest this project has generated. Neighbors and passersby regularly stop to ask what we are doing, offer encouragement, and express interest in getting involved. Down the road, I think an interpretive sign might be appropriate to help explain what could become a small demonstration Valley oak woodland and to tell the story of the unusual natural regeneration event taking place there.

And this brings me to my other reason for writing. Even as a few volunteers have been working in good faith to protect native trees and remove invasive species on City property, we have no clear understanding of whether the City supports these efforts. I have attempted several times to contact Community Services staff to initiate a discussion about this but have not yet received a response.

Accordingly, I would respectfully ask the Commission to consider whether some form of recognition, authorization, endorsement, or partnership could be established so that we can continue this work with the City's knowledge and support rather than in uncertainty.

I would also appreciate the Commission's consideration of placing this topic on a future agenda for discussion. With the City's endorsement or guidance, Sustainable St. Helena may be able to assist with volunteer coordination, public education, fundraising, or interpretive signage in the future.

Opportunities for natural Valley oak regeneration within the city limits are uncommon. What began as the discovery of seven seedlings has revealed well over one hundred young Valley oaks attempting to establish

themselves on a small piece of public land. With modest protection, thoughtful stewardship, and cooperation between citizen volunteers and the City, this site could become a living reminder of the landscape that once characterized our valley.

Thank you for your consideration.

Elaine de Man

MINUTES
City of St. Helena
Regular Parks & Recreation Commission Meeting
Monday, May 18, 2026 @ 5:30 PM
Carnegie Building
1360 Oak Avenue, St. Helena CA

Present: Board Member Doug Boesch, Board Member Julie Jenayan, Board Member Denise Nelson, Board Member John Thompson

Absent: Board Member Stephanie Smithers

1. CALL TO ORDER

Call to Order at 5:32pm

2. ROLL CALL

Commission Chair: Doug Boesch

Vice Chair: John Thompson

Members: Julie Jenayan, Denise Nelson, Stephanie Smithers

Staff Liaison: Ashley Sylvester, Director of Community Services

3. PUBLIC FORUM

4. REPORTS BY STAFF/COMMITTEE

Reports by staff and/or committee on items of general interest. Brief questions for clarification may be posed and answered, and Committee may request that items be placed on a future agenda. Except under certain circumstances, the Brown Act prohibits any other discussion or action by the Parks & Recreation Commission.

4.1. Park Maintenance and Operations Update

CEQA Determination:

Prepared By:

Recommendation:

- Update given by Victor Neri, Parks and Trees Superintendent
- Staff presented a calendar of monthly items that the parks staff undertake during the year
- Commissioner Jenanyan asked a question regarding whether these are pre-determined and how? Or are they prompted by Grapevine Tickets?
- Staff noted that much of the maintenance listed is pre-determined and ongoing, but grapevine tickets are added in as they come into staff's portal and can be addressed
- Superintendent Neri also noted additional landscape work happening at the Library as well as other parks to make it more drought tolerant

4.2. Community Services Update

CEQA Determination:

Prepared By:

Recommendation:

- Director Sylvester gave a report on the following six items:
 - Summer Concert Update
 - PRT Master Plan Update
 - Staffing Update
 - Community Soccer Night
 - Community Services Award
 - Youth Commissioner
- Commissioners expressed frustration at the PRT Master Plan going through additional reviews and being delayed in presenting it to council
- The Community Services Award determined cycle will run from July– June with awards being presented at future June meetings
- Commissioners are willing to help with the recruitment of a Youth Commissioner for the next term, which will run from September to June

4.3. Ad- Hoc Subcommittee Updates

CEQA Determination:

Prepared By:

Recommendation:

- Director Sylvester and Chair Boeschon gave reminder on 3 commissioner seats becoming vacant on June 30th
- Applications to reapply are open online and are asked to be submitted by June 19th
- Commissioner Nelson gave a recap of Shakespeare in the Park, reporting an attendance of 150 in the audience
- Commissioner Nelson gave an update on Art Discussion and Commissioner Smithers and Nelson will meet to discuss with staff and bring back an update at the June meeting
- Commissioner Boeschon gave background on the goal of the Cross-Community Integration subcommittee and hopes to see it continue
- Commissioner Thompson requested that staff bring back the top 20 low-hanging projects for the commission to look at and narrow down to 10 to focus on for the next term
- Commissioners asked clarifying questions on tickets to submit to GrapeVine for their park areas

5. CONSENT ITEMS

5.1. Parks and Recreation Commission Meeting Minutes of April 20, 2026

CEQA Determination:

Prepared By:

Recommendation:

Motion to Approve the Parks and Recreation Commission Meeting Minutes of April 20, 2026 with an clerical edit to the last sentence on item 4.1.

6. SCHEDULED ITEMS

6.1. Grapevine Ticket Report

CEQA Determination:

Prepared By:

Recommendation:

- Director Sylvester presented the January-Current date and April 18– May 18 of Park and Recreation-related Grapevine Report
- Commissioner Thompson asked how priority to items are determined
- Staff responded that safety is top priority and then staff's ability and availability go into further detminations
- Commissioners request that the monthly report moving forward is for just the previous month. The June meeting will be the report of the May tickets

6.2. Public Works CIP Presentation FY27

CEQA Determination:

Prepared By:

Recommendation:

- Director of Public Works Joe Leach gave a presentation for Public Works CIP FY27
- Commissioner Jenanyan asked a question regarding realistic that the CIP list can be amended if items are asked to be added?
- Director Leach noted that the CIP list has been amended when priority and funding come up for projects in the past and could in the future as well
- Commissioner Thompson thanked Director Leach for the presentation and showing where the baseline is for Parks and Recreation projects stand and where to look for future CIP projects and cycles

7. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

1. Lewis Station Park - June Meeting
2. Staff and Commissioner priorities for FY 26–27– June Meeting
3. Art Discussion Update — June Meeting
4. Community Forest Update from Director Joe Leach at future meeting

8. ADJOURNMENT

The next Regular Parks and Recreation Commission meeting is scheduled for June 15, 2026.

Meeting Adjourned at 7:36 PM

APPROVED:

ATTEST:

Doug Boeschen, Chair

Ashley Sylvester, Staff Liaison