



Winnemac Park Advisory Council, March Meeting Minutes

Date: Wednesday, March 11, 2026

Time: 6:15pm

Location: Amundsen Library

Introduction and Call to Order

Approval of February Minutes? Yes.

February Meeting Minutes can be found upon our website (www.winnemacpac.org/WPAC-meetings)

Approval of March Agenda? Yes

Members in Attendance (19 total, 9 total voting members): Jacob Schuster, Amy Williamson, Tessa Groll, Jeff Borden, Amy Reeder, Claire Howard, Lisa Ragucci, Sarah Harpring, Ron Rasmussen, Rick Marron, Lise Helene, Richard Kallad, Danielle Neergheen, Kayla Granados, Anne Sylvan, Tony Correa, Diana Diaz, Amy Kunz, Margaret O' Conor

Supervisor Reports

Park Supervisor Report, Lisa Ragucci

- **Grub infestation & treatment:** Despite seeing the signs months ago, the park district today officially confirmed that the southwest fields will require treatment in the upcoming months. During that time, the fields are anticipated to be fenced off and restricted from use until June 1st (timeframe is always subject to change). We did raise the question as to what kind of solution would be used and whether or not solutions would be harmful to any other aspects in our park (ie: impact on birds who consume grubs post treatment, chemicals used on the lawn, etc). We are currently acquiring more details into what this process entails and how it will impact the community and relay as those updates become available. To review the documentation that was provided, you will find that at the bottom of this document.

- **Movies In The Park will be coming to Winnemac Park in June;** date and time is still being determined and will be announced as soon as they are confirmed.

WINNEMAC PARK MOVIE: Wicked

- **Ribbon-cutting ceremony for our turf baseball field** (northside) will be occurring on April 10th. This will gather various stakeholders for announcements and recognition. **NOTE:** This field will also be utilized by [Chicago Metropolitan Baseball Association](#) in the upcoming months as they rejoin us after a two-year hiatus. We look very forward to them joining us for WFFA, where they will be playing a game for the community at 2:00 PM on Saturday, July 4th.

- **Crack In New Pickleball/Tennis Court:** unfortunately, it has been brought to our attention that there is a sizable crack in the tennis court closest to our central prairie. There are plans to communicate this concern as they are recent updates to our park and should not have endured this damage so quickly. More updates will become available as we have them; as of now, this does not seem to be curtailing playing time or capabilities to use the court.
- **Complaints From Pickleball/Tennis Players (dogs in courts):** we understand that allowing dogs to run in a fenced area may seem like a viable and safer way for your dog to enjoy our park off-leash. That said, we do ask that these spaces, along with our prairies/natural areas, remain dog-free.

Treasurer's Report, Claire Howard

CURRENT FINANCIAL STANDING AS OF MARCH 11, 2026

We currently have ~\$6,500 in the account

Fundraising efforts for WFFA/General Donations have begun. The WPAC is in the process of reaching out to local businesses, partners, and individuals in our mission to raise funds for Winnemac Fourth For All. Thus far, we have received some wonderful contributions and look forward to seeing where our continued efforts lead us. Last April, we did a campaign that focused on Fundraising; this was a group effort that allowed us to tap into our personal networks in order to raise money for WFFA and beyond. This time of year seemed to be beneficial for us, therefore, we hope to employ those efforts once more in addition to our current fundraising outreach.

Public Comment:

Margaret O'Connor emphasized the importance of the lights being finalized for the new turf stadium. With the news of grubs, this will be minimizing the use of available fields this season, which can significantly impact girls softball. Because there should be equity in field use, having lights available will allow more than one game to occur in a day, which would then prioritize and allow the Amundsen softball team to play and practice on a home field. We want to see what we can do as a WPAC in order to prioritize this arrangement and support her encouragement of creating a fair playing field (no pun intended).

Old Business

There will be **NO** beer sales happening at upcoming **Edgewater Castle Football Club** (ECFC) games here in Winnemac Park. This was a measure that was heavily debated and voted upon by the WPAC. While our vote passed with a "YES", the snag came from Chicago Public Schools saying "absolutely not." Therefore, the sales and consumption of beer at these games will no longer be occurring in the 2026 season.

Related items:

- ECFC may provide additional presence/security around football stadium and baseball turf during WFFA to prevent any potential damage to either field.
- They may also be a part of our WFFA event in hosting a soccer class for kids / scoring games

Upcoming WPAC Newsletter: our upcoming newsletter will be going out to our mailing list. This will include future happenings within Winnemac Park, what the PAC is currently focused upon, and recent activity to our natural areas. If you would like to be added to our email list, please let us know by dropping us a line here: winnemacpac@gmail.com

New business

WPAC Purchase Authorization Vote: there was a vote upon the delegation of purchasing authority for the council. The internal council group working on organizing and planning our upcoming Winnemac Fourth For All (WFFA) will require upcoming purchases that will require expedient approval. By delegating this authority, it will allow the organizing individuals to work in accordance to our timeline and required deadlines. Therefore, any expenditures in relation to WFFA will require approval from Claire and Jacob and will not require overreaching WPAC member approval.

Deb Miretzky shared a report from Block Club Chicago about a self-service two-toilet bathroom facility being installed in the Wicker Park area. The toilet itself was free under a program by JCDecaux which provides street furniture in Chicago, with additional money coming from donations and public funds. . We continually work to address the bathroom situation in Winnemac and would need to reach out to Alderman Vasquez, who has suggested this type of toilet in the past, to find out more. We do anticipate two portable bathrooms along the grub issue. The company that provided these last year did a considerably better job of keeping them clean with regular visits. The Block Club article referenced may be visited [HERE](#).

Photoshoots in the park during warmer months: we love that people use our park as a backdrop for their memories. That said, in recent years, we seem to have an oversaturation of multiple photoshoots occurring at once in our park during warmer months. This tends to take up prime areas of the park, with some photographers blocking off prairie pathways. While we do not in any way discourage this activity, we do encourage those who may be interested in using our park for a photoshoot, to donate to the park and council. To do so, please visit: www.winnemacpac.org/donate-1

Nature Committee Report, Amy Williamson

Earth Day Clean-Up | Friends of The Parks | Saturday, April 18th 9:00 - 12:00 PM:

Amy Williamson has signed up to host on behalf of Winnemac Park, which will allow neighbors and caring citizens to help with trash collection in celebration of Earth Day. Here, we can focus on areas that will be harder to tend in the months ahead, allowing our prairies to be free of trash and encouraging abundant wildlife activity. We will be provided with trash bags and gloves.

Mulch pile on the SW end of the park (outside playground): this is a result of our recent Weeping Willow stabilization project, where this incredible tree was pruned in order to be more structurally sound and to increase longevity. She was mulched onsite and left for us to use for our prairie trails. One of our volunteer days will focus on using those remains in order to make our pathways easier for strolling.

Recent prescribed burn in Winnemac: Two of our prairies were burned on March 2, 2026; the easternmost pathway prairie patch and the easternmost pocket patch (that held the recently removed Common Hackberry). We anticipate the remainder of our patches to receive burns prior to April 30th, however, this is always dependent upon weather and seasonal capabilities, as burns will not go beyond a certain date and require the right conditions to be carried out effectively. To learn more, please review the attachments included below that may help cover a few curiosities and inquiries.

Red-winged Blackbird nesting signs: in order to respect the space of our favorite ground-nesting birds, we had four movable yard-signs made for when nesting spots have been identified (aka: where all the head-bopping happens). This will be able to notify patrons of their presence while allowing folks to understand the behavior of these misunderstood, yet beloved birds.

Walk and Talk Tours: We have 13 tours in mind for Winnemac this year, allowing our local neighbors to get plenty of exposure to our park’s incredible prairies and wildflowers, trees, Winnemac history, and beyond. This will be the most we have ever featured and will be led by Tessa, Amy and Jon with a few guest appearances from the folks at The Chicago Ornithological Society once bird migration is in full swing. Amy has plans of hosting a **drawing class** in the park and Jon will be leading a **Generative Haiku** walking session, allowing us to have interactive tours on the books.

Volunteer Days: We will be continuing our usual volunteer days on the last Saturday of each month from April - November from 9:00 AM - 12:00 PM. We will be adding the third Tuesday evening of each month to our roster in July, August, and September from 6:30 - 8:30 PM. Volunteer days are as follows:

Saturday, April 18th - Earth Day Clean-Up	9:00a - 12:00p
Saturday, May 30th	9:00a - 12:00p
Saturday, June 27th	9:00a - 12:00p
Tuesday, July 21th	6:30p - 8:30p
Saturday, August 1st	9:00a - 12:00p
Tuesday, August 18th	6:30p - 8:30p
Saturday, August 29th	9:00a - 12:00p
Tuesday, September 21st	6:30p - 8:30p
Saturday, September 26th	9:00a - 12:00p
Saturday, October 24th	9:00a - 12:00p
Saturday, November 28th	9:00a - 12:00p

Please see below for documented updates covering upcoming grub treatment and our recent prescribed burn.



Administration Office
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March 9, 2026

Hello Welles and Winnemac Park Stakeholders,

Our landscape team at the Chicago Park District has been evaluating our fields across the city and planning for seasonal preparation. During these site visits, they have discovered a grub infestation, (similar to what occurred in 2023) with grubs visible at two North Region sites, Welles and Winnemac Parks.

The landscape team has scheduled with our contractor, Christy Webber Landscapes, for grub treatment and reseeding to begin mid-April. This is the earliest date as this work is weather dependent.

Once the fields have been reseeded, they will be closed for 8-10 weeks for restoration to allow the new grass to become established.

Again, all of this work is weather permitting, but we are hoping for the fields and baseball diamonds to be ready for play on June 1st at Winnemac Park and on July 1st for Welles Park.

In order to continue our programming, including youth baseball, CPS High School Sports, partnerships and special events, we are securing nearby locations as alternative sites. This was very successful in 2023 due to our communication, flexibility and collaboration with these groups and should be again in 2026.

My team, including Area Manager Dennis Gonzalez, Park Supervisors Joe Benson (Welles) and Lisa Ragucci (Winnemac) will work closely with partners to secure nearby sites for relocation.

If you have any questions, please feel free to reach out.

Thank you,

Stacey Anti
North Region Director



Winnemac Park
Advisory Council

WPAC 2026

Park Updates

PRESCRIBED BURNS

As always, you can keep up to date with us by visiting:

WWW.WINNEMACPAC.ORG



Prescribed Burns at Winnemac Park:

On Monday, March 2, 2026, two of our nine prairies received burns: the easternmost prairie pathway patch and the easternmost “pocket patch” that held our recently removed Common Hackberry. This is the first time that our pocket patches will undergo this treatment, making it a very exciting happenstance here in Winnemac.

All of our prairies were prepped for burns, which entails edging along the fences and removal of excess brush ahead of time. While only two were touched by flame on Monday, we anticipate the others to experience the heat prior to the arrival of the equinox (March 20th).

There have been a lot of questions around this activity. We hope to cover a sliver of your curiosity here, and as always, if you have additional questions or pictures of the burn you would like to share, feel free to drop us a line at: winnemacpac@gmail.com.

WANT TO GET INVOLVED? JOIN US ON MARCH 11TH @ 6:15 FOR OUR NEXT WPAC MEETING!

Amundsen Library | Room 118

The Burning Question(s): Prescribed Burns

Q. WHY ARE OUR PRAIRIES BEING BURNED?

A: This practice is essential to ensure that prairies not only receive the essential nutrients they need, but helps to rid of invasive growth and dense thickets of brush that may be prohibitive to our beloved wildflowers. A burn is exceptionally beneficial to these spaces despite appearing ominous. This is a practice we acquired from indigenous tribes, who employed these tactics to ensure a lush prairie, therefore securing a fruitful hunting season.

Q. WAS THIS PRESCRIBED BURN A PLANNED EVENT?

A: The Chicago Parks District provided ample notice with signage in our park and emails to our Park Stewards, however, it is hard to “plan” a burn. This action is very much dictated by the weather; winds can play a major impact on their efforts and therefore, it is determined on a day-by-day basis as to when conditions are most appropriate. **Burns are conducted by the Parks District between November 1st - April 30th** as these are appropriately timed with a natural cycle. The day of the anticipated burn, those who signed up to receive text or emails were notified that Winnemac Park was slated for the flame.

Q. WHAT HAPPENS TO THE INSECTS DURING A BURN?

A: We hear a lot about “leaving the leaves”, which is wonderful, especially in areas where natural spaces like Winnemac are not easily available to host an abundance of insects and critters. That said, prairies are in their own league; they are composed of native plants that require such measures in order to act as the habitats we know and love during the warmer months. Burns provide a much more enriching space for our smallest friends to thrive, but does impose some harm on those caught between the flame. The timing of the burns are done when insect and avian activity is minimal. Additionally, our prairies are not burning long enough to go beyond the surface of the brush (many of our tiniest friends are underground during the time burns are conducted). This method does not remove *all* growth from our prairies, allowing areas of shelter to still be present. Those that sadly perish do not go without recognition, for they help to benefit our beautiful prairies among the ashes.

THANK YOU!
WWW.WINNEMACPAC.ORG



EMAIL US AT:
WINNEMACPAC@GMAIL.COM

Minutes submitted by Tessa Groll, WPAC Secretary with edits and inclusions from Deb Miretzky (WPAC Vice President)