



Winnemac Park Advisory Council, September Meeting Minutes

Date: Wednesday, September 9, 2026

Time: 6:15pm

Location: Amundsen HS (Rm 118)

Board Members: Jacob Schuster, Deb Miretzky, Claire Howard, Tessa Groll, Sarah Harpring

Approval of August Minutes? Yes.

All meeting minutes available at:

www.winnemacpac.org/WPAC-meetings

Approval of September Agenda? Yes

Members in Attendance: 17

Total voting members: 13

Jacob Schuster, Deb Miretzky, Dave Miretzky, Tessa Groll, Amy Williamson, Lisa Ragucci, Mike Pavilon, Diana Diaz, Danielle Neergheen, Tony Correa, Anne Sylvan, Richard Kallad, Robert Lau, Rick Marron, Angelica Duran-Spinks (*Trillium Wilds*), Jake Borgwardt, Sarah Beth Tanner

Current list of voting members (*includes all with voting capabilities, not just those present*)

Jacob Schuster, Deb Miretzky, Dave Miretzky, Claire Howard, Sarah Harpring, Chelsea Brown, Tessa Groll, Amy Williamson, Lisa Ragucci, Mike Pavilon, Diana Diaz, Danielle Neergheen, Tony Correa, Anne Sylvan, Richard Kallad, Robert Lau, Rick Marron, Jeff Borden, Amy Reeder, Ron Rasmussen, Lise Helene, Mary O'Connor

Voting measures covered: by attending two meetings in a row, you obtain voting rights on the third consecutive meeting you attend. You keep those rights through the year unless you fail to be present for at least four additional meetings.

PARK SUPERVISOR'S REPORT, Provided by Lisa Ragucci

- Plumber will be coming out Thursday 9/10 to assess the collection of standing water off Seeley entrance; this began occurring shortly after the waterline project in that area was finalized. They are going to try to see if they can find the source.
- No updates on repairs to central tennis court (crack on its north side)
- **Fiesta Mexicana Recap** (Sept 3rd): ~100+ people attended

UPCOMING EVENTS IN WINNEMAC PARK:

→ [Free Yoga in The Park](#), Adult Class courtesy of Bloom Yoga
Saturday, September 12 @ 10:00 - 11:00 AM

→ **September Storytime:** *Goodbye Summer, Hello Autumn* by Kenard Pak

Presented by: *Time and A Half Books & The Winnemac Park Advisory Council*
Sunday, September 13 @ 10:00 - 11:00 AM

→ **Nature Storytime with Miss Ruby:** Friday September 18 @ 10:30=11:00.

→ **Nature Under The Night Sky: Campfire, S'mores & more!**

Chicago Park District + Winnemac Park Advisory Council October 29, 2026 @ 6:00pm

WPAC will be there with s'mores fixings while Chicago Park District brings the materials to make it happen! Come on by, throw a mallow on a graham, and enjoy an evening in Winnemac among friends, family, and community. Time and a half Books will be contacted to see if they would like to provide a Halloween storytime.

→ **Wender Collective Recap:** Jacob, Tessa, and Claire tabled at the event and thought it went very well; Winnemac had a wonderful turnout both nights they were present. They provided tours of our natural areas, native plant giveaways, and a lovely original movement piece set to music. It was a wonderful way for families to gather on the lawns for an otherworldly experience. Jacob talked with the individual representing Night Out In The Parks and advocated for additional events

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Diana Diaz covered the 40th Ward People's Budget update. There is currently a nature playspace project on the ballot for Winnemac Park; Chicago Park District needs to provide an estimate of what this addition would cost in order to be included on the ballot. CPD needs to be pushed to complete this requirement. p Jacob will follow up with Kiala Moore and noted it was important to work on driving this vote in the same way as was successful in getting Chapell's playground upgraded.

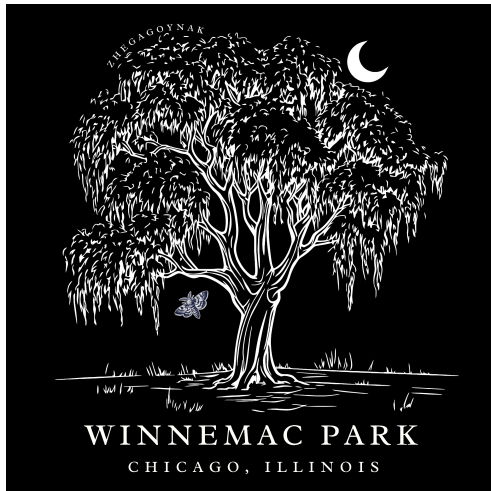
TREASURER'S REPORT, Provided by Jacob Schuster on behalf of Claire Howard

Current financial standing as of: September 8, 2026

We currently have ~\$8,566 in our account; recent expenditures include

- **New signage:** see *graphic below* (~\$40). These signs would remind individuals to stay on the paths while in prairie areas. Signage was further prompted by ball players who, at times, have multiple players wading through the prairies to seek foul balls.
- Re-outlined expenditure process for natural areas (\$800 to go toward new plants/trees/shrubs for the park (invasive/imperiled plants)
- Autumn/Winter Winnemac Park T-shirts that feature a new design (55 ordered)
 - Selling for **\$30**/shirt for cash sales → **\$35**/shirt for credit card sales

- Expenditure: ~\$600 total → ~\$10/shirt → selling 20 will cover costs



T-shirt Designs for our Fall/Winter Collection

Please Respect Our Natural Areas!

Remain on the prairie pathway at all times.

Doing otherwise may cause injury and can bring an unwanted disturbance to our native plants & nesting critters.

Help us to preserve these spaces for nature.

Thank You!

Winnemac Park
NATURAL AREAS COMMITTEE



New park signage to minimize impact on our natural areas

NEW BUSINESS

→ State of Lincoln Square from Heart of Lincoln Square @ Dank House, August 25th

Recap: Tessa Groll spoke on behalf of the council and shared insights on the WPAC's fundraising efforts, Winnemac Fourth For All, increased volunteer presence, and prairie highlights with those in attendance.

→ Bathroom Update, Provided by Deb Miretzky

WPAC will explore various options for providing a more permanent bathroom solution to what we currently have—which is limited, intermittent access to stadium bathrooms and port-o-potties that are not guaranteed for the future. Alder Vasquez is supportive of this effort but indicated that there needed to be more concrete information regarding possible options and their costs before looking into funding.

At this time, Deb has spoken with a rep from JCDecaux, which can provide a free self-cleaning toilet which the company will maintain at no charge, but installation must be funded by raising money via public and/or private sources. The cost of installation could be as high as half a million dollars but we do not know for sure until research by the Park District occurs. Sewer, water, and electricity connections would be necessary for a Decaux toilet.

There is also a need to research other companies that manufacture free-standing public toilets. Deb will reach out to those who indicated on the fall 2025 survey that they were interested in advocating for the park. These toilets may or may not need hookups. It would

be helpful to speak with public works officials in cities where these have been installed to have an idea of how they have worked out.

Another possibility are the regular port-o-potties that Winnemac has during the baseball season, but 1) increasing the number so more of the park is covered year round and 2) negotiating maintenance responsibilities. Right now the Park District pays for the toilets that are in the park out of fees Welles Park Parents Association (WPPA) pays for the use of the ballfields and so their availability is directly related to the baseball season.

Stacey Anti, the Director of the North Region of CPkD, will be contacted to find out how to proceed in terms of understanding what makes sense for Winnemac and next steps.

Finally, a new bathroom survey will be constructed to provide hard data we can share with Alder Vasquez and other officials involved in this process, and as a valuable way to collect important feedback from the community. We are aware that while there is significant public sentiment for clean bathrooms in the park, there are also concerns related to providing them, and we hope to have a productive conversation leading to some resolution of this decades-long problem.

Anne Sylvan, WPAC Member, provided thoughts on trying to utilize what we have available (stadium bathrooms, additional portable bathrooms, etc) versus trying to select an option that requires heavy spending and potential impact upon the park.

Richard Kallad, WPAC meeting attendee, underscored the importance of promoting health and brought up the accessibility to health/hand-washing, and proper facilities being available in order to keep and encourage sanitary measures in a public space.

SURVEY TIMELINE: The survey would be open to anyone who uses the park; we are hoping to obtain a vote via email in the near future as current voting members have been collected.

NATURAL AREAS REPORT, Provided by Amy Williamson, Lead Natural Areas Steward

Amy reported that our prairies are doing spectacularly this year, enhanced by the rains and burns that we received in the late winter/early spring. She gave a nod to the data collection and insights that Tessa has provided, giving us ~3 years of photos, observations, and formal tracking for our park. From wildflowers, birds, insects, and trees, we have greater data than ever before. This allows us to not only know what is present in our park, but helps us to communicate Winnemac's needs as well as identify clear goals for our prairies.

Our goal with the funding provided by the WPAC will be to increase our presence of endangered and imperiled wildflowers in our park, allowing us to give these species a home.

Items touched upon in Heart of Lincoln Square: State of Lincoln Square meeting in September at the Dank Haus. Attended by Jacob and Tessa, Information Presented by Tessa Groll

Since our new board was established in March 2024, we have seen a **consistent and growing presence in our community meetings**. These meetings are held 9-10 times a year and allow us to discuss issues that pertain to our park. We always invite folks who care about our park to join us in the conversation and put forth your concerns or ideas for our shared green space.

- We hosted our **3rd Annual Winnemac Fourth For All** this year; had we not experienced a day of weather obstacles, this would have been our best year yet. We planned well, had a lot of community engagement and presence and all of our vendors returned from prior years. Even with the rain, we were still able to have Full Moon Jam perform in the evening hours.

- **Our Fundraising efforts in recent years have proven to be very successful;** while we are always seeking donations and sponsors to support us, we drive a fundraising campaign each May. In 2026, we saw a significant jump in funds acquired, which allowed us to not only increase offerings for our WFFA event, but throughout the year. These funds also go toward our natural areas, where our park stewards assess our spaces and make additions based on needs or enhancing diversity.

- **Chicago Metropolitan Baseball Authority** and **Edgewater Castle Football Club** both made Winnemac their home park this year, giving our community more to engage with on a semi-professional/amateur level.

- For the first year perhaps ever, we had **portable bathrooms** in the park from May and will continue to be present through October. This solved a prior issue for us, which we hope to continue to remediate in the future.

- We are aware that we have **scooters** that zip through our parks and pathways and that this poses a danger to not only patrons, but those driving them. Until there is a larger solution put forth by those greater than ourselves, we always encourage people to be mindful when using our park and pathways.

We have had the pleasure of not only hosting a few events ourselves, but collaborating with talented groups that bring entertainment to our lawns. This allows neighbors to enjoy free events while the council has the chance to enhance those offerings. In turn, we are able to raise money to support future community efforts.

- ***Two Shakespeare in the Park troupes***

- ***Night Out In The Parks events (Fiesta Mexicana, Wender collective, Bonfire)***
- ***Movies In The Park***

Our website and social media seem to be effective in allowing folks to know what is happening in the park and continues to grow. In collaboration with others who perform or host events, we are consistently told Winnemac brings the largest crowd.

As our secretary, natural areas steward-in-the-making, and someone who highlights our park via writing and photography, I know how much these spaces mean to the community. We not only had our **CHILDREN'S GARDEN** revived this year, we had a handful of wildflowers arise that we have not had present in our park prior thanks to the work of seed spreading & volunteer efforts. ***Cardinal Flower, Spotted Bee Balm, Rose Milkweed (Ice Ballet).***

During Volunteer days, we focus on adding plants that add a great benefit not only in terms of prairie diversity, but for our visiting species. Our goal is to not only remove invasive growth, but to incorporate imperiled or endangered plants within our state. This enhances the ability to protect these spaces as well as gives rare wildflowers a place to thrive. ***Kankakee Mallow, Large-flowered Fame Flower, and Prairie Smoke.*** This year, we **added week-day volunteer evenings** for the first time ever, allowing more people to participate.

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