City of Blair Regular Parks, Recreation and Cemetery Advisory Board Meeting
June 16, 2026

Agenda Item #1 – The Blair Parks, Recreation and Cemetery Advisory Board met in regular session in the City Council Chambers on Tuesday, June 16, 2026, at 5:30 PM with Chairman Anderson presiding.

The Chairman publicly stated to all in attendance that a current copy of the Nebraska Open Meetings Act was available for review and indicated the location of such copy posted in the room where the meeting was being held. Notice of the meeting was given in advance thereof by publication in the Enterprise or the Pilot -Tribune as shown by the affidavit of publication filed in the City Clerk's office. Notice of the meeting was simultaneously given to the members of Blair Parks, Recreation and Cemetery Advisory Board and the agenda is filed in the City Clerk's office. Availability of the agenda was communicated in the advance notice and in the notice to the Mayor and Council of this meeting. All proceedings hereafter shown were taken while the convened meeting was open to the attendance of the public.

Agenda Item #2 – Roll Call of members – The following were present: Betsy Anderson, Sarah Boeka, Joe Burns, Corey Hafer, Kristi Rounds, and Dean Thoene. Also present was Deputy City Administrator of Public Works Heaton.

Agenda Item #3 – Approval of minutes from the May 19, 2026, meeting – Motion by Joe Burns, second by Sarah Boeka to approve the minutes of the May 19, 2026, meeting as presented. Council members voted as follows: Betsy Anderson: Yea, Sarah Boeka: Yea, Joe Burns: Yea, Corey Hafer: Yea, Kristi Rounds: Yea, Dean Thoene: Yea. All Council members voted: Yea: 6, Nay: 0. Chairman Anderson declared the motion carried.

Agenda Item #4 – Budget Report for May 2026 –No questions were raised by board members, and no action was required, so the board moved forward without discussion.

Agenda Item #5 – Consider a recommendation to the City Council of updated rules, regulations, and fees for the Blair Cemetery – Deputy City Administrator Heaton presented updated cemetery rules and fees for the Board to consider and recommend forwarding to the City Council. Key rule changes included increasing the maximum number of burials per grave space from two to three. The change was developed through an ad hoc committee involving Cemetery/Parks Supervisor Bilslend and a local funeral home. This would allow families to put one regular burial and two cremations, or three cremations in one space. No more than three burials will ever be permitted per space. If a cremation needs to be removed to allow for a full burial, the family will need to pay all appropriate fees and follow any appropriate state regulations for disinterment. Headstone rules remain unchanged; if the existing stone has no room for a third name, the family must replace the stone entirely because no additional footstones will be allowed. Regarding fees, it has been at least five years since the last fee update. A flat $50 increase was applied across all existing fee categories. The current cost paid to Olson for grave digging is $500, leaving the city approximately $50 after expenses plus staff time. A new $100 fee was introduced for headstone layout services provided to the Catholic cemetery, whose previous layout staff member retired. The Catholic cemetery has fewer survey pins (approximately every 100 feet vs. every 20 feet in the city cemetery), requiring more manual measurement using strings and tape.

The fee was designed to cover staff time and materials, not generate profit, and is consistent with staking fees charged by most surveyed cemeteries. The board discussed whether the fee would be waived if the Catholic Church hired its own staff, with consensus that the fee would only apply when city staff are actually called upon to perform the service. Motion by Corey Hafer, second by Kristi Rounds to recommend to the City Council the updated rules, regulations, and fees for the Blair Cemetery. Board members voted as follows: Betsy Anderson: Yea, Sarah Boeka: Yea, Joe Burns: Yea, Corey Hafer: Yea, Kristi Rounds: Yea, Dean Thoene: Yea. All Board members voted: Yea: 6, Nay: 0. Chairman Anderson declared the motion carried.

Agenda Item #6 – Consider a recommendation to the City Council on the possible location and installation of e-bike sharing stations in Blair – The Board revisited a previous presentation from Benny of the E-Bike Group regarding installing shared electric bike stations in Blair. The proposed budget was $50,000 per station sourced from Keno funds, of which approximately $240,000 is currently available. Two stations were initially proposed, each costing approximately $50,000. The NRD grant was approved pending their budget taking effect July 1. Proposed locations included Generations Park, the library, downtown (Art Alley, old library parking lot, VFW/Tribute Plaza area), Steyer Park, and the YMCA. Ongoing costs included a $4,000 annual maintenance fee per station and staff time for battery swaps (estimated a few hours per week), snow removal, and litter pickup, potentially incorporated into existing staff duties. Insurance would be maintained entirely by the bike share contractor (Heartland Bike Share), covering vandalism and bike damage. Users must be 16 or older verified through the app, though parents can check out bikes for younger children under their own account. Board concerns included: insufficient trail connectivity (approximately 11 miles of disconnected trails within the city), uncertainty that Blair residents would use the service, the ongoing and potentially burdensome nature of the commitment, weekend staffing gaps for battery maintenance, and preference for directing the $50,000 Keno match toward trail development first. Board member Hafer noted the program works well in Valentine due to a volunteer managing maintenance, and that Blair is not ready for the program until trails are better connected. Motion by Corey Hafer, second by Joe Burns recommended not moving the E-Bike stations forward at this time, leaving open the possibility of revisiting in 2027 once trails are more fully connected. Board members voted as follows: Betsy Anderson: Yea, Sarah Boeka: Yea, Joe Burns: Yea, Corey Hafer: Yea, Kristi Rounds: Yea, Dean Thoene: Yea. All Board members voted: Yea: 6, Nay: 0. Chairman Anderson declared the motion carried. Heaton noted the NRD grant funds could potentially be pivoted to trail infrastructure or the RV Park bathroom project if the E-Bike proposal is not pursued.

Agenda Item #7 – Deputy City Administrator Heaton Report – Deputy City Administrator Heaton stated the city is hosting the 4th of July fireworks for the first time, relocating the viewing area to the cemetery grounds and surrounding fields. Fireworks will be launched from the open field adjacent to the cemetery, but the cemetery gates will be closed once the fireworks crew is in position, preventing anyone from viewing inside the cemetery itself. Parking will be at the youth complex parking lot and high school parking lot, with spectators using soccer fields and grassy areas around the high school for seating. City staff will be present to manage crowd behavior, with additional police department personnel on duty. Traffic management plans include right-hand-turn-only exits from both the complex and high school lots, directing traffic to 10th Street and Highway 30/River Road respectively. Possible road construction on nearby OPD power main project may affect traffic flow; a traffic officer may be deployed if needed. The Chamber is coordinating food vendors including food trucks and Kona Ice. Softball and baseball organizations plan to operate the Hardy concessions stand and possibly the soccer concessions. Cleanup crew will be dispatched the following morning. The Rhoades family previously donated funds for Rhoades Park improvements that were not completed. This spring, an additional $5,000 was received from the Washington County Community Foundation. Park staff will begin improvements within the next one to two weeks. Plans include installing the mayor's family-donated sundial, rebuilding the rose garden with lower-maintenance knockout roses, adding new seating areas, and installing a permanent concrete chess table with benches. A $75,000 NRD grant has been secured for creek stabilization work reshaping the creek channel and installing new riprap to prevent continued loss of parkland and the footbridge. Existing budget funds remain available for bike trail expansion. Public works crews will continue from where they left off at 23rd and Nebraska Street, adding trail one block at a time until funds run out. A $50,000 NRD grant application has been submitted for additional bike trail funding, which if awarded would be matched with Keno funds for a combined $100,000 investment. The priority goal is completing a continuous east-west trail along Nebraska Street, connecting the existing segment at 10th and Nebraska with the one at 15th and Nebraska near the depot. A second planned connection runs down 19th Street past Hardy RV Park to Taco Bell which would connect two major trail sections and open up connectivity across a considerable portion of the city. The River Road Trail project, pending for about a year due to Union Pacific Railroad negotiations for a crossing permit, will connect the trail at Grant Street near the annex/extension office building, past the dog pound, over the railroad tracks, and tie into the Jackson Street trail. The city budget workshop is scheduled for June 30 at 5:30 PM. Heaton encouraged all board members to attend and noted the park budget items, including the RV Park bathroom project supported by a $250,000 Land and Water Conservation grant will be discussed. Chairperson Anderson emphasized that the bathrooms should be the board's top priority project to advocate for this year, noting they were cut from last year's budget in favor of $400,000 in police department funding. Heaton noted the $50,000 previously budgeted for E-Bike stations may now be pivotable toward the bathroom project. Board members were also encouraged to contact their individual City Council members directly about priority projects. City offices will be closed on Friday for Juneteenth. The original entrance archway at the youth complex was damaged when a delivery truck driver for the CHAOS organization attempted to back up instead of waiting, pulling the anchor points out of the top and cracking the concrete base. A local contractor removed the damaged structure. The archway would require structural X-ray assessment before any repair. The board discussed relocating and upgrading the entrance feature to be closer to the street, similar to the high school's entrance signage, incorporating an LED message board showing complex name, hours, and events. This would improve visibility, security, and advertising.

Agenda Item #8 – Adjournment – Motion by Sarah Boeka, second by Corey Hafer to adjourn the meeting 6:21 p.m. Board members voted as follows: Betsy Anderson: Yea, Sarah Boeka: Yea, Joe Burns: Yea, Corey Hafer: Yea, Kristi Rounds: Yea, Dean Thoene: Yea. All Board members voted: Yea: 6, Nay: 0. Chairman Anderson declared the motion carried.

Brenda Wheeler, Recording Secretary