



CITY OF GRAND PRAIRIE

Meeting Minutes

Botanical Gardens and Public Artwork Ad Hoc Committee

Thursday, September 24, 2026

5:00 PM

Betty Warmack Library
760 Bardin Rd.
Grand Prairie, TX

CALL TO ORDER

Chairwoman Adams called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m.

PRESENT

Chairwoman Bessye Adams

Deputy Mayor Pro Tem Jacquin Headen

Council Member Jorja Clemson - 5:10 p.m.

Committee Member Don Meiners

Committee Member Dr. Benita Reed

Committee Member Mal Earl

Committee Member Ray Cerda

Committee Member Lindsay Reeves

STAFF PRESENTATIONS

1. Recap and Follow-Up Items from Meeting 3

Deputy City Manager Mahan provided a recap of the Committee's work to date and reviewed the Committee's role in providing advisory input on the Botanical Garden and Public Artwork projects. Ms. Mahan noted that the Committee had progressed from identifying community needs and shaping the projects to prioritizing the elements that matter most, with the final meeting focused on confirming its advisory recommendations to City Council.

Ms. Mahan reviewed the Committee's previous direction for the Botanical Garden, including serving a broad mix of Grand Prairie residents, families and children, schools and students, older adults, and community groups. Core community needs identified by the Committee included community connection and gathering, programming, relaxation and wellness, family and children's experiences, horticultural education and learning, a beautiful and memorable civic space, and conservation and protection of natural resources.

Ms. Mahan also reviewed the proposed role of the Botanical Garden as primarily serving the Grand Prairie community through nature, education, wellness, and gathering, with resident use as the primary focus and destination appeal developing as an outcome rather than the primary driver of the project. The draft vision statement described a beautiful, welcoming garden where Grand Prairie residents can connect with nature, relax, learn, gather, and make memories.

For Public Artwork, Ms. Mahan reviewed the Committee's previous direction that public art should be experienced broadly throughout the Grand Prairie community and should create memorable places, bring art into everyday public life, enhance and beautify public spaces, and

create moments of surprise and delight. The proposed project role emphasized enhancing places and experiences residents already use while creating opportunities for community connection and pride.

2. Botanical Garden Cost Framework and Prioritization Exercise

Assistant Parks, Arts and Recreation Director Chris Michalski reviewed five benchmark projects provided by the City's consultant, OJB Studios, to illustrate a range of park and botanical garden sizes, programming, amenities, and investment levels. The benchmark projects included Woodchase Park, The Alamo Gardens, Downtown Cary Park, Myriad Botanical Gardens, and San Antonio Botanical Gardens. Mr. Michalski reviewed examples of features incorporated within the projects, including botanical and educational gardens, gathering and event spaces, children's areas, water features, amphitheaters, pavilions, lawns, trails, food and beverage facilities, and other programmed spaces.

Deputy City Manager Mahan then reviewed the project budget framework and discussed the soft costs associated with the Botanical Garden. Ms. Mahan stated that the project has a total budget of \$5 million, with a planning allowance of 30 percent, or approximately \$1.5 million, for project delivery and site preparation, leaving approximately \$3.5 million available for Phase 1 garden elements. She explained that the 30 percent allowance includes design and engineering, permitting and inspections, contingency and escalation, mobilization and general conditions, basic site preparation and grading, utility connections, required accessibility and site circulation, and other necessary project infrastructure.

Ms. Mahan emphasized that the figures are for planning purposes and that actual site-related costs will vary depending on the selected location, existing infrastructure, utilities, and other site conditions. She explained that the cost framework was intended to help the Committee understand the financial tradeoffs associated with its priorities before participating in the Botanical Garden prioritization exercise.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Citizens may sign up to speak for up to three (3) minutes. For multiple agenda items, a citizen may speak for up to five (5) minutes total for all items. All speakers must complete a comment card prior to the meeting being called to order. The views expressed during public comments are the views of the speaker and not the City of Grand Prairie or the Ad Hoc Advisory Committee. Committee members are not able to respond to comments related to any item not on the agenda. The full meeting agenda packet and supporting documents are available online on the City's website at www.gptx.org.

None.

ITEMS FOR INDIVIDUAL CONSIDERATION

3. Minutes of the September 10, 2026 Botanical Gardens and Public Artwork Ad Hoc Advisory Committee Meeting

Committee Member Don Meiners made a motion to approve the minutes of the September 10, 2026, Botanical Gardens and Public Artwork Ad Hoc Committee meeting as presented. Committee Member Ray Cerda seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

4. Consider Approval of the Botanical Garden Project Direction Summary and Vision Statement

Councilmember Jorja Clemson made a motion to approve the item as presented. Deputy Mayor Pro Tem Headen seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

5. Consider Approval of the Committee Recommendations for Botanical Garden Project Priorities

Deputy City Manager Mahan introduced the Botanical Garden prioritization exercise and reviewed the parameters for the activity. Ms. Mahan stated that the total project budget is \$5 million and explained that, for purposes of the exercise, 30 percent, or \$1.5 million, had been reserved for soft costs, contingency, and site preparation, leaving \$3.5 million for Phase 1 garden elements. She emphasized that the purpose of the exercise was not to build the entire garden within Phase 1, but to determine which elements should be included initially, preserved for future phases, or not included. Ms. Mahan also noted that the costs used in the exercise were planning-level estimates based on comparable construction projects and that actual costs may vary once a site is selected and design begins.

Chair Adams explained that the Committee would divide into two groups, with each group receiving the same set of project element cards. Each group was asked to categorize the elements as Phase 1, Future Phase, or Do Not Include while remaining within the available Phase 1 budget. Following the exercise, each group presented its recommendations to the full Committee. The Committee compared areas of agreement and differing priorities and discussed the selections in developing a collective recommendation to City Council.

Following the group presentations and discussion, the Committee reached consensus on its priorities for the initial Botanical Garden project. Phase 1 priorities included a simple amphitheater (\$259,182); complex curated botanical planting (\$750,000); simple educational garden (\$94,090); complex lawn (\$135,000); complex stone-paved trail (\$37,000); moderate water feature (\$650,000); and a 4,000-square-foot building with a \$2 million planning allowance based on an estimated \$500 per square foot.

As part of the discussion regarding project costs, the Committee expressed interest in identifying an existing location with parking and restroom facilities that could be utilized to help reduce the cost of developing the Botanical Garden.

All amounts used during the exercise were planning-level estimates intended to assist the Committee in evaluating and prioritizing project elements and were not presented as final design or construction costs.

{Council Member Jorja Clemson left the meeting at 6:07 p.m.}

Committee Member Mal Earl made a motion to approve the Committee's recommendations for Botanical Garden project priorities as discussed. Committee Member Ray Cerda seconded the motion. The motion carried 7-0 (Council Member Clemson absent).

6. Consider Approval of the Public Artwork Project Direction Summary and Vision Statement

Deputy Mayor Pro Tem Headen made a motion to approve Items 6 and 7 as presented. Dr. Benita Reed seconded the motion. The motion carried 7-0 (Council Member Clemson absent).

7. Consider Approval of the Recommendations for the Public Art Guiding Principles

Deputy Mayor Pro Tem Headen made a motion to approve Items 6 and 7 as presented. Dr. Benita Reed seconded the motion. The motion carried 7-0 (Council Member Clemson absent).

8. Future Meeting Dates

The Committee discussed topics for the next meeting and requested additional information to further define the Botanical Garden concept. The Committee requested clarification on the distinction between a botanical garden and an educational garden, along with examples of different types of botanical gardens and educational gardens, and a range of educational opportunities for both children and adults.

The Committee also discussed opportunities for educational garden elements to be incorporated in locations throughout the City and expressed interest in considering smaller themed garden components, such as a Japanese garden, as part of a future phase.

ADJOURNMENT

Chairwoman Adams adjourned the meeting at 6:34 p.m.

The foregoing minutes were approved at the October 15, 2026, Botanical Gardens and Public Artwork Ad Hoc Advisory Committee meeting.



Kristin Downs, TRMC
Deputy City Secretary