

Joint Parks and Recreation Committee Meeting Minutes

Lawrence Township Office

1:00pm

Date: May 6, 2026

Attendees:

- Alicia (Village Trustee), Mike Carpp, tom reynnnels, Dale Gribler, Dave Vanzoren, Tim Griffin
- Guests: Joelle (Consultant, Abonmarche), Nick Shelton, Ashley Regal

Purpose: To discuss the new accessible playground project, understand the scope of services from Abonmarche, review fundraising progress, and plan next steps.

Key Discussion Points:

1. **Abonmarche Services:** Joelle outlined the firm's services, which include design (site surveying, ADA-compliant civil design, playground structure selection), bidding (drafting bid packages, public bidding, contractor outreach), and construction oversight (project management, grant reporting, compliance).
2. **Bidding Process:** The grant requires a competitive bid. The committee can specify preferred manufacturers (e.g., Landscape Structures) as examples, requiring other bidders to propose "equal" products. The committee retains the right to determine equivalency.
3. **Community Input:** Abonmarche will facilitate public meetings for community and children's input. This will involve presenting pre-vetted, budget-appropriate options for elements (e.g., different slide types) and using methods like sticky notes for voting, ensuring budget control.
4. **Fundraising Status:** The project has a total budget of \$602,000, including a \$300,000 matching grant.
5. **Fundraising Strategies:**
 - **Marijuana Funds:** Alicia will inquire about using village marijuana sales revenue.
 - **Additional Grants:** The committee has contacted the Van Buren County Parks Commission and will explore other grant opportunities.

- **Patronicity Crowdfunding:** The state offers a matching grant program through Patronicity, where a target amount (e.g., \$50,000) raised via crowdfunding can be matched. This is considered for the tail end of fundraising, potentially a 30-day campaign ending around August.
 - **Promotional Efforts:** Plans include promoting at the Labor Day weekend festival, a museum car show, local media, and school social media.
6. **Volunteer Demolition:** Using volunteers for demolition could save money and be reallocated to equipment. However, liability remains with the village, and for in-kind contributions to count towards the grant, demolition must wait until the grant agreement is executed (estimated August 2026). Joelle will follow up on amending the grant application for an in-kind labor match
 7. **Flexibility:** The project can be scaled down if the full fundraising goal is not met, and the full grant award is not mandatory
 8. **Equipment Durability:** Landscape Structures is noted for better durability and longer warranties compared to Little Tikes, which is a significant factor given the 25-30 year life expectancy of the equipment.
 9. **Consultant Payment:** Abonmarche's fees are included in the grant. While hiring can occur now, the committee agreed it is safer to wait until the grant agreement is executed (estimated August/September) to reduce risk.
 10. **Surfacing:** Stephanie, salesperson from Little Tikes playground brought in samples of poured in place (PIP) surfacing and alternative ADA complaint surfacing samples. The rubber PIP compared to the turf surfacing: the turf surfacing is cheaper per/sqft and has a longer warranty. It's also easier to maintenance . Committee is leaning towards installing the turf surfacing due to price, warranty and easier maintenance down the road

Action Items:

- **Alicia:** Pose a question to the village about using marijuana funds for the playground
- **Joelle:** Follow up on whether the grant application can be amended to change the cash match to an in-kind labor match
 - **Committee:** Investigate the Patronicity program further and set up a crowdfunding campaign, likely for a 30-day run ending around August.
- **Abonmarche:** Send the link and information for the Patronicity program to the group.
- **Abonmarche:** Help make the connection with Sarah Snowey at the MEDC for the Patronicity campaign.

- **Committee:** Promote the playground project at the Labor Day weekend festival and set up a booth at the museum's car show
- **Committee:** Get press for the project in local media and use the school's social media channels
 - **Village:** Wait until the grant agreement is executed (estimated August/September) before officially hiring and paying the consultant
- **Village Trustee:** Once the grant agreement is received, present it at a village council meeting for approval