



PARKS COMMISSION AGENDA

Tuesday, May 5, 2026

4:30 PM

Berlin Police Department

1. Call to Order
2. Approval of Minutes for March 3, 2026
3. Presentation: Girl Scout Troop 365, Community Sensory Garden Proposal at Stephen Decatur Park
4. Park Updates
5. Comments from Staff
6. Comments from the Commission
7. Adjournment

Upcoming Meeting/Event Schedule:

Tuesday, May 5, 2026, at 4:30 PM

Tuesday, July 7, 2026, at 4:30 PM

Tuesday, August 4, 2026, at 4:30 PM (National Night Out)

Tuesday, September 1, 2026, at 4:30 PM

Tuesday, November 3, 2026, at 4:30 PM

Friday, November 13, 2026, at 5:30 PM (Glow Walk – *tentative*)

**Berlin Police Department, 129 Decatur Street, Berlin, MD 21811
Training Room
410-641-4002 for more information.**

Parks Commission
Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, March 3, 2026

4:30 PM REGULAR SESSION – Berlin Town Hall Council Chambers

Commission Members Present: Patricia Dufendach, Corey Davis, Kristen Gerhart, Melissa Gillespie, and Laura Stearns

Staff Present: Public Works Superintendent Cody Chesser and Special Projects Administrator Kate Daub

This meeting was also broadcast live via Facebook. Special Projects Administrator Kate Daub called the meeting to order at approximately 4:30 PM.

The meeting began with formal approval of the minutes from the previous meeting held on January 20th, 2026. A motion to approve the minutes was made by Patricia Dufendach, seconded by Ms. Gerhart, and unanimously approved by the Commission.

Ms. Daub transitioned the meeting to park development updates at Stephen Decatur Park and turned the meeting over to the Superintendent of Public Works, Mr. Cody Chesser. Mr. Chesser explained that funding was available in the current fiscal year to replace an existing spring jumper at the park. He said the jumper had been flagged during safety checks, is underused, and is considered outdated. Mr. Chesser added that the proposal is to replace it with a zip line, which was shown as an example in the meeting packet.

The idea is met with enthusiasm by the group, as Mr. Chesser noted that zip lines have been frequently requested by residents and are highly popular in other parks. While the zip line would require a significantly larger footprint, approximately 75 feet long by 25 feet wide, he said it can be accommodated within the available space.

Commission members asked questions about accessibility, height, and safety. Mr. Chesser explained that the zip line uses a disc-style seat that riders sit on, typically rated for children aged five to twelve, and is positioned only a couple of feet off the ground. He added that riders pull the seat toward themselves and mount from one end, with all supports embedded in the ground.

Ms. Stearns responded positively, noting that the park already had many climbers and slides and that a zip line would add a unique, appealing feature. Ms. Gerhart expressed excitement about the idea and suggested it aligned well with the available space and future park development opportunities. Mr. Chesser reiterated that this has been the most frequently requested piece of equipment he has heard about from park users.

Next, Mr. Chesser reported that a large tree had fallen onto the main playground structure at the back of the park, likely due to saturated ground conditions, causing significant damage. Ms. Daub added that, following the incident, the town was made aware that the playground equipment had been omitted from the town's insurance coverage years prior and was not insured. Mr. Chesser said that until the ground dries enough to allow machinery access, the damaged area had been coned off with caution tape, and the public had been asked to stay away. He continued to detail the extent of the damage, saying roughly half of

the playground unit was affected, including a slide that was broken off, a deck that was destroyed, and several structural uprights that were sheared. Mr. Chesser noted that the remaining half of the equipment had been left in place and isolated for safety and clarified that the playground unit, dated back to 2012, was grant-funded, with an expected life cycle of about 20 years.

Should insurance coverage be insufficient, especially since the playground is heavily used, Ms. Dufendach suggested incorporating donation opportunities, such as a collection jar, into the upcoming Spring Celebration, and the group supported the idea. Ms. Daub emphasized that the damaged playground would be out of service for an extended period and that commission members should be prepared to inform residents who inquire.

Mr. Chesser provided more context on the overall storm damage within the park. Based on his preliminary observations, he estimated that more than 30 trees were down, including one obstructing a trail near the restroom and water access area. While no additional major equipment damage had been identified, he said there were smaller issues, such as displaced stones and blocked trails. He further explained that staff planned to walk the entire trail to better assess conditions and determine what could be cleared immediately. He cautioned that cleanup would be a lengthy process, potentially taking several months, as public works crews are still focused on town-wide yard waste pickup, which had taken priority.

Ms. Daub added that many residents may not realize the same small public works department is responsible for storm cleanup, trash service, and other municipal tasks. Ms. Dufendach echoed this and suggested it may be helpful to remind the public of the scope of public works responsibilities and to express appreciation for the demanding and often dangerous work crews perform.

The conversation turned to tree chipping and material reuse. Mr. Chesser explained that crews are chipping debris as they go, though the process is slow. When asked whether the chips can be used in the parks, he clarified that playground mulch must be double-shredded and dye-free, making storm debris unsuitable for play areas. However, he noted that chips can be repurposed in other locations, such as wet or damaged areas of parking lots like West Street, to help stabilize the ground. Commission members supported this approach. Mr. Chesser also reported that Henry Park largely escaped damage, aside from a tree falling onto a fence, which is already scheduled for replacement.

With the discussion of storm impacts concluded, Ms. Daub noted the clear consensus around the proposed zip line and called for a formal motion. Ms. Dufendach motioned to approve the zip line installation as presented, seconded by Ms. Gerhart, and the motion was unanimously approved.

The meeting then shifted to planning the Parks Commission's Spring Celebration craft activity for the upcoming event scheduled for Saturday, April 4, 2026. Ms. Daub recalled that the commission had traditionally offered seed-based craft kits, while succulents offered at National Night Out were extremely popular but more expensive and in limited supply. She asked whether the group would prefer to return to the traditional kits or consider alternatives.

Ms. Stearns suggested choosing a park-related activity that avoids plastic. She initially considered paper kites but rejected the idea because the string could pose a choking hazard. She instead proposed paper pinwheels, recalling them as a fun, simple childhood activity. The idea was well received, with several

members noting that paper pinwheels could be affordable, seasonal, and enjoyable, especially if children can color them. Ms. Daub agreed to research pricing and move forward with the craft option if pricing allowed.

Before concluding the meeting, Ms. Daub provided a brief update on the Backyard Buffer program. She explained that the program had been promoted through social media and the Forestry Service and clarified that she is the contact person only for residents of Worcester County. She noted that eligibility generally requires property to be adjacent to or near a waterway and explained that the Forestry Service follows up with participants after installation.

Lastly, Ms. Daub provided a brief update on follow-up discussions regarding the town's pursuit of the Tree City USA designation. She indicated that town staff planned to meet with Mr. Greg Geesaman from the Forestry Service, who had presented at a previous meeting, to refine details and determine what the town would need to move forward with the designation he discussed.

With no further questions or comments, the meeting adjourned at approximately 5:24 PM.

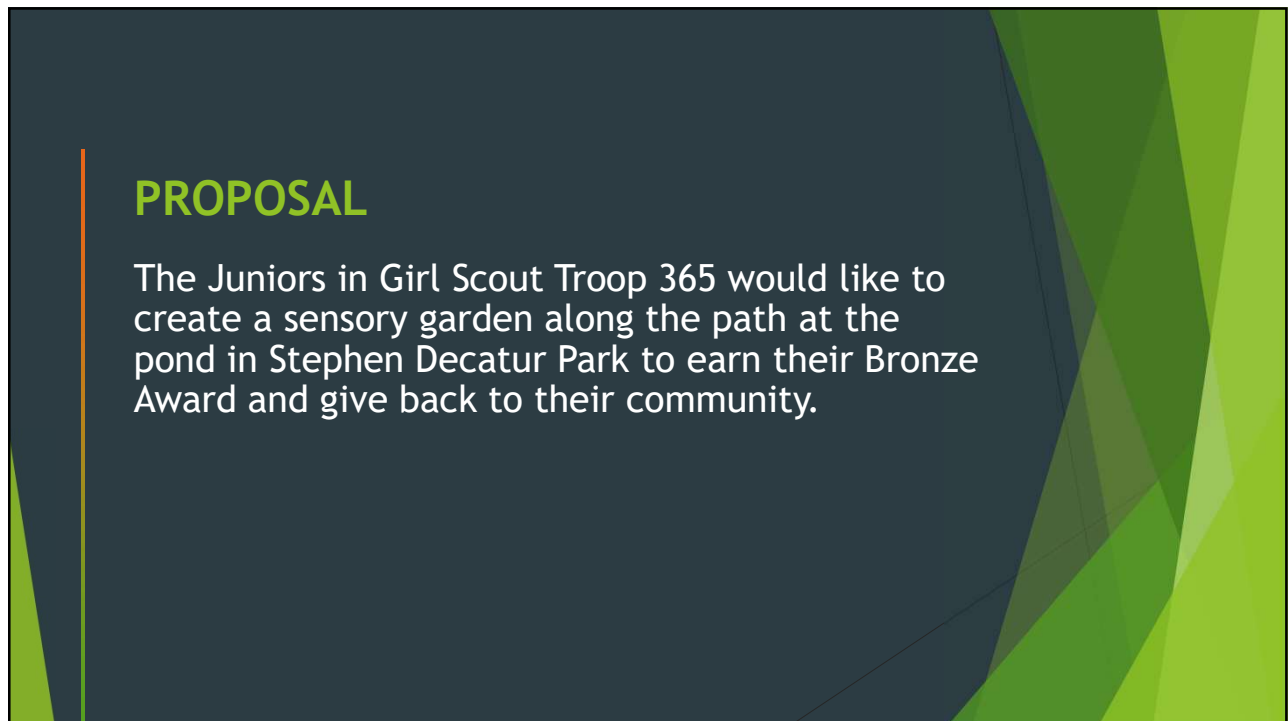
Respectfully submitted,



Kate Daub
Special Projects Administrator



1



2

What is a Sensory Garden?

- ▶ A sensory garden is a natural space that promotes connection with nature through a person's senses. It aims to help people become calm and relaxed when they are upset or stressed.

3

BENEFITS

- ▶ Sensory gardens provide a place for people of all ages to find connection with nature through their senses.
- ▶ Offers a stress reducing and calming environment.
- ▶ Helps individuals with sensory processing disorders, neurodivergence, and other mental and physical health limitations feel the therapeutic benefits of nature.

4

The garden will be set up as three stations along the path surrounding the pond, each focused on a separate sense (smell, touch, sound and sight).



5

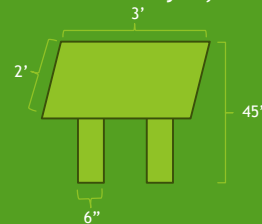
Garden Entrance

► Entrance:

There will be a sign with a wooden base at the path entrance with an explanation and troop acknowledgement:

*Welcome to the
Berlin Sensory Garden
by Girl Scout Troop 365 2026 Juniors*

Walk along the path and connect with your senses of smell, touch, sound, and sight. Slow down, observe the nature around you, and always remember to leave this place better than you found it.



6

STATION 1: SMELL STATION




- ▶ The first station will include a pollinator garden that will consist of fragrant perennial plants that are native to the area with blooms that will extend from spring through the end of summer.
- ▶ The garden will be a wooden raised garden bed with dimensions 10' x 5' x 2'
- ▶ A sign will be included near the garden bed with instructions for ways people can explore their sense of smell.


Sign Base: 4"x4" wood
 Sign: 1.5'x1' sign
 Height: 3'

7


STATION 1: SMELL STATION

▶ Fragrant native perennials will include:


▶ Daffodils




▶ Homestead Purple Verbena



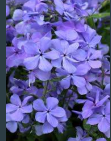
▶ Coral Bells




▶ Bee Balm




▶ Blue Moon Woodland Phlox



▶ Peacock White Garden Phlox



▶ Anise Hyssop



8


STATION 2: TOUCH STATION




- ▶ The second station will encourage people to explore their sense of touch by finding natural objects of different textures and sorting them within each section.
- ▶ A mulch path, edged with landscape edging, will lead people to a wooden box structure from the existing pond path. The box will have 6 square sections, and each will be labeled with a different texture name (smooth, rough, spiky, bumpy, soft, crunchy)
- ▶ A sign will be included near the mulch path with instructions for ways people can explore their sense of touch.
- ▶ Dimensions:
 - ▶ Box: 44" x 30"
 - ▶ Sign:
 - Base: 4"x4" wood
 - Sign: 1.5'x1' sign
 - Height: 3'

9

STATION 3: SIGHT & SOUND STATION

- ▶ The final station will encourage individuals to sit on the bench and look at the space around them to connect with nature and their sense of sight (Look up at the blue sky, look down at the fallen leaves, look at the ripples in the water, etc.)
- ▶ They will also be encouraged to connect with sounds in nature and their sense of sound by listening to the sounds of the birds, the water, the wind.
- ▶ A sign will be included near the mulch path with instructions for ways people can explore their sense of touch.
 - ▶ Sign:
 - ▶ Base: 4"x4" wood
 - ▶ Sign: 1.5'x1' sign
 - ▶ Height: 3'

10

STATION 3: SIGHT & SOUND STATION

▶ We would like to add Bird Houses, an Interactive Rain Stick, a Bat House and an Imaginative Nature Based Play Space:

▶ Bird Houses: We will select bird house plans to build 3 - 4 bird houses that are best for the local birds and hang them on the surrounding trees.



Robins



Chickadees



Tufted Titmouse

(among others)

▶ Interactive Rain Stick:

▶ People will be able to fill a capped pvc pipe with natural objects found on the ground to see how they sound traveling through the pipe. This will be connected to a 4x4 wood post.

▶ Imaginative Play Space:

- ▶ Children will be encouraged to build animal and fairy houses among the trees with the natural objects around them (sticks, fallen tree bark, leaves, stones, etc.) Troop 365 will create a toad house and fairy house set up to inspire imaginative play.

11

Questions?

Thank you for your consideration!

*The Girl Scout Troop 365 Juniors:
Alana, Anara, Ava, Erin, Eva, Harper,
Lennex, Lillian, and Mckenzie*

12