

LAWTON CITY LAKES AND LAND COMMISSION SPECIAL CALLED MEETING
MARCH 19, 2026, 4:15 PM
CITY HALL – BANQUET HALL
212 SW 9TH STREET, LAWTON, OKLAHOMA

Meeting was called to order at 4:15 p.m.

Kelvin Ingram: Deputy Director/Parks and Recreation Also Present: Dylan Dunavin/ Admin 2
James Bonnarens: Lakes Superintendent/Parks and Receptions

PRESENT: Kade McClure (Co-Chair)
Donald Smith
Jimmy Garrison
Robert Weger

Absent: Austin Rabon (Chair)
Mark Scott
Dustin Hilliary

Notice of the meeting and agenda were posted on the City Hall noticeboard as required by law.

1. Discuss possible improvements using the lake improvement funds in the School House Slough Park area.

Kelvin Ingram stated that, due to budget constraints, some of the projects will be postponed until the next fiscal year. We are going to go forward with the School House Slough Park site approved at a cost of \$120,209.02. The remaining parks, Lake Lawtonka Day use site, Est. \$161,215.68, Robinson's Landing site, Est. \$72,451.00, Lake Ellsworth site, Est. \$72,451.00, are the sites that will possibly be pushed to next fiscal year.

Bonnarens added that the playground currently located at School House Slough was likely installed in the 1980s when playground equipment in Lawton was replaced and relocated to the lake. He noted that much of the older playground equipment includes concrete barriers, which no longer meet today's safety standards. He expressed hope that the playgrounds at the day-use area, Robinson's Landing, and Ralph's Resort will be removed and replaced in the next fiscal year.

Garrison asked whether the total budget for the new playground equipment was known. Ingram responded that it is not at this time.

Garrison also pointed out that three sites have been designated for playground equipment at Lake Lawtonka, compared to only one at Lake Ellsworth. While he did not oppose this plan, he noted that, given the currently low water levels at Lake Ellsworth, it would be a good opportunity to focus on improvements there as well in order to attract more visitors.

Bonnarens stated that in his 16 years working in the Lakes Division, the majority of improvements have been made at Lake Ellsworth, with no new developments at Lake Lawtonka/School House Slough during that time. He noted that the boat ramps at Lake Ellsworth were funded through grants from the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation (ODWC). Additional improvements at Ellsworth include rebuilding the parking area at Ralph's Resort, installing a retaining wall, adding an ADA-accessible parking space, and completing the Collier's Landing project last year.

He added that while there are plans for further improvements, a hiring freeze and reduced staffing levels—currently down to four employees responsible for both lakes—have forced larger projects to be placed on hold. He also mentioned that a track hoe was borrowed from the rehab department to assist with burning accumulated dead trees, noting that there is currently no burn ban in effect.

There are plans to take the track hoe over to Ralphs Resort to remove boathouse material and pick up other trash that has been laying around while the water level is down. Future improvements to Fisherman's Cove have been discussed when staff, equipment and revenue become available.

2. Discussion regarding a portion of the road and bank restoration provided by City of Lawton Streets and Drainage Divisions at SHS.

Street Division and Drainage Maintenance began work on Monday, March 16, 2026, in the School House Slough area.

The Street Division is scheduled to pave the entire loop around School House Slough, including the section near the trailers and the lift station. Completion is expected within 2–3 weeks, weather permitting.

Drainage Maintenance crews are removing wood debris on the west side of the boat ramp and repairing the area to address erosion issues.

Asplundh will be in the park area cutting and removing an estimated 8 cottonwood trees.

Lake Commission – No report

Audience Participation – None

Unfinished Business – None

Business Items

3. Discuss and take action, if necessary, to purchase and place another restroom at Ralph's Resort due to increase recreational activities.

Bonnarens stated that the most recent quote for a comparable unit of the same size that is currently at Ralphs was just under \$130,000. In addition, there will be a utility stub-in fee estimated at between

\$5,000 and \$7,000 to cover sewer and water connections. The bathroom will be in addition to the restroom that is already in place.

The restroom has not yet been ordered. The item is currently under review by the legal department to confirm that we can proceed with purchasing through Sourcewell without going through the bid process. Once legal provides approval, we will move forward with the order.

Additional discussion occurred, with concerns raised about the revenue being collected at the lakes.

Motion: McClure made the motion to purchase and place another restroom at Ralph's Resort providing two restrooms. The motion was seconded by Smith.

Vote: AYES – McClure, Smith, Garrison, Weger

Result: Motion Passes

4. Discuss and take action if necessary, setting a height limit to boathouses on City of Lawton Lakes Lawtonka and Ellsworth.

Bonnarens stated that there is currently no height restriction on boathouses.

McClure raised a question regarding whether taller boathouses present a safety risk.

Bonnarens responded that the only boathouse known to have overturned was a two-story structure, and the cause was high wind. He expressed concern that two-story boathouses become significantly heavier once placed in the water due to saturated floats and added structural components. He also noted that this increased weight could create challenges during removal. Bonnarens further stated that the City may be losing a contractor experienced in removing boathouses, and there are currently two or three remaining structures that still need to be removed.

Weger asked whether it is the responsibility of the boathouse owner to arrange for removal.

Bonnarens responded that the Oklahoma Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) would hold the City responsible if boathouses remain in poor condition on the lake, regardless of ownership, potentially resulting in fines against the City.

Weger further asked whether there is a policy assigning responsibility to the owner. Bonnarens indicated that such a policy would be developed.

Smith stated that an owner could abandon a boathouse if they determine it is in poor condition, leaving the City responsible for removal costs.

Bonnarens asked the commission whether there was a need to establish a height limit for boathouses.

Smith asked for clarification on the height of the tallest existing boathouse and the distribution of one-story versus two-story structures. Bonnarens responded that the tallest structure is a two-story boathouse with a top deck, and most existing boathouses are one-story. He also noted that the City has an engineering division.

McClure suggested consulting City engineers to evaluate the issue and provide guidance on safe height limits.

After further discussion, the item was tabled. The commission recommended additional research, including engineering review and evaluation of potential height limitations for boathouses.

A motion was made by McClure to adjourn the meeting, and a second motion was made by Smith.
AYES: McClure, Smith, Garrison, Weger

Meeting was adjourned at 5:23 p.m.

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED BY THE LAKES AND LAND COMMISSION
CHAIRMAN, AUSTIN RABON