

## PARKS, RECREATION & FORESTRY COMMISSION

### MINUTES

Monday, January 19, 2026

#### **1. Call to Order**

The Watertown Parks, Recreation & Forestry Commission met in person and virtually on January 19, 2026. The meeting was called to order by Kerry Kneser at 4:36 p.m. **Commission Members Present:** Kerry Kneser, Ald. Jonathan Lampe, Jennifer Clayton, Julie Chapman, Kristine Butteris, Andrea Draeger, Hunter Karnitz, Ryan Thurow. **Absent:** Brad Clark, Kyle Krueger, Emily Lessner.

#### **2. Review and Approval of Minutes**

November Minutes from November 17, 2025 – Motion to approve by Julie Chapman, second by Jennifer Clayton. Motion carried.

December Minutes from December 15, 2025 – Motion to approve by Julie Chapman, second by Jennifer Clayton. Motion carried.

Senior Center Advisory Board Minutes from December 16, 2025 – Motion to approve by Ald. Jonathan Lampe, second by Julie Chapman. Motion carried.

#### **3. Review and Approval of Financial Reports**

Preliminary Year-End financial reports – Motion to approve by Ald. Jonathan Lampe, second by Jennifer Clayton. Motion carried.

#### **4. Citizens to Be Heard**

There were none.

#### **5. Business**

##### **A. Review and discuss: Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) Update**

Ryan Thurow, City Forester, provided an update on Emerald Ash Borer (EAB). EAB was first discovered in 2002 and in Watertown in 2013. EAB suffocates and kills ash trees. The City originally had approximately 1,000 ash trees (about one-sixth of the total tree population). A proactive approach was taken with removals, treatment of selected trees, and forestry grant applications. Seventy-four ash trees remain, with 60 currently being treated. Alternative strategies discussed included additional removals and conducting injections in-house. The City is pursuing grants to address canopy loss and support planting efforts using a *“right tree, right spot”* program. The goal is 30% canopy cover, with some areas currently lacking coverage. Tree value and community benefits were discussed as part of the presentation.

## **B. Review and take action: Fees and charges policy updates**

Kristine Butteris reviewed the current update to the Fees and Charges schedule for 2026 again to include a few new fees for the Bentzin Family Town Square private reservations. These additional fees are for electrical use as well as interactive water feature uses. Ald. Jonathan Lampe motioned to approve a \$25 flat fee for each use, approving as written but changing hourly references to event-based references. Second by Julie Chapman. Motion carried.

## **C. Review and take action: Facility Use Agreements**

Watertown Fastpitch Softball agreement – Motion to approve by Ald. Jonathan Lampe, second by Julie Chapman. Motion carried.

Outlawz Softball agreement – Motion to approve by Ald. Jonathan Lampe, second by Julie Chapman. Motion carried.

Soccer Agreement – Motion to approve the contract for named individuals and any organization for which they act as an agent in the future. Motion by Ald. Jonathan Lampe, second by Kerry Kneser. Motion carried.

## **D. Review and take action: Pool Passes for city employees**

A request was made to table discussion until April in order to obtain additional information. Motion to table by Kerry Kneser, second by Julie Chapman. Motion carried.

## **6. Project Updates**

- Parks Updates:**

Hunter Kartnitz introduced as the new Recreation Program Manager.

A tennis court bid approved; work will be scheduled between May–July.

A new park has been approved in the Hepp Heights Subdivision; development will occur after updates to existing park parcels are completed.

The department is reviewing options for pickleball facilities.

The current main focus is development of the all-inclusive park.

Staffing updates: openings will soon include one part-time permanent position, a full-time seasonal aquatics manager, and seasonal staff.

## **7. Programming Updates**

- Senior & Community Center Updates:**

Andrea Draeger reviewed recent programming including a Badger Talk and several seminar presentations. The annual Soup Fundraiser will be on January 22. A sponsor for quarterly birthday parties was requested.

Discussion also included a winter break enrichment recap and planning for spring break activities.

## **8. Adjournment**

Motion to adjourn by Julie Chapman, second by Jennifer Clayton.  
Meeting adjourned at 5:26 p.m.

Next Meeting: Monday, February 16, 2026