

PARKS, RECREATION & FORESTRY COMMISSION

MINUTES

Monday, October 20, 2025

1. Call to Order

The Watertown Parks, Recreation & Forestry Commission met in person and virtually on October 20, 2025. The meeting was called to order by Kerry Kneser at 4:30 p.m.

Members present: Kerry Kneser, Julie Chapman, Kyle Krueger, Emily Lessner (online), Jennifer Clayton, Brad Clark, Jarrod Folkman, Stephanie Juhl, Kristine Butteris, Andrea Draeger, Jeff Doyle, Robert Stocks.

Not present: Jonathan Lampe.

Julie Chapman motioned to move item K (Budget Clarification) to the beginning of the agenda, and Kyle Krueger seconded,. Motion carried.

K. Review and Discuss: Budget Clarification

Kerry raised a question regarding the purpose and role of the Parks, Recreation & Forestry (PRF) Commission. Discussion followed regarding the current condition of the park shop and the proposed 2029 replacement facility. Kerry expressed concern that the current building poses safety and morale issues, citing poor ventilation, water leakage, inadequate lighting, insulation, and limited space.

Kristine explained that deferred maintenance and equipment needs often appear in the budget, but are delayed or removed for future years. Mayor Robert Stocks stated that the Finance Committee voted to remove the proposed \$400,000 park shop building from the 2026 budget to prioritize payroll, wage adjustments, and insurance. Kristine noted that a comparable new building with a wash bay would cost approximately \$600,000, while temporary repairs through 2029 would cost around \$123,500.

Kerry expressed that the former "Bentzin Family Town Square" (BFTS) programming commission had dissolved and discussed concerns raised by alderpersons that the Events Programming Coordinator was not meeting intended funding expectations. Stephanie Juhl shared that since May 2023, the department has generated \$121,600 in grants and sponsorships and exceeded revenue goals for the past two years.

The proposed part-time recreation coordinator position, which may support aquatics operations in the winter, was not denied. The aquatics manager position has been reduced to part-time/seasonal. Kristine stated that the Events Programmer position was moved from Fund 1 to a future fund, and the department will not be able to rehire a full-time aquatics manager or park crew member following recent and upcoming vacancies. Jarrod Folkman announced he will be leaving the department on October 31, 2025 for a new position, also leaving a vacancy for the Recreation Programmer position.

2. Review and Approval of Minutes

Kyle Krueger motioned to approve the September 15, 2025, Parks, Recreation & Forestry Commission minutes. Brad Clark seconded. Motion carried.

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

Discussion noted higher overtime costs in aquatics due to covering shifts without a full-time manager. Brad Clark motioned to approve the August 2025 financial reports. Julie Chapman seconded. Motion carried.

4. **Citizens to Be Heard**

There were none.

5. **Business**

A. Review and Take Action: Meridian Barrier Rental Fees

Kristine explained that new 700-pound metal barriers with gates were purchased to prevent traffic from entering special event areas. The proposed rental fee is \$275 per set, requiring about two staff and two hours to transport and set up. Discussion included whether usage should require Public Safety approval. The Commission agreed that staff trained in barrier deployment should handle set up. Kyle Krueger motioned to approve the meridian barrier rental fees. Jennifer Clayton seconded. Motion carried.

B. Review and Take Action: 2026 Fees and Charges

Kristine presented proposed 2026 fee changes, including planned increases to athletic field rentals for 2027. Brad Clark motioned to approve the proposed fees and charges. Kyle Krueger seconded. Motion carried.

C. Review and Take Action: 2026 Facility Reservation Policies

Kristine reviewed changes and additions to existing policies.

Kyle Krueger motioned to approve the proposed facility reservation policies. Jennifer Clayton seconded. Motion carried.

D. Review and Take Action: 2026 Room and Park Rental Applications

Kristine and Andrea worked with Dale to update room and amenity details.

Kyle Krueger motioned to approve the updated room and park rental applications. Jennifer Clayton seconded. Motion carried.

E. Review and Take Action: 2026 Pool Admission Fees

Kristine presented background on pool fee changes and pass options. The memo incorrectly listed the daily admission fee as \$5 (current fee is \$4). Kyle expressed concern about increasing pass rates given pool closures and recommended reviewing 2025 sales data before making changes. The Commission agreed to table the discussion until November for further evaluation.

Brad Clark motioned to table the item. Kyle Krueger seconded. Motion carried.

F. Review and Take Action: 2026 Seasonal Wages

Kristine proposed increasing starting seasonal wages to \$12/hour and adjusting others to remain competitive. Kyle noted the department has historically offered low seasonal wages.

Kyle Krueger motioned to approve the 2026 seasonal wages. Julie Chapman seconded. Motion carried.

G. Review and Take Action: 2026 General Registration Form

Kristine presented a redesigned registration form featuring a QR code linking to RecDesk instead of offering registration forms for each program and activity.

Brad Clark motioned to approve the new registration form. Jennifer Clayton seconded. Motion carried.

H. Review and Discuss: Tiles at Chamberland Park

Kristine reported that decorative tiles are deteriorating and asked for feedback on next steps. Kyle suggested creating new artwork or a mosaic. Brad recommended photographing the current tiles for historical preservation. The item will return next month for formal action.

I. Review and Discuss: Removal of Park Sandboxes

Kristine reported that seven sandboxes across the parks are being considered for removal due to animal activity and maintenance. The commission supported removal.

J. Review and Discuss: Safety Issue – Park View and Hall Street

Kristine shared that twelve trees on private property encroaching into the right-of-way will be removed to improve safety and sightlines.

6. Director's Report

A. Project Updates

Park restrooms are being winterized. The access fence at Brandt-Quirk Park has been completed.

B. Programming Updates

Recreation Programming: Boo Bash will be held in partnership with downtown Pumpkin Palooza, featuring over 40 vendors. The Tree Lighting Ceremony is scheduled for November 15. The Holiday Train will visit on December 10, with food vendors and donation opportunities. Kerry commended Stephanie for her continued work in planning community events.

Senior and Community Center Programming: Recent and upcoming programs include the Monster Mash Bash, Veterans Day event, and fall break enrichment. The Patio Party raised over \$900. Generations of Joy will raise funds and provide decorations for the Center, with a Holiday Open House on December 3. Additional upcoming Senior Center activities include Norwegian Dancers, Maranatha Handchimes, and a January Badger Talk. Fundraisers such as the Brat Fry, Cookie Box, and January Soup Sale will continue. Funds have been raised for toilet replacements, which will be installed soon.

7. Adjournment

Brad Clark motioned to adjourn the meeting at 6:09 p.m. Kyle Krueger seconded. Motion carried.

Next meeting date: November 17, 2025.