

## Parks, Recreation, and Forestry Department

To: Parks, Recreation, and Forestry Commission

From: Kristine Butteris, Director of Parks, Recreation, and Forestry

Date: 6/19/2025

Subject: Parks and Open Spaces Plan

### Background

As we move forward with growth in Watertown, we will be expanding our parks division by three new parks in the next few years. This increase parks throughout the city will require additional staff needs as it means more trees to plant and/or maintain, total acreage to maintain as well as increase in programming as we grow our programs for our growing community.

We are looking for additional staff in three different divisions of the Parks, Recreation, and Forestry Department.

One additional Arborist –

- With the addition of subdivisions and parks land, we will need an additional arborist to assist with tree maintenance in these new areas and around the City including:
  - o Could implement sectional pruning. We are currently behind in our street and sidewalk clearance pruning as well as structural pruning because we have to wait for available park staff.
  - o Safety of the Forestry Division while on site. An additional arborist will allow for a safer approach as they will be certified.
    - Ability to have an additional bucket truck operator.
    - Ability to climb trees and aerial rescues.
    - Knowledge of storm damage clean up and removals.
    - Electrical hazard awareness.
    - Assist with chainsaw, roping, rigging, and felling trees.
  - o We will be expanding our urban tree canopy as well as park lands which will add to our plantings and removals season.
- Could be used as park laborer.
- This position would not need to be outsourced as it is a current position with the City.

Two new part-time permanent Program Supervisors –

- On-site lead for individual programs to ensure daily operations run smoothly
- Provides supervision and coaching during programs, tracks attendance and reports back to Recreation Manager.
- Organizes equipment for specific programs and transports for daily use.
- These positions would also be split between Recreation, Aquatics, and Events to ensure assistance where needed.
- This position needs to be reviewed as it is a new position.

#### One additional Park Worker –

- As more parks are created within the City, we will need additional parks workers to assistance with maintenance of park and city properties including:
  - o General landscape maintenance – plantings, weeding, mulching, hydro mulching, turf installation
  - o Mowing and trimming
  - o Chipping walking paths
  - o Additional projects for new and existing facilities – bench placement, shelter construction, concrete pours, playground repair, vandalism repair, aging facility repair.
- According to the 2019 National Parks and Recreation Association average employees per acres of parks, we are currently five employees below the national average.
- Areas that would be addressed with this position: weeding, mulching, bench/picnic table replacement, playground repair and maintenance, field maintenance weed control.
- This position would not need to be outsourced as it is a current position with the City.

## Budget Goal

1. Invests in the strategic planning and maintenance of our city buildings
2. Proactively maintains and improves our parks and infrastructure to ensure safety, quality, and equity
3. Supports employee retention and growth, while also evaluating operations and the associated staffing
4. Fosters community growth by assessing opportunities, stakeholder input, environmental needs, and modern code and policy priorities
5. Maintains a safe and healthy community, with an eye toward future needs and trends

## Financial Impact

There will be financial impact as these are all either new or additional positions.

## Recommendation

My recommendation would be to consider approval of an additional Arborist in the 2026 budget. This position could be used in parks as needed and would help with the additional park land maintenance and development.

If a full-time position is not possible in 2026, I would like to suggest adding two permanent part-time program supervisor positions so that we can maintain and grow our current programs as well as program the new park space for the 2026 season.

I would also like to recommend the addition of a full-time parks worker in 2028 to assist with the growth of the department as stated above.

Motion #1: Approve the addition of a 2<sup>nd</sup> Arborist position in the 2026 budget following two permanent part-time program supervisor positions in 2027 and a Parks Worker position in 2028.

Motion #2: Approve the addition of two permanent part-time program supervisor positions in the 2026 budget and look to add a second Arborist position in 2027 followed by a Parks Worker position in 2028.