

PARKS, RECREATION & FORESTRY COMMISSION

Monday, August 17, 2026 at 4:30 p.m.

The Parks, Recreation & Forestry Commission met on the above date and time. The following members were present: Kerry Kneser, Julie Chapman, Dana Davis, Rick Schultz, Kyle Krueger, Brad Clark, and Jennifer Clayton (virtual), as well as Ryan Schmidt, Hunter Karnitz, Ryan Thurow, and Andrea Draeger.

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 4:30 p.m. by Kerry Kneser.

2. Review and Approval of Minutes

Julie Chapman moved to approve the Parks, Recreation & Forestry Commission minutes from July 20, 2026 as presented, seconded by Rick Schultz, and carried by unanimous voice vote.

3. Review and Approval of Financial Reports

Staff noted that utility expenses have not been updated by City Hall since May. Journal entries for administrative supplies and Watertown Aquatic Center supplies remain pending, along with refunds related to the Watertown Aquatic Center phone account.

Brad Clark moved to approve the financial reports as presented, seconded by Dana Davis, and carried by unanimous voice vote.

4. Citizens to be Heard

Dan Olejniczak, 326 N. Montgomery St., raised concerns regarding an individual in a vehicle/camper van remaining at Brandt-Quirk and Grinwald parks for extended periods of time and expressed concern that the individual may be living in the parks. Kerry Kneser thanked him for bringing the concern forward and indicated that, as an auxiliary police officer, he recognized the potential concern and would look into the matter.

Ian Pilak spoke regarding the Meridian barrier fee associated with the Fuelify/School's Out Hangout event. He recommended waiving the fee due to the Public Safety & Welfare Committee's last-minute requirement that barriers be used for the event. He expressed support for community events of this nature and a desire to see similar events succeed in the future.

5. Business

A. Review and take possible action: Fuelify/School's Out Hangout Meridian Barrier Fee Waiver

Ryan Schmidt provided background regarding the request and explained that the Public Safety & Welfare Committee met the evening prior to the event and required Meridian barriers as a condition of holding the event. The event was revenue-generating for the organizer, and the Commission had previously considered and denied a request to waive the barrier fee.

Kerry Kneser expressed the importance of maintaining consistency among events and fee requirements. Dana Davis provided additional background regarding the special event permit reviewed on May 20 and the Public Safety & Welfare Committee's subsequent decision to require the road closure based on the nature of the event. Discussion included the need to develop clearer policies to provide more objective and consistent direction for similar situations in the future.

Kerry Kneser moved to deny the request to waive/refund the Meridian barrier fee, seconded by Julie Chapman, and carried by unanimous voice vote.

B. Review and take possible action: Linda Kilps Senior Center Room Rental Letter

The Commission reviewed a request from Linda Kilps regarding Senior & Community Center room rental fees for an event sponsored by Foresters Financial.

Kyle Krueger initially moved to waive the applicable rental fees, seconded by Brad Clark. During discussion, Commission members requested additional information regarding the proposed event, including the number of rental hours, the purpose and format of the event, and how the organization has supported or would support the Senior & Community Center.

Following discussion, Kerry Kneser moved to table the request until the September meeting to allow additional information to be provided, seconded by Rick Schultz, and carried by unanimous voice vote.

6. Director's Report

A. Parks and Forestry Projects and Program Updates

Staff provided the following parks and maintenance updates:

- Bleachers at Brandt-Quirk Park were removed to allow staff to clean and regrade underneath the structures to improve drainage. Staff noted an issue with a door sticking at the Brandt-Quirk soccer facilities. Brandt-Quirk tennis court repairs remain underway.
- Fascia replacement work was completed or underway at the well building. Staff cleaned up and regraded Diamond 1 at Riverside Park.
- A discussion on vending machines in City parks occurred. Staff indicated the issue is on the Department's radar and that work will continue with the City Attorney toward establishing a fair and consistent arrangement.
- Kerry Kneser asked about inconsistent lighting in park restrooms. Staff noted some restroom lighting operates on sensors while other locations utilize timers.
- Staff continue responding to pruning requests from homeowners. Tree risk assessments will begin soon and will be used to develop the tree removal list for the upcoming year. A small number of tree plantings also remain to be completed.

B. Recreation and Aquatics Projects and Program Updates

Summer recreation programs are wrapping up following weather-related make-up dates. Staff reported that participation in programs has generally been similar to or higher than the previous year. Fall programming is beginning, with soccer practices scheduled to start this week.

Staff reported the conclusion of the 2026 Watertown Aquatic Center season. Ryan Schmidt noted that the season was safe and successful and included the implementation of credit card sales. The Aquatic Center began draining following the end of the season, and staff discussed progress on the concession stand flooring project. Jim and Joel have several additional projects planned for early fall. Ryan Schmidt plans to provide an end-of-season Aquatic Center report to the Commission.

Staff are also working on the transition to indoor pool programming and fall swim lessons.

C. Senior Center and Enrichment Project and Program Updates

Staff provided updates on the Senior & Community Center elevator modernization and front entrance door replacement projects, which are still pending start dates. New lighting has also been installed in the hallway, with staff looking into whether the lighting can be turned off when appropriate.

Planning continues for National Senior Citizen Day on August 19, as well as upcoming fall and holiday events, including Boo Bash and the annual tree lighting.

2027 Budget and Policy Updates

Ryan Schmidt reported that staff are working on the 2027 Department budget, along with updates to policies, applications, and forms. Proposed updates are expected to be brought to the Commission for review in September.

Staff will also continue reviewing park operations and related policies as part of this process.

7. Adjournment

Julie Chapman moved to adjourn, seconded by Dana Davis, and carried by unanimous voice vote.

Next meeting date: September 21, 2026.

Respectfully submitted,

Andrea Draeger

Senior Center, Enrichment, and Office Manager

Note: These minutes are uncorrected, and any corrections made thereto will be noted in the proceedings at which these minutes are approved.