

PARKS, RECREATION & FORESTRY COMMISSION

Monday, March 16, 2026 at 4:30 p.m.

The Parks, Recreation & Forestry Commission met on the above date and time. The following members were present: Jennifer Clayton, Julie Chapman, Kyle Krueger, Kerry Kneser, Ald. Jonathan Lampe, Emily Lessner, Brad Clark, as well as Andrea Draeger, Ryan Thurow, Hunter Karnitz, Robert Stocks, Andrew Beyer, and several members of the public.

1. **Call to order**

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

2. **Review and approval of minutes**

Emily Lessner moved to approve the February Parks, Recreation, and Forestry Commission and Senior Center Advisory Board minutes as presented, seconded by Julie Chapman, and carried by unanimous voice vote.

3. **Review and approval of financial reports**

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

4. **Citizens to be heard**

William Oswald addressed the Commission regarding pickleball courts, providing background information, cost estimates, requests for the city, and potential locations. He referenced previous discussions with staff and consultants and discussed possible timelines.

A member of the public (**Tom McGarvey, unconfirmed**) spoke regarding the current dog park and its limitations. He indicated interest in forming an ad hoc committee to explore development of a new dog park and noted prior discussions with council members and staff.

Ald. Ken Berg addressed the Commission regarding Bentzin Family Town Square (BFTS), encouraging Commission involvement in maintenance and programming efforts and offering support from a council perspective.

5. **Business**

F. Review and take action: 1514 Oconomowoc Avenue lease agreement

Kerry Kneser requested to move this item to the beginning of Business with item D. next.

Kyle Krueger moved to reorder the agenda, seconded by Ald. Jonathan Lampe, and carried by unanimous voice vote.

Andrew Beyer presented information regarding a proposed lease agreement for a resident adjacent to Kolata Park. The agreement was drafted by the City Attorney and would proceed to the Finance Committee and then to the Common Council via resolution if approved. Ald. Jonathan Lampe moved to recommend approval of the lease agreement to the Finance Committee, seconded by Brad Clark, and carried by unanimous voice vote.

D. Review and discuss: Pickleball

The Commission discussed the growing popularity of pickleball and reviewed information provided by staff and the public. Discussion included potential locations such as Riverside

Park, Brandt-Quirk Park, Washington Park, and the Quarry area, as well as considerations related to noise, fundraising, and maintenance responsibilities. Commissioners also discussed the benefit of forming a local pickleball group. Staff will bring additional information regarding site feasibility and next steps to a future meeting.

A. Review and discuss: Future of Bentzin Family Town Square (BFTS)

Kerry Kneser initiated discussion regarding the future of BFTS, including current programming commitments, the absence of a programming coordinator, and the financial status of the Future Fund. It was noted that maintenance costs—particularly related to the water feature—are significant and that the fund may be depleted within approximately two to two and a half years.

Mayor Stocks provided additional financial context and discussed potential options, including reducing maintenance costs, modifying or removing the water feature, and forming a nonprofit or “friends” group.

Ald. Jonathan Lampe also provided historical context, which began with the Redevelopment Authority to include a building at the site location to create a funding source for the park. An original three-year plan was created to establish the programming position, commission, and future fund, with the goal of fundraising to sustain maintenance and programming.

Representatives from the Main Street Program presented a proposal to coordinate the night markets and 4–5 concerts in 2026, requesting \$10,000 from the Future Fund and waiver of associated fees with an MOU. Potential sponsorship structure and future programming partnerships were discussed. The Commission expressed general support for continuing programming and exploring partnerships with a recommendation to move forward with collaboration with the Main Street Program.

B. Review and discuss: Indoor and outdoor pools

Discussion was held regarding interim communication and oversight of aquatics operations. Staff provided updates on addressing recent concerns and improving coordination.

C. Review and discuss: Office closure on election days

Staff provided information regarding facility operations on election days as a polling location. The Mayor has indicated the Parks, Recreation, and Forestry office may close to the public on election days, while still available for online and phone customer service.

E. Review and discuss: Recreation scholarship fund

Staff provided updates on ongoing fundraising efforts and sponsorship outreach to increase the fund balance of the recreation scholarship fund as well as all sponsorship opportunities with the department. Commissioners discussed methods of recognizing sponsors.

G. Review and take possible action: Bentzin Family Town Square Commission ordinance

Kerry Kneser reviewed the need to formally repeal the BFTS Commission ordinance after the commission was voted to sunset in 2025. Brad Clark moved to recommend forwarding the repeal to the Common Council, seconded by Ald. Jonathan Lampe, and carried by unanimous voice vote.

H. Review and take possible action: Building rentals on holidays

The Commission discussed allowing rentals on City holidays and the requirement for staffing. Kyle Krueger moved to approve the option allowing rentals with required building supervisor oversight unless it is an established renter, seconded by Jennifer Clayton, and carried by unanimous voice vote.

I. Review and take possible action: facility use contract updates

Discussion was held regarding consistency in parking policies across park facilities and the need for clear language regarding allowable restrictions and emergency access. Staff will draft updated policy language for review by the city attorney and update facility use contracts when approved.

J. Review and take possible action: fee schedule, park reservation application, town square additional park reservation

The Commission reviewed proposed updates to fee schedules, including park reservations and BFTS-related fees. Discussion included integrating all BFTS rentals into the current park reservation application and rules, equipment fees (including Meridian barriers), and vendor fair fees. Ald. Jonathan Lampe moved to approve the fee updates as outlined, seconded by Kyle Krueger, and carried by unanimous voice vote.

6. Director's Report

7. Project Updates

A. Staff provided updates on current and upcoming projects, including tennis court improvements and have contracted with Poblocki for tennis courts repairs, ADA upgrades at multiple parks, facility improvements, and storm damage repairs. Union Park is scheduled to receive a new playground. The Fannie P. Lewis parking lot and boat launch is looking to be redesigned this year along with the path this year. Brandenstein will have a ADA sidewalk poured around the bathroom and connect to the sidewalk. Rock River Ridge will be graded back to preexisting grade by the Greater Watertown Area Health Foundation. Quotes for shop improvements for electrical and HVAC are being collected.

Forestry operations include contracted removal of hazardous trees. Cut N Go will be at Oak Hill Cemetery From March 25-31 tentatively for Tree Removals. Oak Hill will be closed at this time to the public.

B. Update on Programming

Hunter Karnitz reported on recreation programming, including current soccer programs and upcoming summer registration beginning on March 23. Andrea Draeger provided updates on senior and enrichment programming, including upcoming seasonal events, senior center volunteer event, senior care fair, and new seminars, as well as community initiatives, including spring break, family fun nights, and community day trips.

Staff also discussed upcoming aquatics planning for aquatic center opening and swimming lessons, and the indoor pool closure in April. Community events such as park clean-up days and Arbor Day tree planting are planned for April. Ryan Thurow reported on Rooted in Watertown, Right Tree Right Spot, and Living Lands & Waters trees programs which are set to open for registration in April.

7. Adjournment

Ald. Jonathan Lampe moved to adjourn at 6:51 p.m., seconded by Brad Clark, and carried by unanimous voice vote. Next meeting date: April 20, 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.