Willard Parks and Recreation Director's Report

Monthly Report – October 2025

Quote of the month: "Recreation is a necessity, not a luxury. It provides an opportunity for re-creation, a chance to make those self-discoveries that lead to fulfillment and happiness." — Robert W. Crawford

The month of October brought the successful conclusion of several key seasonal operations for the department, as well as opportunities to evaluate our financial performance as we move toward the end of the fiscal year.

One of the highlights of October was the Trunk or Treat event, which had more than 600 kids in costume and their parents come through. The move to the parking lot was well-received by the community. Trunk attendance was strong, only a few that had registered to be a trunk backed out due to weather. October also marked the close of the mowing season, traditionally one of the department's most labor-intensive periods. To date, we have achieved significant savings in seasonal staffing costs through tighter scheduling, more efficient use of personnel, and careful management of hours. These efficiencies have been realized despite a more than seven percent increase in the state minimum wage for seasonal employees. Expense control across the department has remained a top priority, particularly in the area of seasonal salaries, which represent one of the largest operational expenditures. **It should be noted: deferring maintenance and not mowing parks are temporary, not long-term solutions. Maintenance can only be deferred for a short period of time before costs begin to snowball, eventually costing more than the original cost of upkeep.**

On the revenue side, updated figures demonstrate strong program performance in 2025. Pool revenue has now exceeded $131,000, and summer camp programming produced $95,000. Combined with cost containment efforts, these results have placed the department on track both to reduce non-capital expenditures compared to 2024 and to increase overall revenue.

At the same time, broader fiscal challenges have emerged. Tax revenue continues to trend downward when compared to the prior year. In fiscal year 2024, sales tax revenue to date totaled $322,902, while in 2025, revenue to date stands at $294,908, representing a decrease of $27,994 or 8.7 percent. Similarly, capital improvement tax revenue declined from $254,337 to date in 2024 to $221,973 in 2025, a reduction of $32,364 or 12.7 percent. These reductions are significant and will require continued attention as we approach the next budget cycle. A very thorough and logical (emotionless) review of the 2026 budget cycle indicates that we are at a point where operational costs and program revenue are net zero. Current program revenue covers cost of personnel, but elimination of cost due by reducing supplies or personnel would be detrimental to program, and would result in less revenue.

Looking ahead to 2026, the department anticipates a number of challenges. The slowing economy and corresponding reduction in tax revenue will constrain available resources. Seasonal salary costs are projected to continue rising, placing further pressure on operating budgets. In addition, increases in equipment costs are expected to contribute to higher maintenance and replacement costs. Together, these factors are likely to necessitate a reduction in certain services and programs, paired with an increase in user fees, in order to maintain operational stability.

This presents a catch 22 of sorts- to meet budget objectives revenue must be increased. Program fees are subject to open market forces; if our programs are priced too aggressively, we will lose participants to competing organizations. Therefore, to increase program revenue, we must increase program ***use***, however, our facilities are near capacity, and we cannot add additional time or space. The most feasible solution is an increase in tax revenue, and again, that is beyond the Parks alone to acconplish.