

Willard Parks and Recreation Director's Report

Monthly Report – November 2025

Quote of the Month: “Parks and recreation are not luxuries; they are essential public services that define a community’s quality of life.” — Adapted from the National Recreation and Park Association

The close of October brought both highlights and continued challenges for the Willard Parks and Recreation Department. As the fiscal year nears its end, the department has continued to navigate significant budgetary pressures while delivering successful programs that serve hundreds of residents each month.

This month’s programming reflected the department’s ongoing commitment to providing safe, well-run, and enjoyable community experiences. The annual *Trunk or Treat* event was a major success, drawing more than 600 costumed children and their parents despite the rain, and earning overwhelmingly positive feedback from participants. Similarly, the fall soccer season concluded successfully, with excellent turnout and enthusiastic participation from both players and families. Recent School’s out camps were also well received, offering vital childcare support to working parents during school breaks. These programs show the department’s ability to deliver high-quality services even amid financial constraints.

Despite these program successes, the department continues to face structural financial challenges. Seasonal staffing remains the single largest operational expense and continues to rise due to state-mandated wage increases and the department’s reliance on seasonal labor. These costs are essential to maintaining safety and service quality in programs such as the pool, summer camps, and youth sports, but they have grown to represent a crushing share of total expenditures. The department has aggressively managed scheduling and reduced facility maintenance costs to offset these pressures, but such reductions have visible consequences. Much of the limited negative feedback received from the public is not on programs themselves, but on declining facility quality—issues such as field conditions, lighting, and outdated equipment—all areas where spending reductions have been most pronounced.

While cost containment remains a departmental priority, it is important to recognize that the budget cannot reasonably absorb additional cuts without diminishing service quality or safety. The department continues to operate efficiently and responsibly, but the broader economic slowdown and stagnant tax revenues have compounded the challenge of sustaining service levels. Parks and recreation, like water and sewer, are core elements of city infrastructure—vital systems that directly impact public health, safety, and community well-being. However, unlike utilities, parks operate in an open market where price increases risk pushing families to more affordable alternatives in neighboring communities, limiting our ability to generate revenue through user fees.

As we look ahead to the Fall Break Camp and Christmas on the Frisco, the department remains committed to delivering programs that strengthen community connection and pride.