

**March Quote:**

"City parks serve, day in and day out, as the primary green spaces for the majority of Americans." - Bruce Babbitt

**Parks Director Report – March**

With February over now, we have just wrapped up basketball season, one of our most popular youth programs. Participation was strong, 181 kids and 54 teams playing 7 games each drawing in families and spectators. Our staff continues to focus on responding to feedback to provide a well-organized season, with attention to officiating, scheduling, and facility upkeep to provide a positive experience for all participants. We have sent out a post program survey for additional feedback to help us meet these goals.

As we look ahead, spring is quickly approaching, and with it comes a renewed energy for outdoor recreation and facility improvements. Spring plantings are being planned throughout our park system, focusing on enhancing green spaces with native species and pollinator-friendly selections. These efforts align with our ongoing commitment to beautification and sustainability while improving the overall park experience for residents.

Facility improvements remain a priority, with notable updates taking place. Jason now has a new office space at the Recreation Center, providing a dedicated workspace that enhances efficiency and accessibility, while freeing up space at City Hall. Additionally, improvements to the maintenance shop facility are underway, ensuring our team has the resources needed to manage park upkeep effectively.

Looking ahead, we are actively pursuing cost-sharing opportunities with the Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC) for upcoming projects. We are exploring potential partnerships for enhancements at the Trailhead and the Rec Center pond, with the goal of leveraging available resources to improve these key areas while maintaining fiscal responsibility.

The Parks Department remains committed to providing high-quality leisure services while continuously working to improve efficiency and maximize resources. We welcome the opportunity to strengthen our operations and view these discussions as a chance for growth rather than criticism. While the department's projected transfer in 2025 reflects an increase of \$325,000 since 2015, it is important to consider the rising costs that have impacted operations. The hourly rate for labor has increased by more than 80% over the past decade, leading to an increase of over \$120,000 in seasonal labor costs for the same amount of labor hours, and with the addition of more programs, we have experienced a growth in the number of employees required. Additionally, inflation since 2015 has further increased costs across all sectors. While it may appear that the department's expenses have risen substantially, we have diligently worked to control spending, maintain affordability, and keep community participation high. Parks and Recreation remains a vital public service, and we are committed to balancing fiscal responsibility with ensuring accessible and enriching programs, opportunities for community partnerships, and accessible facilities for all.

As we move forward, our focus will be on balancing growth with fiscal responsibility, strengthening community partnerships, and ensuring that our parks and recreation offerings continue to serve as an essential resource for residents. We appreciate the support of our staff, volunteers, and community members as we navigate these discussions and work toward sustainable success for our department.

### February Facility Usage

Facility	General Attendance	Members	Day Pass	2/for \$2 Youth Rate	Total
Recreation Center	4305	1880	37	188	6410
Better Together Playground	Insufficient Data				
Jackson St Park	1100				1100
Miller Disc Golf Course	833				833
Community Building	Insufficient Data				

