

December Parks and Recreation Department Updates from Staff

Recreation: Report provided by Bob Furland and Dani Bakken;

- Winter guide should be delivered by mail this week.
- Winter registration opened on December 9, 2024.
- Ugly Sweater Skate will be held on December 22. Santa Bob will be at the Arena for pictures and fun.
- Rock on Ice will be held on December 27 and featuring a Live DJ.
- Recreation is partnering with Community Education to offer the event Climb and Skate, a no school day activity featuring rock climbing and ice skating on January 2 and 3.
- Working on summer programming and the Fun Guide.
- Adult Winter Volleyball Registration is open until January 2nd.
- Holiday Bazaar is Thursday December 12 in downtown Albert Lea.
- Santa's Mailbox is located at City Hall and the City Arena until December 20th.
- Registration for Learn to Skate is open through 12/29.
- Special Olympics Young Athletes program will once again be offered starting in January and will focus on basic sport skills. Registration is open until January 17th.
- Fitness classes with Annie start January 27th.
- Candle Light Walk will be held at Myre-Big Island State Park Feb 15 6-8 PM.
- Fall Adult Volleyball Champions: Women's League– "Practice Safe Sets" and Co-Ed League – "Notorious D.I.G."

Parks: Report provided by Ryan Hajek and Mike Westney;

- Tree work – Takedowns & trimming, they are taking down the trees on the south side of the pickle ball courts.
- Finished putting up the lights in central park.
- Working on putting new door in at Sondergaard, Valley, Frank Hall & the Beach.
- Working on picnic table repairs.
- Started flooding rinks.
- Equipment & building maintenance.

City Arena: Report provided by Bob Furland/Josh Heilman;

- Facility updates –
 - Apex sub-contractor for water conservation will work at the arena on Dec. 18th and 19th.
- Events -
 - Youth Hockey
 - December 13th – 15th A Peewee tournament 8 teams.
 - December 20th – 22nd B Peewee tournament 8 teams
 - January 3rd – 5th Girls U 10 / U12 16 teams
 - January 10th – 12th B Squirt tournament 8 teams
 - Waldorf

- Off until January 3rd
- High School
 - Tiger High School Hockey schedules can be found at Big9.org
- Figure Skating
 - No new updates.
- Other events –
 - December Public Skate schedule is on Facebook.
 - Watch Facebook for weekly schedule events at the arena.
 - NEW! Adaptive Skating and Sled Hockey open ice is now available at the City Arena. Ice walkers and skate rentals are included in the rental fee. Wheelchairs are welcome on the ice! December 15th, 3-4 pm, 23rd 1-2 pm, Dec 29th 11am – 12pm.
 - In November, the City Arena had 34.4 K visits and 11.3 K visitors. (per Placer data)

Aquatic Center: Report provided by Bob Furland/Josh Heilman;

- Walk through with Apex to finalize design plans

Senior Center: Report provided by Bob Furland;

- Trips -
 - Holiday day trip to Side Kick Theatre December 10th
- Programs/Events –
 - Senior Center held its annual Christmas Party at Edgewater Bay Pavilion on December 5th and had 103 attend.
 - The Senior Center will be closed December 23rd - 27th for Christmas.
 - Arts with Emelia January 29th.

Marion Ross Theater: Report provided by Bob Furland;

- Facility Updates –
 - Apex sub-contractor for water conservation will work at the Theatre on December 20th.
- Upcoming events -
 - Final weekend of White Christmas
 - Dec 21 and 22 Dawson Family Christmas Musical
 - January 18th Greg Hall and the Wrecking Ball Concert
 - February 1 The Crown Jewels Concert – Tribute to Queen
 - February 8 The Story Show- Better together - Eight local writers will share stories written on the theme.

Other: Report provided by Cathy Malakowsky;

What a successful year!

On behalf of the City of Albert Lea, I would like to thank the Parks and Rec Board for a successful and productive year. You all did an incredible job on narrowing down the projects for our rec facilities and then supporting the referendum that passed 3:1 in favor.

The Board vetted and recommended the following projects, which are headed for implementation:

- Improvements to Grizzlies Field
- Bicycle shelter at Frank Hall Park
- Storage shed for softball at Snyder Fields

The Board has also helped 4 of its top 5 priorities move forward:

- Restrooms by the Splash Pad – under design
- Develop trail along former UP rail – funding is in place for planning it
- Upgrade Snyder Fields – some improvements made with more in the works
- Update aging facilities – new systems are in the works for the Arena, Aquatic Center and Marion Ross Theater with remodeling at the Arena and Aquatic Center about to open for bids

That leaves the off-season field house to move forward if the Board chooses that as a priority in 2025.

And even Pickleball has now submitted a full application for new courts!

Updates on City Council action

The Albert Lea City Council unanimously approved the plans and specs Dec. 9 for the remodeling at the City Arena and Aquatic Center, and ordered bids for the project.

The public notice for bids will be published in the Albert Lea Tribune on Dec. 21, 2024. Bids will close at 2 p.m. on Jan. 16, 2025, when Apex – now called “InBylt” – will hold bid opening online via Procore. If the low bid is within budget, then I plan to take it to the Council for approval at the Jan. 27, 2025 meeting.

In other action, the Council:

- **Approved the city’s budget, property tax levy, capital improvement plan and fees for 2025.**
The property tax levy will increase 14% from 2024 to 2025, with nearly 10% of that increase for referendum projects. The impact to property owners is about \$60 per year per \$100,000 in home value.
- **The CIP includes several Parks and Rec projects:**
 - Improvements to Grizzlies Field as recommended by the Parks and Rec Board
 - New playground equipment at Ginkel and Lakeview parks
 - New shelter at Morin Park
 - Storm shelter at Sondegaard Park for nearby mobile home parks
 - 2 new Rec Department vehicles
 - New referee changing area in the hallway outside the Nystrom Rink (previously an Apex project and now a Rec Department project)
 - Funding for planning the new trail along the former UP rail corridor from Fountain Street to Manchester

Update on Senior Center

The City of Albert Lea and Albert Lea Family Y are renewing their contract for the Y operating the Senior Center for an additional 2 years. This contract will end on Dec. 31, 2026, when the lease with Skyline Plaza for the Senior Center space also expires.

The City and Y are starting an evaluation of the Senior Center, including alternative locations, in January. We are putting together a team of community representatives to meet the first Wednesday of each month at 10:30 a.m. at the Senior Center, except the first meeting will be Jan. 8. We expect the process to take 6-7 months. If any Board members are interested in serving on the team, please let Cathy know.

**** Top 5 Project Updates:**

Restrooms by Splash Pad –

- Ryan has been working on gathering quotes and design options.

Develop the Union Pacific rail to trail –

- No new updates

Develop an off-season field house –

- Status of the non-city group working on this idea?

Upgrade Snyder Fields –

- No new updates

Update aging facilities, including the City Arena and Aquatic Center –

- See staff reports