

**PARKS & RECREATION
ADVISORY BOARD
MEETING MINUTES**

January 27, 2025 6 pm
City Garage

Members Present:

Steve Ball
Kent Rahn
Whitney Sauer
Amy Leach (arrived at 6:02pm)
Therese Salazar (arrived at 6:12pm)
Wende Taylor
Tony Segura

Members Absent:

Jason Howland, Ex-Officio (City Council Meeting)

Staff in Attendance:

Cathy Malakowsky, Community Engagement and Enrichment Director
Ryan Hajek, Assistant Director of Public Works
Bob Furland, Recreation Manager
Mike Westney, Parks Superintendent
Afton Wacholz, Recreation Office Manager

Others in Attendance:

Call to Order:

The meeting was called to order by Steve Ball at 6:00pm.

Adopt Agenda:

Wende Taylor made the motion to approve the agenda for tonight's meeting and Whitney Sauer seconded the motion. The board voted in favor of said motion 5-0 (Amy Leach and Therese Salazar were absent). Motion declared passed.

Approval of the Minutes:

Wende Taylor made the motion to approve the minutes from the November 18, 2024 meeting and Kent Rahn seconded the motion. The board voted in favor of said motion 5-0 (Amy Leach and Therese Salazar were absent). Motion declared passed.

Public Items:

Dani Bakken, Recreation Coordinator, had her baby boy named Griffin on Saturday, January 4. Everyone is doing well!

Action/Discussion Items:

- **Review and discussion of Splash Pad/North Lot Bathroom Project**

- Ryan Hajek presented on the progress of the North Lot/Splash Pad bathrooms. Staff evaluated three cost options for their budget of \$250,000 for the project.
 - Option 1: Prefabricated building by Green Flush
 - Option 2: RCP Structures Prefab materials
 - Option 3: Arrow Building Center – local company (option to have City staff construct the building)
 - Details regarding the building include: siding exterior as it would be easiest to clean (graffiti), heated year-round, women's with two stalls, men's with one stall and one urinal, mechanical/storage area in-between and possible concessions/storage area for use by Farmer's Market and/or Recreation staff.
 - Design concepts are included in minutes.
 - Costs of the three options:
 - Option 1 - \$420, 000
 - Option 2 - \$245,500
 - Option 3 - \$196,295 (with \$43,500 in deductions if City staff builds it)
- Therese Salazar made the motion to recommend the Albert Lea City Council proceed with Option 3 – Arrow Building Center, with an increase in size for public restrooms if budget allows at the North Broadway parking lot near the Splash Pad with funding as approved by voters in a referendum held April 9, 2024, because this option saves money and meets the demands of the project. Amy leach seconded the motion. On a roll call vote, board voted in favor of said motion 7-0. Motion declared passed.
- **Review 2025 Fee Schedule**
 - Recreation staff presented the 2025 Fee Schedule changes, primarily for the City Arena, Aquatic Center and pavilion rentals. There was a positive response from the board regarding the change to two different individual season passes with one now specifically for ages 10-15 years old and the second for ages 16 and older. There was also a slight increase in the daily rates.

Staff Updates:

Recreation: Report provided by Bob Furland and Afton Wacholz;

- Recreation Coordinator, Dani Bakken, welcomed a son, Griffin Jo, on Saturday, January 4.
- Learn to Skate Session 5 began on January 5
 - Snowplow Sam ages 3-5 – 3 classes of 13, 10 and 17 participants
 - Basic ages 6 and older – 3 classes of 9, 8 and 8 participants
 - 65 total participants – our largest session yet
 - 12 high school staff – Figure Skaters and Girls Hockey Players
- Outdoors rink were ready for skating on Friday, January 10. Automatic lights started up and Warming Houses had a soft opening that weekend. Regular Warming House hours started Monday, January 13.
 - Monday-Friday 5-8 p.m. open at Hawthorne, Lakeview and Hayek
 - Saturday and Sunday 1-8 p.m. open at Lakeview, Hayek and Academy

- 9 total staff covering shifts
- Due to dangerously low wind chills, Warming Houses closed Sunday, January 19 and Monday, January 20
- Lakeview park will host the Pond Hockey Tournament for the Big Freeze on Saturday, February 8
- Winter Adult Women's and Co-Ed Volleyball League started the week of January 13
 - Women's league plays on Monday evenings with 7 teams participating
 - Co-Ed league plays on Wednesday evenings with 8 teams participating
 - All games played at the Armory
- Special Olympics Young Athletes program began Tuesday, January 21
 - 19 total participants ages 3.5-6 years old
 - Children of all abilities learn basic sport skills, like running, kicking and throwing
- Weight training and Pilates fitness classes with Annie begin January 27
 - Currently have 12 and 11 participants registered
 - Meets on Monday and Wednesdays at the Senior Center
- Winter Candle Light Walk will be held at Myre-Big Island State Park Feb 15 6-8 PM. This is a collaborative event with the DNR.

Parks: Report provided by Ryan Hajek and Mike Westney;

- Continue to work on outdoor ice rinks
- Ben is working on EAB treatment list for 2025
- Frank Hall Park bathroom doors – started putting electronic locks in
- Working on installing new doors at the beach.
- Working on MSDS sheets for computer lookup
- Working on Edgewater maintenance & picnic table repairs
- Monte & Jim are going to an arborist workshop in Rochester on 2/20/25
- Ordered 3 new replacement mowers for this year
- Working on purchasing a replacement pickup and a bucket truck
- Waiting for two replacement playground quotes to be approved

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

- Facility updates –
 - Water conservation project is completed; replaced urinals and toilets as well as flush valves
 - Sealing of the building envelope is completed; replaced and added weather stripping
 - New ref room is completed and was no cost to the City through the generous donations from Attig Construction, Geneva Lumber, Rink Systems and Albert Lea Electric
 - Lighting upgrade will kick-off January 27 in the Colstrup Arena
 - Low E Ceiling in Colstrup will begin February 10
 - Colstrup compressor will be shut down February 20
 - Demo electrical on Colstrup system beginning March 17
 - Cap fire protection on March 17
 - Start demo of the Colstrup floor March 19
- Events -
 - Youth Hockey

- Albert Lea Hockey Day 2025 January 25
 - U8 Boys and Girls Tournament February 1 and 2
 - C Bantam Tournament February 8 and 9
 - A Bantam District Tournament February 14-16
- Waldorf
 - Last home game for D1 will be held on February 8
- High School
 - Tiger High School Hockey schedules can be found at Big9.org
 - Last girls high school game will be January 25; Section play begins the week of February 3
 - Last boys high school game will be February 11; Section play begins the week of February 17
- Figure Skating
 - Annual show March 1 and 2
- Other events –
 - January Public Skate schedule is on Facebook and the City web page; February calendar will be released the last week in January
 - Watch Facebook for weekly schedule events at the arena.
 - In December, the City Arena had 28.6 K visits and 10 K visitors. (per Placer data)

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

- No new report

Senior Center: Report provided by Bob Furland;

- Trips -
 - none
- Programs/Events –
 - Mondays 10:30 Building Bones, 1:00 PM Bingo
 - Tuesdays 9:00 AM Sail / 10:00 AM Quilting / 1:00 PM Crafts
 - Wednesday Bingo 1:00 PM
 - Thursday 11:30 Bridge, 12:00PM 500, 1:00 PM Knitting
 - Friday Aerobics 9:00 AM

Marion Ross Theater: Report provided by Bob Furland;

- **Facility Updates –**
 - Staff is working with Apex on the front windows and doors project. This includes tinting the glass and placing ADA doors and openers.
 - Apex project water conservation done, included replacing all flush valves and toilets.
- **Upcoming events -**
 - **February 1 PM 7:30 PM concert The Crown Jewels** – Tribute to Queen The Crown Jewels are the Midwest's premier tribute to Queen, one of the greatest rock bands ever.

- **Feb. 8 – 7:30 p.m. The Story Show – Better Together**
 - Eight local writers will share stories written on the theme “Better Together.” This season’s show will benefit the Freeborn County Promise Scholarship, which offers graduating seniors from Freeborn County, the opportunity to attend Riverland Community College is free.

Other: Report provided by Cathy Malakowsky;

Snyder Field Improvements (one of the Board’s top 5 priorities): At its meeting on Jan. 13, the Albert Lea City Council approved a \$30,000 agreement with an engineering firm to design improvements to Snyder Fields. The City started making changes to the ballfields in 2022 for the first time in decades. Drainage was installed in 2022, with new fencing and dugouts in 2023. Now the City is considering improvements to the concession stand, bathrooms, walkways and parking area, along with a picnic area and playground. Some of the changes are needed to meet ADA requirements. The goal is to have plans ready for review by the Parks and Rec Board this spring. If the Council approves the plans, then the City would work with baseball and softball groups to raise funds this year with construction in 2026.

Update on developing the Union-Pacific rail to trail (one of the Board’s top 5 priorities):: Also Jan. 13, the Albert Lea City Council voted to support a grant application by Freeborn County for funding toward the proposed trail along the former UP rail corridor. The city and county, with extensive public input, completed a [Trail Action Plan](#) in 2023 that envisions a 15-mile-long paved trail from Front Street in Albert Lea to Hartland. Freeborn County plans to apply for \$1 million grant from the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) to partially fund the first phase, which is 6.4 miles from Fountain Street to Manchester. MnDOT has \$12.5 million in Active Transportation fund available for infrastructure projects. The grants range from \$50,000 to \$1 million per project selected.

Go jump in the lake ... for a good cause! Mayor Rich Murray challenges community members to take part in the “Plunge for the Playground” fund-raiser for the All Together Inclusive Playground. Murray plans to jump in Fountain Lake himself at the event, set for Saturday, Feb. 8, at 11 a.m. at the Edgewater Bay Pavilion, 1940 Edgewater Drive. While the playground equipment and rubberized surface have been installed, the All Together volunteer group is still raising money to complete the project. The playground, designed for people of all abilities, is set to open this spring on the west end of Edgewater Park. Teams can sign up on the [All Together Facebook page](#).

Blazing Star State Trail: Ulland Brothers, the contractor hired by the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, is progressing on extending the Blazing Star Trail from Myre-Big Island State Park to Hayward. The work includes a bridge over Albert Lea Lake. Trail users should be on the lookout for closures of a 1-mile segment from the park’s visitor center heading east due to the construction. When completed in 2025, the trail will run between Frank Hall Park, 505 Frank Ave., in Albert Lea to Hayward. The project is funded by the Minnesota Environment and Natural Resources Trust fund, Federal Recreational Trail and Transportation Alternatives programs, 2020 state bonding, and the Parks and Trails Legacy Fund. Visit the [trail webpage](#) for future updates.

Senior Center: The Recreation Department and Albert Lea Family Y kicked off an evaluation of the Senior Center on Jan. 8 with several community partners and Senior Center members participating. We are following a process established by the National Council on Aging/Institute of Senior Centers. The process includes 9 standards, and project team will focus on all 9 standards over the next 7 months, including programming and location.

New stormwater project with trails: At its meeting Jan. 27, the Albert Lea City Council will vote on an engineering agreement to design a \$1 million stormwater project, funded mostly by a state grant. The project would consist of an extensive rain garden at 1300 Front Street with public trails for walking. The area is prone to flooding and the stormwater basins would help hold and filter stormwater. The city owns the project site and will use a Stormwater Resiliency Grant of \$886,000 to pay for most of the project.

New referee changing room: If visiting the City Arena, look for the new referee changing room in the skate-changing area outside the Nystrom Rink. Originally part of the referendum plans for the Arena, local companies built the room as a donation. Attig Construction, Geneva Lumber, Rink Systems and Albert Lea Electric donated supplies and services totaling around \$6,500 in value.

**** Top 5 Project Updates:**

Restrooms by Splash Pad –

- Agenda item for January meeting

Develop the Union Pacific rail to trail –

- See update under Cathy's report

Develop an off-season field house –

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

Upgrade Snyder Fields –

- See update under Cathy's report

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

- See staff reports

Additional Staff Report Items:

Discussion was had on scoreboard clocks for in the new ref rooms to keep things moving along better. Staff will look into this option.

Mike Westney also discussed the possibility of not replacing the Edgewater Bay Pavilion playground when it is due to be replaced again. Since the Inclusive playground will now be across the street and close, there may be a better use for a patio/pergola area for outdoor activities or weddings.

Board Member Items:

- Amy Leach –
 - Discussed the curb access again on Lakeview Blvd near Lakeview Park and the east Edgewater Park entrance. There is no way for pedestrians to leave the sidewalk and cross over to the park. She understands the location may not safely warrant a crosswalk but would like to see if a curb access could be cut so allow for bikes, strollers, etc to cross. She referenced the curb access on Greenwood near the park.
- Wende Taylor –
 - Inquired about grass/yard repairs in her neighborhood from fiber option work that was being completed. Staff assumed that the company doing the work would repair in the spring.
- Therese Salazar –
 - Reported a light not working on the corner of Bridge Ave and Glenview.
 - Inquired about the pickleball group and the status of their project requests. Cathy and Ryan shared that the group will need to raise a fair share of funds for the project to be approved. It could be done in 2026 if funding lined up right. Ryan shared the new design of the court orientation with the board.

Adjournment: Amy Leach made a motion to adjourn the Park Board meeting and Whitney Sauer seconded the motion. The board voted in favor of said motion 7-0. Motion declared passed. Meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Afton Wacholz
Parks and Recreation Advisory Board Secretary

Approved:

Steve Ball
Park & Recreation Advisory Board Chairman