

PARKS, RECREATION & FORESTRY COMMISSION

MINUTES

Monday, September 15, 2025

1. Call to Order

The Watertown Parks, Recreation & Forestry Commission met in person and virtually on September 15, 2025. The meeting was called to order by Kerry Kneser at 4:31 p.m.

Members present: Kerry Kneser, Julie Chapman, Brad Clark, Emily Lessner, Kyle Krueger, Jennifer Clayton (arrived at 4:34 p.m.)

Not present: Jonathan Lampe

Also present: Kristine Butteris, Andrea Draeger, Stephanie Juhl, Jeff Doyle, Jarrod Folkman.

2. Review and Approval of Minutes

Brad Clark motioned to approve the July 16, 2025, Bentzin Family Town Square minutes. Julie Chapman seconded. Motion carried.

Julie Chapman motioned to approve the August 18, 2025, Parks, Recreation & Forestry minutes. Kyle Krueger seconded. Motion carried.

Emily Lessner motioned to approve the August 19, 2025, Senior Center Advisory Board minutes. Brad Clark seconded. Motion carried.

3. Review and Approval of Financial Reports

Kyle Krueger motioned to approve the July 2025 financial reports. Julie Chapman seconded. Motion carried.

4. Citizens to Be Heard

There were none.

5. Business

There was none.

6. Director's Report

A. Project Updates

Staff has worked extensively on the 2026 budget with the goal of maintaining a 0% increase. However, requests were made for additional capital expenses.

At Union Park, proactive changes are being made in anticipation of the Lafayette Street design and reconstruction project in 2027. The ball diamond has been removed and a gaga ball pit will be installed, with a full redesign planned. A redesign and construction project is scheduled for Labaree Street in 2028, including the Riverside Park parking lot. Clark Park's fence will be removed due to safety concerns. Seasonal restroom closures will begin on October 15. There has been increased bee activity and tree issues have been noted this fall. There are no updates yet on the Oak Hill Cemetery tree removals. Riverwalk work continues, including issues with orange barricades. Bike and kayak rentals continue to be operated through an external vendor. The City only receives revenue from kayak rentals at Riverside Park.

Meridian barriers were used for the first time at the most recent BFTS event to enhance safety. The water feature at BFTS is still operational but will run on limited hours. Staff is working to resolve a timer issue caused by power outages. The feature will be shut down at the end of September.

New lighting at the Senior & Community Center has been added to the pool table area and LED lights will be installed in the hallway for brightness and energy efficiency. The fence and kayak rental station at the back shelter area have been removed.

B. Programming Updates

Fall recreation programming is underway. Soccer began two weekends ago. Adult softball, fall fitness classes, youth dance, gymnastics, and football are ongoing. Late fall programs such as youth wrestling, Little Dunkers, adult volleyball, and men's basketball will begin in November. Winter and early spring registration will open in late October.

Upcoming events at BFTS include: Tailgate on 9/21, Markets on 9/25 and 10/4, Boo Bash on 10/25. The last concert was held on 9/6 and was well attended. A volunteer coach appreciation element was added with food truck discounts and a band shout-out.

A new Gold Star Self Defense class on 9/9 reached capacity in the afternoon session. Staff hopes to offer additional sessions. Senior Center fundraising continues through gift card sales and 50/50 raffles, as well as a new brat fry. Senior Citizen Day was celebrated at the end of August as well as the second quarterly birthday party for seniors. A Patio Grand Opening Party will be on 9/24 to celebrate the new space – all are invited.

7. Adjournment

Julie Chapman motioned to adjourn the meeting at 5:01 p.m. Emily Lessner seconded. Motion carried.

Next meeting date: October 20, 2025