

## **January Parks and Recreation Department Updates from Staff**

**Recreation:** Report provided by Afton Wacholz and Dani Bakken;

- Young Athletes started on Tuesday, January 20. There are 17 kids registered for this program
  - Young Athletes is an inclusive recreation program for kids ages 4-6
- Adult fitness classes with Annie – Weights and Pilates will start on Monday, January 26. There are currently 25 people signed up. Registrations will continue to be accepted once the classes start.
- Adult volleyball will now be continuing their winter season back at the Armory.
- Planning has begun for summer programs and events, as well as summer staffing
- Warming houses have been going well despite the inconsistent weather patterns. The following are attendance numbers as of 1/21/2026:
  - Hawthorne: 57
  - Hayek: 503
  - Academy: 90
  - Lakeview: 527
- Community dock and garden renewal applications for the 2026 season will be mailed out the end of February.

**Parks:** Report provided by Ryan Hajek and Ben Bangert;

- Splash Pad Bathroom- partitions are in and will be installed after electricians are caught up. Then, plumber setting fixtures, install furnishings, and floor sealant. Possibly open in spring in order to avoid winter wear and tear.
- Ice rinks continue to be maintained as cold weather allows.
- Preparations for replacement trucks and equipment.
- Christmas Decorations- Proposal to City Council to sell 40 of the oldest, non-used pole decorations and one trailer, to City of Hartland, as they are interested in refurbishing them to brighten up their downtown area and new wooden poles. These will not affect our current decoration operation.
- Annual tree inspections and EAB list compilation for treatment this spring.
- Lake aerator will be turned on as per Shellrock River Watershed recommendations on oxygen levels and snow cover dictate.

**City Arena:** Report provided by Afton Wacholz/Josh Heilman;

- Facility updates –
  - See Facilities Project Update below
- Events -
  - U10B1 Girls Tournament Jan 2-4
  - B Squirt Youth Tournament Jan 9-11
  - C Squirt Youth Tournament Jan 16-18
  - Albert Lea Hockey Day Weekend Jan 23-25
  - C Peewee Youth Tournament Feb 6-8

- ALHS Boys and Girls High School teams are wrapping up their seasons. Girls will begin section play the first week of February and the boys will begin the week of Feb 16.
- Albert Lea will host the U12 Girls District tournament Feb 13-15.
- Albert Lea will also be host to the Waldorf University D1 regional tournament Feb 20-22.
- Other events –
  - Weekday public skate and stick and puck calendar can be found on our website or Facebook page.

**Aquatic Center:** Report provided by Dani Bakken;

- None

**Senior Center:** Report provided by Dani Bakken;

- Trips -
  - None
- Programs/Events –
  - Tech Tuesday - Feb. 10
  - Valentine’s Day Dance and Luncheon - Feb. 13
  - Art with Emelia - Feb. 25

**Marion Ross Theater:** Report provided by Afton Wacholz;

- Facility Updates –
  - See Rec facilities update below.
- Upcoming events –
  - Nunsense will run Feb 19, 20, 21, 22(m), 25, 26, 27 and 28(M).

**Other:** Report provided by Cathy Malakowsky;

- **Public invited to share input on Songbird Trail through online survey**

Freeborn County and the City of Albert Lea are inviting residents to take a short online survey by Feb. 13 about the proposed Songbird Trail to help guide future planning, improvements, and decision-making related to the trail. Access the survey by going to <https://hdr.jotform.com/253483965770066>.

The proposed 50-mile regional trail would support walking, biking and rolling by transforming a historic Union Pacific rail corridor into a safe, scenic and accessible route in southern Minnesota. It will extend from Albert Lea through Manchester and Hartland in Freeborn County and eventually connect to the Sakatah Singing Hills State Trail near Waterville, via New Richland and Waseca.

In Albert Lea, the Songbird Trail will connect to the Blazing Star State Trail in Albert Lea via bike lanes on Front Street.

Freeborn and Waseca Counties developed the Freeborn-Waseca Regional Trail Master Plan in 2018 to envision a trail connecting between the Blazing Star State Trail in Albert Lea to the Sakatah Singing Hills State Trail in Waterville.

In 2022-2023, Freeborn County and the City of Albert Lea pushed forward with a Trail Action Plan to further refine the vision for the trail within their jurisdictions. They are now in the process of designing 6.4 miles of that trail route and will begin construction on the first phase in 2026.

The county and city are updating the master plan to meet requirements of the Greater Minnesota Regional Park and Trail Commission with the goal of applying for funding to build parts of the trail.

For more information about the Songbird Trail, including its purpose and features, visit the Freeborn County website at: [www.co.freeborn.mn.us/597/Songbird-Trail](http://www.co.freeborn.mn.us/597/Songbird-Trail).

## **Referendum Project Updates**

### **City Arena**

#### *Lobby and office area*

- Final punch list items are being completed.
- Staff are beginning to work on furniture for the skate office, new lobby and Rec office
- Waiting on hardware for the main Rec office service counter window

#### *Refrigeration and arena floor*

- Colstrup arena concrete floor cure is complete
- Refrigeration piping continues
- Dasher boards will start being installed early February
- Cleaning will begin in the Colstrup rink the second week of February
- Refrigeration system start-up and testing are scheduled to begin mid-February.
- There is a delay in the completion of the sub floor heating, which may delay ice making on Colstrup.

### **Aquatic Center**

- Ford Metro has started to install windows on the new ticket building.

### **Marion Ross Theater**

- Final punch list items are being completed

**\*\* Top 5 Project Updates:**

Restrooms by Splash Pad –

- Update under Parks updates

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 update under Referendum Project Updates