



**CITY OF ALBERT LEA  
PARKS AND RECREATION ADVISORY BOARD**

*September 2025 Meeting  
9/15/2025, 6 pm  
Edgewater Bay Pavilion*

1. CALL TO ORDER:
  - Roll Call
  - Adopt Agenda
2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES:
  - July 21, 2025 Meeting Minutes (August meeting was cancelled)
3. PUBLIC ITEMS:
4. OLD BUSINESS:
  - Parks project updates – Ryan Hajek
    - Bridge Ave Dock, Splashpad Bathroom, Blazing Star Trail Bike Shelter, Pollinator Garden signs and permit, and SRRWD channel cleanup
  - Rec facilities project update – Rec staff
5. NEW BUSINESS:
6. STAFF REPORT DISCUSSION:
7. BOARD MEMBER ITEMS:
8. ADJOURNMENT:

**MISSION STATEMENT**

***“To provide quality recreational opportunities and to plan, acquire, develop and maintain attractive and safe parks and facilities that enhance the quality of life in the community of Albert Lea.”***

**PARKS & RECREATION  
ADVISORY BOARD  
MEETING MINUTES**

*July 21, 2025 6 pm*  
City Arena

**Members Present:**

Steve Ball  
Kent Rahn  
Therese Salazar  
Wende Taylor  
Amy Leach  
Whitney Sauer (arrived at 6:03p)  
Jason Howland, Ex-Officio (arrived at 6:03p)

**Members Absent:**

Tony Segura

**Staff in Attendance:**

Cathy Malakowsky, Community Engagement and Enrichment Director  
Ryan Hajek, Assistant Director of Public Works  
Bob Furland, Recreation Manager  
Mike Westney, Outgoing Parks Superintendent  
Ben Bangert, Incoming Parks Superintendent  
Dani Bakken, Recreation Coordinator  
Afton Wacholz, Recreation Office Manager  
Emma Barclay, Arena and Aquatic Center Technician  
Teresa Kauffman, Communications Coordinator

**Others in Attendance:**

none

**Call to Order:**

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

**Adopt Agenda:**

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

**Approval of the Minutes:**

Wende Taylor made the motion to approve the minutes from the June 16, 2025 meeting and Amy Leach seconded the motion. The board voted in favor of said motion 5-0 (Whitney Sauer absent for vote). Motion declared passed.

**Public Items:**

None

**Old Business Items:**

None

**New Business Items:****Discussion on community requests for use of Recreation Department games and equipment –**

Dani discussed the current challenges that the Recreation Department faces with requests from community groups to borrow City equipment for their own private events. There is currently no formal process in place for this type of request.

The Freeborn County Relay for Life has been an organization that has requested use of a bounce house for many years. There has been recent requests for additional equipment as well.

**Staff Report Discussion:**

- Congratulations to Mike Westney on his retirement as Parks Superintendent. His last day will be Friday, July 27. After nearly four decades of employment with the City of Albert Lea, Mike looks forward to hitting the golf course and traveling with his family.
- We welcome Ben Bangert as the new Parks Superintendent. Ben brings over 15 years of experience with the Parks department and a wealth of knowledge, as he has served as the department arborist.

**Staff Updates:****Recreation:** Report provided by Bob Furland and Dani Bakken;

- Neighborhood parks opened on Monday June 2
  - Our first week attendance was:
    - Academy- 25
    - Lakeview-62
    - Troy-Hammer-6
    - Sondergaard-17
    - Hawthorne- 58
    - Valley-40
- We are partnering with Freeborn County 4-H Extension to provide programming at the neighborhood parks this summer
- Our first Movie in the Park will be held on Friday, June 13 – Trolls Band Together
- Recreation will be participating in Wind Down Wednesday on Wednesday, June 11
- Teen Takeover events kicked off on June 5, with Recreation partnering with the Albert Lea public Library hosting an escape room on June 5. There were roughly 40 who participated.

**Parks:** Report provided by Ryan Hajek and Mike Westney;

- Working on tree trimming and take downs.
- The Inclusive playground is open and held it's Grand Opening event on June 5.
- Inclusive Park Star mentorship garden is done (west side of driveway)
- Splash Pad bathroom build has started; electrical has been moved & sewer and water is in. Footings and foundation will start the week of June 9.

- Edgewater Cottage has been reroofed.
- Work has started on Ginkel playground.
- Summer help is all hired & have started.
- Downtown planting of pots & baskets is done.
- Mowing, rough mowing, & spraying have started.
- Most of the vandalism repairs at Fountain Lake park are complete.
- Bridge Ave dock is close to being ordered. Design has been established and now just looking at cost with the DNR.
- Frank Hall Park Bike Shelter plans are still out for structural review. The new location has been established.

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

- Facility updates –
  - See Facilities Project Update below
- Events -
  - None
- Other events –
  - None

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

- The aquatic center opens on June 6<sup>th</sup>.
- See Facilities Project Update below for updates.

**Senior Center:** Report provided by Bob Furland;

- Trips -
  - July 16, 2025 Wild Rose Casino Trip
- Programs/Events –
  - Coffee and Conversations June 12, 2025
    - Enjoy coffee and donuts as you learn more about the value of planning!  
Andrew T. Schwarz, Advanced Funeral Planner

**Marion Ross Theater:** Report provided by Bob Furland;

- Facility Updates –
  - No new updates
- Upcoming events –
  - Matilda - June 19, 20, 21, 22, 25, 26, 27, and 28
  - Peter Antoniou, Physic Comedian July 30

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

- **New website:** The City of Albert Lea plans to launch a revamped website on June 24 that is more secure and easier to use. While the new site will have the same address at [cityofalbertlea.org](http://cityofalbertlea.org),

the [test site](#) is ready for review and comment. The new site includes a directory of parks, trails and fun spots. Please visit the [test site](#) and email any corrections or suggestions to Cathy Malakowsky at [cmalakowsky@ci.albertlea.mn.us](mailto:cmalakowsky@ci.albertlea.mn.us). Other new features include accessibility features such as bigger text for browsers with visual impairments, a staff directory, translation into other languages such as Spanish and online submissions for Public Works issues such as streetlight outages and potholes.

- **Blazing Star State Trail:** The contractor is making progress on building the bridge to extend the [Blazing Star State Trail](#) between Myre-Big Island State Park and Hayward. After pausing work to allow the bridge foundation to settle, crews recently resumed work. This Minnesota Department of Natural Resources project is slated for completion late this year.
- **Council supports grant to restore channel:** The Albert Lea City Council voted May 12 to support the Shell Rock River Watershed District's grant application for restoring the channel between Fountain and Albert Lea lakes. The [watershed district](#) is seeking more funding for the proposed project from the Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council. This project would help reduce erosion, improve accessibility, and build upon past funding to improve lake water quality and habitat.

## **Referendum Project Updates**

### **Aquatic Center**

- Electric will be completed on Friday for exterior lighting.
- Construction on the new ticket booth and entrance will start in September 2025.

### **City Arena**

- Excavating for the under-ice tile and sump pump in the compressor room and under the rink floor continues.
- Albert Lea Electric continues to update the building's wiring and add transformers.
- Steel beams, bar joists, and decking for the new lobby are complete, and the masons have started laying the block.
- Framers are working in the Recreation office and new lobby.
- Interior masonry is ongoing in the new referee room.
- Solar panels continue to be installed in the Colstrup arena.

### **Marion Ross Theatre**

- Continue to work on controls for Heating and Air conditioning.

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

Restrooms by Splash Pad –

- See update under Referendum Project Updates

Develop the Union Pacific rail to trail –

- No new update

Develop an off-season field house –

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

Upgrade Snyder Fields –

- No new update

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

- See update under Referendum Project Updates

**Board Member Items:**

Steve Ball – Inquired about how we can get the word about Ginkle Park and how to access it since it is located in a more secluded area.

Amy Leach – Amy asked staff about the curb cut-out near the east entrance to Edgewater park for access from the sidewalk across Lakeview Boulevard to the park. Staff assured her that the work will be done, the timeline is just uncertain at this point.

Jason Howland – Jason discussed ash trees with the Parks staff and how they are addressed the private vs public trees that need to be either treated or removed. Staff informed him that when a tree becomes hazardous and is on private property, they will send a letter to the home owner and allow 30 days for them to take care of the issue. After 30 days another letter will be sent and they are given 7 days as a final warning. At this time the City will hire a company to do the work and the home owner will be assessed for the expense.

**Adjournment:** Amy Leach made a motion to adjourn the Park Board meeting and Kent Rahn seconded the motion. The board voted in favor of said motion 3-0 (Wende and Theresa were absent). Motion declared passed. Meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

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Afton Wacholz  
Parks and Recreation Advisory Board Secretary

Approved:

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Steve Ball  
Park & Recreation Advisory Board Chairman



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

**Recreation:** Report provided by Bob Furland and Dani Bakken;

- Rec staff will be participating in Viva La Independencies (Mexican Independence Day) on Friday, September 12, from noon to 8:00 PM in the North Lot of Albert Lea. Food trucks all day, 4 to 6 pm kids activities, bounce house, food, music, and cultural activities.
- Safety Day will be held on Tuesday, September 16, at Morin Park from 4-6pm. A great way for families to learn about local resources and meet the people who offer all kinds of support. Everyone is welcome to attend. 22 organizations are participating this year.
- The fall guide was mailed out.
  - Registration is open for Young Athletes and workout classes with Annie
- Oktoberween is at the Freeborn County Fairgrounds, October 23-26

<https://www.oktoberween.com/>

Oktoberween is a Partnership of Recreation, Albert Lea Convention and Visitor Bureau, and The 112 on Broadway. This year will have kids' events and activities, music, and the Haunted House. Sunday admission to the grounds is free for music and the Third annual Trunk or Treat.

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

- Ongoing maintenance with trees, grass, and flowers downtown.
- Final repairs for Fountain Lake Park vandalism from the spring. Albert Lea Electric set last bollards and electric panel repairs.
- Beginning fall seeding and dirt work at Ginkel Park, Inclusive Playground, etc.
- Big Island Rendezvous preparations again for annual event. Trail maintenance, mowing, early stage items.. tables, benches, electrical.
- First electric vehicle – Ford F-150 Pro arrived. Primary use will be at Edgewater Park.
- Special thanks to the Street Department mechanics Joe and Steve for help on repairs, modifications and support work with the Art Sculpture projects throughout the park system.

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

- Facility updates –
  - See Facilities Project Update below
- Events -
  - None
- Other events –
  - None

**Aquatic Center:** Report provided by Bob Furland/Dani Bakken;

- Aquatic Center is now closed for the season.
- Please see Facilities Project Update below.



**Senior Center:** Report provided by Bob Furland;

- Trips -
  - Sept. 24 - "A Fall Day to Remember" day trip to Cracker Barrel, Fergusons Orchard, and Minnesota's Largest Candy Store.
- Programs/Events –
  - October 8<sup>th</sup> 11:30a Singing Cowgirl at the Senior Center
  - Chair tai chi started September 3rd
  - September 17- Art with Emelia

**Marion Ross Theater:** Report provided by Bob Furland;

- Facility Updates –
  - Windows and doors arrive September 27, with installation set for later October to work around productions..
- Upcoming events –
  - On Golden Pond will run from October 9-12 and 15-18 at the Marion Ross Theater.
  - September 20<sup>th</sup> from 9a-5p ACT will be holding a garage sale at the Vitality Center, their wardrobe and prop storage location.
  - September 14<sup>th</sup>, Rachael Kilgour, Minnesota singer-songwriter, live performance "My Father Loved me" Kilgour poses questions about belonging, inheritance, and grief, and triumphantly affirms the value of one ordinary working man's life.
  - October 25<sup>th</sup>, The Vee Gees – Tribute band to the Bee Gees. A great tribute to the music of the Bee Gees. Saturday night fever and all the hits.

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

- Songbird Trail: The City of Albert Lea is applying for an EPA grant to clean out the hazardous materials from the former Merrick buildings on Adams Avenue and remove the buildings. The long-term plan for the site is a trailhead for the Songbird Trail that will go from Front Street to Hartland. Freeborn County is applying for regional designation of the trail to qualify for additional grants to develop the trail.
- Blue Zones: Annie Olson, local fitness instructor, is leading walking moais on Sunday evenings at United Preschool and Thursday evenings at the Blazing Star Trail, starting at Frank Hall Park. Both start at 6 p.m. and are open to the public.

### **Referendum Project Updates**

#### **Lobby/Office Areas**

- Lighting was installed in the new lobby and will continue in the office areas.
- Awning was installed on the front of the new lobby entrance.
- Cabinetry and counters are scheduled to be installed the week of September 15.
- Epoxy flooring for the lobby and carpet for the office areas will be installed end of September/early October, with the planned finishing punches scheduled for the second week of October.

- Recreation staff plans to move back to the arena once carpet is in, likely the second week of October.

#### **Ice Arena**

- Contractors are removing supplies from the Nystrom rink to prepare for ice making.
- Nystrom Arena schedule provided by INBYLT in preparation for the first skate, no later than October 17:

	<b>Duration</b>	<b>Sub</b>	<b>Start</b>	<b>Complete</b>
<b>Leak fix</b>	5	Total Mech	September 8, 2025	September 12, 2025
<b>Set Temp chiller</b>	1	Total Mech	September 17, 2025	September 17, 2025
<b>Electrical/Power to chiller</b>	2	ALE	September 19, 2025	September 22, 2025
<b>Piping, purge/Fill glycol</b>	14	Total Mech	September 22, 2025	September 30, 2025
<b>Start-up test</b>	2	Total Mech	October 6, 2025	October 8, 2025
<b>Make Ice</b>		City of AL	October 8, 2025	October 15, 2025

- Underground plumbing in the compressor room is completed.
- Below-grade inspections were done in the compressor room.
- Compressor room, vestibule, and perimeter areas in Colstrup have been backfilled, and floors will be poured by September 16.
- Below-grade sump pump installed.

#### **Aquatic Center**

- Demolition of front doors and the dividing wall in the main bathhouse is complete.
- Forms are ready for the footings to be poured for the new admission building.
- Demo is complete of the outdoor showers on the family bathhouse.

#### **Marion Ross Theater**

- Windows and doors will be delivered on September 26.

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

Restrooms by Splash Pad –

- Update during presentation by Ryan Hajek

Develop the Union Pacific rail to trail –

- Update under Cathy Malakowsky's updates

Develop an off-season field house –

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

Upgrade Snyder Fields –

- No new update

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

- See update under Referendum Project Updates

# Rec Facilities Update

Albert Lea City Council  
Sept. 8, 2025

Cathy Malakowsky, Engagement/Enrichment Director  
Bob Furland, Recreation Manager  
Chris Humphrey, Project Manager for Apex/InBylt



# Arena: When will ice be available?

## Plan: October 17 for Nystrom Rink

### Proposal from Total Mechanical Services:

- Repair leaks in existing Nystrom floor
- 3-month lease for temporary chiller for ice
  - \$8,000 in 1-time electrical hookup costs
  - \$34,250 per month for chiller rental
  - \$1,700 per month for insurance and bonding
  - **\$115,850 total** rent for 3 months
  - **\$180,000 in budget** for temporary chillers
- Proposal under staff review



# Arena: Ice for Nystrom Rink

## Nystrom Arena Ice Schedule

	Duration	Sub	Start	Complete
Leak fix	5	Total Mech	September 8, 2025	September 12, 2025
Set chiller	1	Total Mech	September 17, 2025	September 17, 2025
Electrical/Power to chiller	2	ALE	September 19, 2025	September 22, 2025
Piping, purge/Fill glycol	14	Total Mech	September 22, 2025	October 3, 2025
Start up test	2	Total Mech	October 6, 2025	October 8, 2025
Make Ice		City of AL	October 8, 2025	October 15, 2025

# Arena: Ice for Nystrom Rink

- **Albert Lea Area Schools:** Must provide ice under contract
  - School District pays \$80,000 to City for use of Arena, Bancroft Bay Park, Snyder Fields and Hayek Field
  - Impact of 1 sheet of ice: Early morning practices
- **Waldorf University**
  - Impact of only 1 ice sheet: Practices only after 10 p.m., may need to move some games
- **Albert Lea Hockey Association**
  - Impact of only 1 ice sheet: Fewer practices, may impact number of teams for tournaments
- **Albert Lea Figure Skating Club**
  - Impact of only 1 ice sheet: 1 night of practice per week instead of 2 per week
- **Ice rental brings in revenue:**
  - \$32,000 in October 2024
  - \$43,500 in November 2024
  - \$37,000 in December 2024

# Arena: Ice for Colstrup Rink

June 12 timeline:  
  
November 14,  
2025





# Arena: Ice for Colstrup Rink

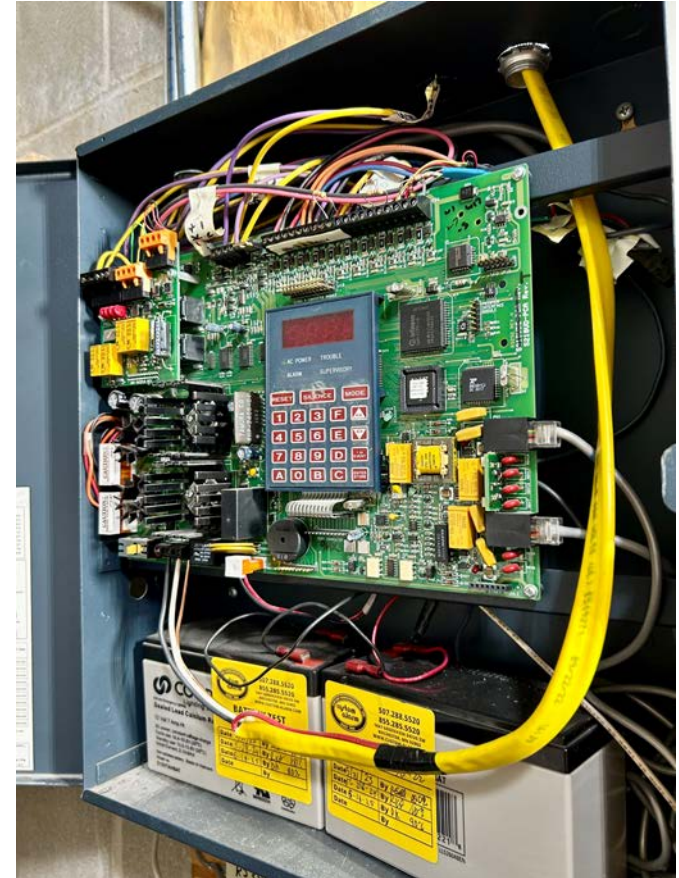
September 8 timeline:

January 6, 2026

Task Name	Duration	Start	Finish
<b>New Refrigeration Plant</b>			
New Sump System	5 days	Mon 6/16/25	Fri 6/20/25
Below Grade Transmission Lines	15 days	Mon 6/23/25	Fri 7/11/25
Underground Plumbing	2 days	Tue 9/9/25	Wed 9/10/25
Bleow Grade Inspections	1 day	Wed 9/10/25	Wed 9/10/25
Backfill Below Grade Work	1 day	Fri 9/5/25	Fri 9/5/25
Prep & Pour Mech/Elec/Vest/Perimeter	2 days	Mon 9/15/25	Tue 9/16/25
Floor Cure Time	5 days	Wed 9/17/25	Tue 9/23/25
Temp Chiller Piping	10 days	Wed 9/24/25	Tue 10/7/25
Detail 4 S201 2 (Condenser lines)	1 day	Wed 9/24/25	Wed 9/24/25
Overhead Structure S102	5 days	Thu 9/25/25	Wed 10/1/25
CMU Partition Walls	2 days	Wed 9/24/25	Thu 9/25/25
Place & Cure Housekeeping Pads	7 days	Wed 9/24/25	Thu 10/2/25
Set Mechanical Equipment	10 days	Fri 10/3/25	Thu 10/16/25
Set Condenser	2 days	Wed 9/10/25	Thu 9/11/25
Refrigeration Room Piping	40 days	Fri 10/3/25	Thu 11/27/25
Set MCC	1 day	Wed 10/1/25	Wed 10/1/25
Electrical Service to MCC	1 day	Thu 10/2/25	Thu 10/2/25
Refrigeration Room Electrical(hook up refrig)	30 days	Wed 10/15/25	Tue 11/25/25
Refrigeration Controls	25 days	Fri 11/28/25	Thu 1/1/26
Interface Controls	3 days	Fri 1/2/26	Tue 1/6/26
<b>Colstrup Arena Rink</b>			
Trench Rink Drain Tile & fill w/ pearock	20 days	Wed 9/24/25	Tue 10/21/25
Heating system piping & fill w/ 6" sand	14 days	Wed 9/24/25	Mon 10/13/25
insulation, chairs, rebar, poly piping	24 days	Tue 10/14/25	Fri 11/14/25
Pour prep	5 days	Mon 11/17/25	Fri 11/21/25
Pour Rink Floor	1 day	Mon 11/24/25	Mon 11/24/25
Cure Time	24 days	Tue 11/25/25	Fri 12/26/25
Install Dasher Boards	3 days	Mon 12/29/25	Wed 12/31/25
Start Up & Test	2 days	Mon 12/29/25	Tue 12/30/25
Make Ice	5 days	Wed 12/31/25	Tue 1/6/26

# Arena: Fire alarm issue

- Lobby expansion: New fire alarm system needed for entire facility
- Wrong assumption:
  - Existing system had capacity for additional sensors in current panel
- Current system installed in 1997



# Arena: Fire alarm issue

- 2 proposals:
  - \$300,000 from Ahern
  - **\$146,000** from Custom Alarm (current system in place)
    - Nearly 15% of \$1 million remodeling project at Arena
- Also considered fire doors and shutters for lobby
  - \$126,000 plus design costs
- Need to meet code to open to public
  - Building Official and Fire Chief willing to issue 90-day certificate of occupancy
  - As long as current system remains in place and functioning

# Rec Facilities: Fire alarm issue

- Spent \$82,000 of \$132,500 contingency budget for remodeling of Arena and Aquatic Center
  - Some items unforeseen:
    - Examples: Additional drainage under Arena offices and stoop buried under Arena sidewalk
  - Some items missed by architect
    - Examples: Flooring in Arena lobby and Aquatic Center gates
- \$50,500 remaining in contingency

# Rec Facilities: Fire alarm issue

City Attorney seeks direction from City Council:

- City absorbs cost of new fire alarm system?
- Or City Attorney seeks financial contribution from InBylt and JLG Architects through arbitration?

# Rec Facilities: Other project updates

Completed at Marion Ross Theater:

- Furnace in lower level replaced
- A/C installed in main dressing room
- Water conservation measures installed
- Building sealed for energy efficiency
- Lighting upgrades
- HVAC controls





# Rec Facilities: Theater

## Upcoming:

- Front windows and accessible front doors arrive Sept. 26
- Installation scheduled for Oct. 1 and 8 around theater events



# Rec Facilities: Aquatic Center

## Projects completed:

- New water heating systems
- New electrical system
- Lighting upgrades

## • Project underway:

- Remodeling of front entrance



# Rec Facilities: Arena

## Projects completed:

- Shower heads replacements
- Water conservation measures
- Building sealed up
- Lighting upgrades to LEDS
- Low e-ceiling in Colstrup rink
- Structural reinforcements
- Drainage around building



# Rec Facilities: Arena

## Project on schedule:

- Remodeling of lobby, offices and skate rental area



# Rec Facilities: Arena

## Projects to come:

- New Colstrup rink floor
- Refrigeration system
- Dehumidification changes
- Sound system for Colstrup rink

Questions?