



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

*July 2025 Meeting
7/21/2025, 6 pm
City Arena*

1. CALL TO ORDER:
 - Roll Call
 - Adopt Agenda
2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES:
 - June 16, 2025 Meeting Minutes
3. PUBLIC ITEMS:
4. OLD BUSINESS:
5. NEW BUSINESS:
 - Discussion on community requests for use of Recreation Dept games and equipment
 - Tour City Arena - Rec Facilities Projects
6. STAFF REPORT DISCUSSION:
 - Farewell to Parks Superintendent Mike Westney; Welcome aboard Ben Bangert!
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**

June 16, 2025 6 pm
Edgewater Cottage

Members Present:

Steve Ball
Kent Rahn
Therese Salazar
Wende Taylor
Amy Leach (arrived 6:02p)
Jason Howland, Ex-Officio

Members Absent:

Tony Segura
Whitney Sauer

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
Dani Bakken, Recreation Coordinator
Afton Wacholz, Recreation Office Manager
Teresa Kauffman, Communications Coordinator

Others in Attendance:

Mayor Rich Murray

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 Kent Rahn seconded the motion. The board voted in favor of said motion 4-0 (Amy Leach absent for vote). Motion declared passed.

Approval of the Minutes:

Wende Taylor made the motion to approve the minutes from the April 21, 2025 (May meeting was cancelled) meeting and Therese Salazar seconded the motion. The board voted in favor of said motion 4-0 (Amy Leach absent for vote). Motion declared passed.

Public Items:

Communications coordinator, Teresa Kauffman, was present to take pictures of the board members for use on the new City website.

Mayor Rich Murray was also in attendance to thank the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board on a job well done for their work and dedication to the board. Parks are huge in our community and the new construction and projects at the City Arena are exciting for all.

Old Business Items:**Review and updates of Rec Facilities Referendum Projects -****City Arena****Lobby -**

- The roof demo will take place on the 18 and 19. This will be where the old lobby and office area get tied into the new lobby.
- Work will begin on the new roof for the lobby area on June 22.
- Blockwork for lobby windows will be done this week.
- July 1 brickwork will take place for about ten days.

Interior Lobby and Office area –

- Jim and Dudes will start roughing in for HVAC and plumbing.
- Albert Lea electric finish rough-ins for electric next two weeks.
- June 18 install begins for door frames and sheetrock in the office area. Work expected to be complete June 23, with painting starting after July 4.
- June 26 install begins for new rooftop units, entry, office area, and Colstrup locker rooms.
- Windows and glass doors are to be installed in the early part of August.

Colstrup Arena Refrigeration and Floor –

- This week, they are installing a drain tile and sump system to keep water from the arena floor and refrigeration piping.
- Next week, the refrigeration contractor will start welding the main pipes from the refrigeration unit to the arena floor.
- June 30 to July 8 they will begin to import sand into the rink.
- July 9 they will work to level and compact sand for the arena floor.
- July 14 install of equipment begins in the equipment room for 24 days.
- Mechanical room piping work will begin Jul 14.
- August 4 compressors will be set.
- Sept 12 work will begin for the rink floor pour.
- System startup is set for Oct 27.
- Over the next two weeks, Bob will be starting plans for temporary chillers to get the ice in as soon as possible.
- Bob will also contact all the user groups as soon as he can get some firmer dates.

Aquatic Center

- The boilers are up and running. We have a problem with gas regulators, but we are working that out with Minnesota Energy.
- Construction for the new entrance and admission building will begin at the end of August.

Marion Ross Theatre

- Working with Harris Mechanical on more straightforward controls for ACT to use.
- Windows to be installed in late July.

New Business Items:

Cathy presented information to the board about the City's new website that is set to launch on June 24th. There are still corrections being made and staff will continue to work on adjusting things as they come up.

Staff Report Discussion:

- Snyder Field improvement update from Ryan Hajek regarding the presentation of the design to the youth softball and baseball associations. Ryan presented the potential cost and the amount the City would be asking for the associations to provide for the concessions portion. Further discussion will be had with these groups about how to move forward.

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 6th.
- 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, 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. 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,

Afton Wacholz
Parks and Recreation Advisory Board Secretary

Approved:

Steve Ball
Park & Recreation Advisory Board Chairman

July Parks and Recreation Department Updates from Staff

Recreation: Report provided by Bob Furland and Dani Bakken;

- Participated in Wind Down Wednesday on July 9. We had our archery tag gallery and other yard games.
- Neighborhood parks will end on Thursday, July 24. Participation numbers from opening day through July 3:
 - Academy- 65
 - Lakeview- 241
 - Troy-Hammer- 46
 - Sondergaard- 149
 - Hawthorne- 123
 - Hayek-65
 - Valley-254
- Movie in the Park will be held on July 18. We will play the movie Harold and the Purple Crayon. The next movie in the park will be held on August 8.
- Archery Tag league will end on July 22. We had 12 people sign up and they have enjoyed the program.

Parks: Report provided by Ryan Hajek/Mike Westney/Ben Bangert;

- Continue tree trimming, requests, and removals.
- Inclusive Playground- waiting on repairs to surface and a couple pieces of equipment.
- Edgewater Park Cottage- Primer painting when time allows.
- Morin Park – Exterior painting when weather permits.
- Ginkle Park Playground Construction- setting posts and equipment construction phase in progress. Tile lines added for drainage.
- Continual finished mowing, rough mowing, weed eating, and weed spraying through park system.
- Baseball season slowing to end for Snyder Fields. Demo replacement Toro/ Surface leveling unit.
- Mike Westney retirement party on July 25th (his last day of work!) at Public Works City Garage breakroom 1-3p.
- Ben Bangert promoted to Parks Superintendent.
- Bridge Ave Dock: Close to ordering. DNR is reviewing the dock proposal.
- Splash Pad Bathroom: In foundation plumbing installed and back filled. Pouring concrete floors and sidewalks next week
- Frank Hall Park Bike Shelter: Structural Review process has started!!!! Yay!!!!

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;

- Session 2 swim lessons began on Monday, July 7. We have 172 participants in this session.
- Total Aquatic Center attendance since opening day is now 8,961.
- Teen Takeover scheduled at the Aquatic Center for July 10 was rescheduled to July 24 due to the weather.

Senior Center: Report provided by Bob Furland;

- Trips -
 - August 6, 2025 – Chanhassen Dinner Theater production of Grease
- Programs/Events –

Marion Ross Theater: Report provided by Bob Furland;

- Facility Updates –
 - No new updates
- Upcoming events –
 - Peter Antoniou, Physic Comedian July 30 7:30p

Other: Report provided by Cathy Malakowsky;

- New website: If you haven't already done so, please check out the City of Albert Lea's new website at www.cityofalbertlea.org/.
- Blue Zones: Annie Olson, a local fitness instructor and preschool teacher, is also coordinating moias (clubs) for Blue Zones Albert Lea. She invites families to join her on Sundays, at 6:30 p.m., through Aug. 31 at United Preschool. Kids can hit the playground or join their families walking laps in the parking lot. She also plans to add a moai in late July that will walk to Thursdays on Fountain the rest of summer.
- Rock n Roll the Lakes: This annual bike ride with 10-,30- and 50-mile routes will be held Saturday, Aug. 16, with registration opening at 8 a.m. The ride will start and finish at Central Park. It raises money for local trail amenities, including the trailhead shelter being built at Frank Hall Park.
- Senior Center: The City of Albert Lea plans to issue an RFP soon for the Senior Center's location, including proposals from Skyline Plaza, the current landlord, as well as other parties interested in renting or selling space for the Senior Center starting in 2027.

Referendum Project Updates

Aquatic Center

- No new updates.

City Arena

- Exterior masonry materials have arrived. Work to begin today (7/10) delayed by rain
- Sheet rocking in office area, conference room, and ticketing area has been completed
- Lobby expansion roof construction and adjoining to the existing roof continues
- Well drilling has reached 200 feet in depth; an estimated 2.5 weeks remain until complete
- Total Mechanical air test transmission line mains passed inspection
- Albert Lea Electric continues to update building wiring
- Excavating for the under-ice tile and sump pump in the compressor room and under the rink floor continues
- Refrigeration mains continue to be installed in the compressor room.

Marion Ross Theatre

- No new updates.

**** Top 5 Project Updates:**

Restrooms by Splash Pad –

- See update under Parks update

Develop the Union Pacific rail to trail –

- No new update

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