



City of Fort Atkinson
City Manager's Office
101 N. Main Street
Fort Atkinson, WI 53538

**PARKS AND RECREATION ADVISORY BOARD MEETING
IN PERSON AND VIA ZOOM
WEDNESDAY, MARCH 12, 2025 – 4:00 PM
CITY HALL – SECOND FLOOR**

MINUTES

1. Call meeting to order

Baird called meeting to order at 4:10 pm.

2. Roll call

In attendance: Ben Dayton, Director, Parks & Rec, Hillary Baird, Simon Dorfman, Steve Mahony, Robert Cassidy (virtual), Councilman Kyle Jaeckel (virtual)

Also in attendance: Anna Schaeftbauer, P&R intern from UWW, Ryan Huber, Kiwanis Club, John Kutz, Kiwanis Club, Jude Hartwick, Fort Atkinson Beautification Council, Tom Fick, Fort Atkinson Beautification Council, Cyleen Pint, Fort Atkinson High School student (attending as requirement of Government class), Emily Foerster, Fort Atkinson High School student (attending as requirement of Government class)

Absent: Excused Ryan (Rocky) Baldry and Becky Romans

3. Approval of Minutes

*a. Review and possible action relating to the **minutes of September 11, 2024 Parks and Recreation Advisory Board meeting** (Baird)*

Mahoney motioned to approve the minutes of the September 11, 2024, Parks and Recreation Advisory Board meeting, seconded by Baird.

4. New Business

*a. Review and possible recommendation to the Planning Commission relating to the **Rock River Park Kiwanis Field Facility Improvements** (John Kutz, Kiwanis Club)*

John Kutz described the multi-phase project in detail on behalf of the Kiwanis Club.

Kutz explained that the pavement plan and new bleachers would be phase 1 of the project. Hard service pads will be placed under six proposed bleacher sets, and additional seating will be added to the south field as a home and away set-up.

Kutz mentioned that the Kiwanis Club has funding that can be allocated to this project, with additional fundraising to come. John stated that Phase 1 can start as soon as this fall.

Mahony stated that this is a great project that will touch many people in the community.

Kutz informed the board of the value of having game facilities on city property, and that within the youth tackle football league they play in, Fort Atkinson Youth Tackle is the only club that uses the city parks. Other communities rely on the High School field, which can be difficult to schedule around.

Ryan Huber stated that the goal is to help improve the facilities for increased community use by other user groups and the community. Middle- and high-school-aged soccer teams have already reserved Kiwanis fields for practice because of the lights. The Kiwanis Club has begun discussing purchasing new goals with the Jefferson County United Soccer Club.

Jude Hartwig stated that the Luther (Elementary school) fields have closed nets, which will be a good addition to the city.

Dayton asked if the soccer field and goals could alternate to limit wear on the turf and how they would move and mow around. Also, consider an off-season storage location.

Huber and Kutz suggested a goal system with wheels that can be safely moved by mowing staff and user groups. They also indicated that a potential agreement similar to the Fort Youth Tackle Football may be needed for other user groups.

Dayton asked about the size of the proposed Concessions Stand patio addition.

Kutz stated that the pad size would match the width of the existing hard surface around the concessions stand and that it could be adjusted to fit 4 to 6 picnic tables. He stated that a detailed hard surface plan, including specs, will be provided to the Planning Commission.

Baird stated that adding bleachers at Kiwanis fields would be a great addition for soccer or football teams that practice or play at this facility. It would also highlight the convenience of bleachers over folding chairs.

Kutz covered Phase 2 Lighting in further detail, stating that the proposed cost estimates are based on replacing the fixtures only and do not include poles.

Baird brought up renewable energy options when looking into lighting and highlighting cost savings and sustainability.

Huber noted that the soccer club, JC United, has a spring season, which may utilize the field lights.

Dayton asked how often the Fort Youth Tackle Football uses lights during their season.

Huber explained that the Padded Flag Football League plays at night, and they get used to and practice as needed. The goal is to get LED Lighting to save on costs and be more functional. He stated that the existing lights need to warm up for about 10 minutes before turning on.

Kutz reiterated that the concrete and seating are intended to be phase one this year and that lighting will be phase two in 2026. Lighting options have been investigated and will be fine-tuned for phase 2.

Baird asked if the construction of the path would prevent the use of the football fields while work is being done.

Kuntz and Huber explained that the areas that would be affected would not be on a playing field. They also noted that both fields have installed drain tiles, which must be inspected before breaking ground.

Jaeckel noted that Rock River Park has a high deer population and that deer getting caught in the net is a concern. He also stated that if it becomes an issue, this could lead to more calls to the police department. He asked if the nets would be easily removable.

Mahoney stated that regardless of the color of the net, deer would not see it, .

Dayton asked if there were other considerations for the site, including parking, and if the additional practice space to the south gets used often.

Huber stated that a conversation with the Fort Youth Tackle Football would be needed to gather more information.

Dayton brought up to the group that this project was also reviewed by other Parks and Recreation Staff and received support from the department. This is a win for accessibility to and seating by the football fields. The patio is also an improvement, and staff will work with the club on final dimensions.

Baird made a motion to recommend the Rock River Park Kiwanis Field Facility upgrade to the Planning Commission. Seconded by Mahony.

- b. *Review and possible recommendation to the Planning Commission relating to the **Fort Atkinson Historic Mural (37 N Water St. West) Informational Sign** (Jude Hartwick, Fort Atkinson Beautification Council)*

Jude Hartwick presented this project to the Parks and Recreation Board on behalf of the

Fort Atkinson Beautification Council.

Hartwick explained the elements of the sign, pointing out the features of the mural and a legend that provides details of each corresponding image. He pointed out that the Beautification Council website and Hoard Museum websites are listed to provide more detailed information on the mural's subjects. He also read the statement from the Beautification Council, including their mission statement and a quote in memory of Dick Schultz.

Tom Fick asked why the Main Street location was denied from the original proposal and what the maintenance concerns were.

Dayton explained that the consideration of having multiple signs was reduced to having fewer items to maintain. Even without daily maintenance requirements, these items can collect debris. Long-term maintenance will eventually be needed. The recommendation from the department is a single site for a sign on a pedestrian path.

Hartwick explained that the Beautification Council has funding for this project, which includes maintenance, repair, or replacement of the sign.

Dorfman asked for more information about the pictures on the sign and what each letter represented.

Hartwick explained the various figures painted on the mural and clarified that the letters on the sign are not painted on the mural itself and that it is key for people to identify each item on the painting. Eventually, historical information and dates will be painted directly onto the mural instead of a sign behind the water building. He went on to ask if there was a preference between option 1 and option 2.

Dorfman recommends the sign with a solid background, option #2.

Hartwick and Fick told the board that the Beautification Council is looking for foot traffic and an easy route to the mural for sign placement so that people can view it from a closer perspective. The hope is that the sign can also be a teaching tool for local students. The intent is also to draw people to the museum as well.

Baird recommended the pedestrian bridge as a location due to the high foot traffic. She also commented that the riverwalk is not as busy. Baird also suggested that the council include a QR code or arrow to point people in the direction of the mural.

Dayton mentioned that using URLs was preferable in this application since both website addresses are short enough to fit neatly on the sign. Furthermore, there are concerns about posting a QR code that the city doesn't directly control. There is also worry about the possibility of someone tampering with a QR code in an area that isn't regularly

monitored.

Fick suggested a new location at the base of the Riverwalk stairs on the south end of the Pedestrian Bridge.

Dayton stated this would be an acceptable location after staff thoroughly vetted it.

Dorfman motioned to move forward with the rail-mount sign on the ped bridge unless the riverwalk location was deemed to be a better fit.

Baird made a motion to recommend the Fort Atkinson Historic Mural (37 N Water St. West) Informational Sign to the Planning Commission. Seconded by Dorfman.

5. Miscellaneous

a. Director's Report (Dayton)

A lot has happened since our last Parks and Recreation Board meeting!

We had a few staffing changes over the summer. Dave Radloff took a new position with the school district last summer, leaving a vacancy in our Aquatics Specialist position. After completing a year working as Dave's backup, Mat Thompson was promoted to this position. On January 2, Jim Witucki, who previously worked with the FADPW, joined the team to fill that vacancy. Jim comes to us with an extensive background in tree maintenance, has his CDL, and is very familiar with the city.

With Mabel Schumacher's support, the WWII Memorial was installed and officially dedicated in less than six months! Since the monument's completion, Mabel has received several awards and will receive the Wisconsin Assembly Hometown Hero Award at the state capital tomorrow. Rebecca Houseman, JJ Yanke, and I plan to attend to celebrate Mabel as she accepts the award.

Jones Park was busy last fall and winter. Parks staff completed the initial steps to install our new batting cage. Between October and December, the Parks staff executed site preparation for the installation of the batting cage support beams and the concrete pad. Staff will also install the turf mats in the spring. Parks Maintenance Supervisor Yanke led the team in completing a field renovation. Staff removed the infield mix and clay base. During this process, we discovered that some areas of the diamond had nearly four inches of clay built up, creating a barrier and limiting drainage. Over 306 tons of diamond dirt were delivered (14 truckloads) to the park. The staff spread, leveled, and compacted the field.

We welcomed an intern to our department for the Spring Semester on January 27. Anna Schaeftbauer, a Senior at the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater, has been working with

us and is already making valuable contributions to the department. Thanks to her excellent work, we have a newly designed summer program guide cover.

Lastly, I'd like to give a shoutout to the Recreation team for their time and attention to detail while completing the 2025 Summer Program Guide on time. We estimate that the guide will hit mailboxes in the final week of March 12, 2025, with programs opening online on April 1.

Aquatic Center:

- The Aquatic Center is scheduled to open on the weekend of June 7-8, 2025.
- Admissions/Concessions: Lauren Lescohier is returning as manager for the fourth year. Of the 19 staff members, 15 are returning.
- Lifeguards: We will have three of the four managers returning. Charles Schenck, Ava Stedman and Maren Selle. After interviewing two candidates for the Head Manager position, Charlie was selected for the promotion and will serve in this role for the 2025 pool season.
- 24 of 30 lifeguards will be returning for the 2025 season!
- Family Pool passes went on sale on February 28. They will be sold at a discounted rate of \$90 through May 15.
- A goal for the Aquatic Center this summer is to have Mat Thompson and JJ Yanke document the start-up and closing-down procedure to help with staff efficiency. With a seasonal pool, some of the process is lost during the off-season.

Main Street Dance:

- Dancers delivered holiday cheer this winter, visiting four nursing homes. It was uplifting to see the residents and staff's reactions.
- The 2025 Main Street Dance Studio Recital is set for May 16 and 18 at the UWW Young Auditorium. If you have not seen it, you should! The dance team, along with Brett Ketterman, deliver an impressive and engaging performance!

Parks:

- Summer seasonal staff hiring has begun; part-time staff letters of assignment were mailed out earlier this year. After receiving confirmation of who will be returning, we will start the next step of hiring for any open positions.
- The Parks Team has almost completely moved into the new Public Works and Parks Operations facility! The team is doing a great job creating a new workspace that is functional and fits their needs.
- In 2024, we recorded 345 shelter rentals for the year, excluding Barrie Park Bandshell, which was rented 20 times during the summer. Below is a breakdown of rentals by shelter:
 - Haumerson's Pond Warming House: 149
 - Jones Park Shelter: 44
 - Ralph Park Lions Shelter: 28
 - Ralph Park Corner Shelter: 21

Rock River Park Rotary Pavilion: 44

The Clubhouse @ Rock River Park: 59

-Parks staff are actively entering data into the City's GIS map. This important work will prepare the department for success by creating a digital catalog of our park assets. This will enable staff to perform their tasks more efficiently and aid in long-term park planning.

-Lastly, we are happy to say that the targeted completion date for the Haumerson's Pond Garage/Shelter Building is June of 2025.

Recreation:

-The Recreation staff had a great year of providing the community with a variety of programs and events.

-Below is a breakdown of our recreation program numbers for 2024!

Our Adult Sports programs brought in 1,491 participants. This is down 150 from 2023.

The Dance Program, Aquatic Center, and Youth Center offerings accounted for served 4,552 individuals, which is an increase of 321.

In total the department's Youth Sports, Adult Sports, Dance/Swim/Youth Center served 7,691 people, which is 129 fewer than 2023.

The total number of recorded participants, including Aquatic Center attendance, is 35,829.

-To highlight a few programs, the World of Wheels event experienced the largest increase, adding approximately 75 attendees. The most significant decreases occurred in Fast Pitch Softball, which had 40 fewer participants; the Grade 3-4 Girls Basketball program, which declined by 45; and Karate, which saw a loss of 90 participants compared to the 2023 numbers. It's important to note that the karate program is in its first year of transitioning to a Saturday-only format. Additionally, the girls' basketball program pertains to the 2023-24 season.

Senior Center:

-The Senior Center successfully launched its programs using the department's registration site, Sportsman. Now, patrons can sign up for their favorite program online and complete payments with a credit card. This move will also save the department money by utilizing a single site for all program registrations.

-Lastly, the Senior Center received a grant from the Community Foundation to install new door assist buttons at the Robert Street entrance and the men's and women's restrooms. The AV equipment also received an upgrade, with a new headset mic and handheld mic.

Baird suggested scheduling programs like the Nerf War on different days of the week if they are offered multiple sessions.

6. Next Meeting

a. Wednesday, June 11, 2025 at 4:00 p.m.

7. Adjournment

Baird motioned to adjourn, Mahoney second.