

Parks and Recreation Advisory Board Minutes
September 9th, 2025

Chair Kazmira Herberger called the meeting to order at 5:35 p.m. on September 9th, 2025, at Mayors Riverfront Park.

Roll Call:

Members Present: Kazmira Herberger, Isabela Ballez, Chris Bol, Rachel Hughes-Nilsson, Karen Wellman, Riley Nilsson

Members Absent: Bjorn Nelson

Staff Present: Deidrean Barrett

Commissioner Liaison: Chris Praedel

Introduction of Guests: None

Changes to the Agenda: None

Special Presentations: None

Approval of Minutes:

Karen Wellman motioned; Kazmira Herberger seconded by for unanimous approval of the July meeting minutes.

Old Business:

1. Park Inventory and Park Adoptees List – Board confirmed 30 parks have been adopted. Ongoing issues include missing/incorrect contact information, lack of responses, and coordination challenges. Karen Wellman raised concerns about communication gaps and conflicts with the adoption of Rose Park Veterans Memorial. American Legion expressed interest, but adoption was blocked due to Public Safety's current adoption. Discussion included improving clarity for adoptees on planting rules, watering access, and coordination with staff. Proposal to involve Hannah Whiteman (Landscape Coordinator) directly in answering planting/grounds questions. Agreement to develop a Google Sheet tracker with a "notes" and "dreams" column for adoptee requests, allowing realistic tracking of future projects. Emphasis on realistic expectations: trash cans and benches vs. high-cost projects.
2. Youth & Family Paddle 2025 – Event was held successfully with strong family turnout despite brief rain. Feedback is to move the event to July instead of August and adjust the start time. Board stressed the need for multiple experienced paddlers on the water. Positive feedback from repeat participants, plan to host again in 2026.

New Business:

1. Fall and Winter Events – Halloween Forest is confirmed for October 25th from 2-4 pm. If volunteers are needed it will be coordinated by Zach Farley and Morgan Gillis.
2. Location for October Meeting – Next meeting will be held at Mayor's Riverfront Park to accommodate board members attending virtually.

Event Recommendations: Youth & Family Paddle 2026 added to future planning. Suggestion to explore open paddle opportunities on first Saturdays during summer.

Adopt-A-Park Applications: None

Comments:

Citizens: None

Commission Liaison: Chris Praedel shared updates on City Manager search – meet and greet with the finalists on October 14th, public interviews will be October 15th.

Friends of Recreation Liaison Update: None

Parks and Recreation Director Monthly Report: Farmer's Market Building is still on schedule for completion by the end of September. Delay in HVAC air handler delivery, expected in the first week of October. Winter market logistics are under discussion. Milham Park stream restoration phase 2 project is going out to bid in the next few weeks. Work to occur in December (2-3 weeks duration), with minimal disruption to spring/summer operations. The new bathroom building at Milham Park is 90% complete. It is expected to reopen next week. It will be available for use during Halloween Forest. Princeton Park improvements were rebid with it going to Kalleward Group. Equipment delivery has 18–36-week lead time. If delayed installation will occur in the spring. Other improvements begin this fall. Verburg Park improvements had only one bid received that was higher than budget. Staff working on alternative completion plan. Update expected at October meeting. Rockwell Park had converted the old tennis courts into a traffic playground. Scheduling with the artist is underway. Special Event Coordinator team is now fully staffed. Zach Farley was hired in May. He is a WMU grad and former intern for the department. Morgan Gillies is a recent WMU grad with a special event major. Both coordinators will connect with the board for fall/winter volunteer needs. We are working on contract with People's Food Co-Op for Farmer's Market operations. Negotiating major upgrades to Homer Stryker Field and a 10-year extension with the Kalamazoo Growlers, securing them through the 2038 season.

Staff: None

Board Members: Rachel Hughes-Nilsson emphasized the need for new board member recruitment. Chris Bol discussed city attorney guidance on mileage for Parks and Recreation. Kazmira suggested partnering on the Kalamazoo River clean up and adding T-shirts/table setup to 2026 event.

Adjournment: 7:17 p.m.

The next Parks and Recreation Advisory Board Meeting will be held on Tuesday, October 7th, 2025, at 5:30 p.m. at Mayors Riverfront Park.

Respectfully submitted by Deidrean Barrett, Recording Secretary

Deidrean Barrett 11/04/2025
Recording Secretary

Kamryn Dumbin 11/5/2025
Chair