

City of Van Meter, Iowa

Parks & Recreation Board Meeting – July 8, 2025

- 1) The Van Meter Parks & Recreation Board met on July 8, 2025 for a meeting. The meeting started at 6:02 pm.
- 2) Parks & Recreation Director Chia called the meeting to order & roll was taken.
Board Members Present: Rhonda Baldwin, Janice Miller, Lisa Benton, Amber Bowen, Brooks Newton, Nate Weitl
Staff Present: Sam Chia – Parks & Recreation Director
- 3) **Approval of June 5, 2025 minutes:**
Rhonda Baldwin approve agenda ~ Amber Bowen second approval
- 4) **Master Parks Plan Update**
 - A survey has been distributed to gather community feedback, closing on the 14th; committee members were reminded to review the provided document and bring questions.
 - Committee members include several board members, the mayor, city council reps, and external consultants from Bolten & Menk.
 - Early feedback highlighted concerns with the recreational areas, especially regarding parking and safety due to high kid activity.
 - Comprehensive feedback from surveys and committee will be integrated into a ten-year master plan with recommendations per park based on priorities and funding.
 - Bolten & Menk is collaborating with a recreation specialist firm to assess field adequacy; upcoming presentations for the board are expected in the fall.
 - Discussion clarified that certain grant funds (e.g., from Microsoft) are not allocated for general park improvements but for trees.
 - Members encouraged broader participation in the survey, including non-residents and all household members.
- 5) **July Concert on the Corner & Event Communication**
 - Concerns were raised about the July 20th Concert on the Corner, as the Legion is hosting community concert event two days prior (July 18th).
 - No performer is yet secured for July; prior suggestion (Jenny Hunstrod) is unavailable and county fair overlaps with scheduling.
 - Previous concert had about 50 attendees, considered good despite hot weather.
 - Communication methods for these events were discussed: water bill newsletter, city website, physical banners/signs, and Facebook; suggestions included targeted emails and partnering with the local school for wider reach.
 - Brief discussion about installing a digital/video sign to announce community events.
 - Brainstorming for entertainment ideas included considering a magician or children's karaoke to diversify offerings and attract families.
 - Plan set to move forward with July event if an entertainer can be found.
- 6) **Field Maintenance & Sports Complex Updates**
 - Contract signed with All American Turf for weed control; plans to lay sod on barren patches this summer and overseed/aerate in the fall.
 - Public Works handles mowing; a new seasonal full-time staff member was added to address upkeep.
 - Persistent large potholes on the drive to the sports complex noted; Public Works to be tasked with road repairs.
 - Feedback about lack of accessible (ADA) parking at baseball/softball and soccer fields from visitors; board agreed this needs rectifying.
 - Discussion on additional amenities like dugouts for T-ball and long-term plans for new sports complex land (pending any community land donation).
 - Maintenance improvements also acknowledged at Johnson Park, including trimming and woodchip application, but the trail and water fountain require more attention.

7) Fall Rec Sports Updates

- Currently about 300 registered for fall soccer and 74 for flag football; soccer numbers down from last year, mostly for older age groups shifting to more competitive/tournament teams; younger numbers are up.
- Expansion of flag football to grades K-6 and partnership with Winterset aims to boost participation.
- Board discussed possible ways to balance rosters, including using tools like ChatGPT for randomization or ensuring team variety.
- Pre-K registration may still be open; focus on timely uniform orders.
- Wrestling is run independently but communicated through the board.

8) Fall Festival Planning

- Ongoing interest in holding a fall festival, possibly at the boat landing to showcase the trail—logistics about river access/safety and parking discussed.
- Ideas included nature walks (possibly with DNR involvement), crafts with leaves, coffee trailer, mums and pumpkin sales, and a local band or DJ for entertainment.
- September was tentatively targeted, aiming to avoid conflicts with other local festivals and events; weekends other than September 13th/21st preferred.
- Event location should consider accessibility and safety for young kids.

9) Meeting Wrap-Up and Next Steps

- Meeting adjourned at 6:40pm.
- Next meeting scheduled for August 7, first Thursday.

Suggested Action Items

- Share master parks plan updates and compiled survey results at future meetings.
- Identify and book entertainment for July Concert on the Corner, considering a magician or children's activity.
- Push event notifications using email and local school communications in addition to existing channels.
- Follow up with Public Works regarding pothole repair and establishing ADA parking at sports fields.
- Obtain contact info for recommended magician and pursue booking for July event.
- Continue discussion and planning for a fall festival, finalize possible dates and location.
- Address maintenance issues (trail clearing, water fountain repair) at Johnson Park before next meeting.

Preparer of minutes attestation: Rhonda Baldwin