# 08-06-25 PARK COMMITEEE MEETING

Augst 6, 2025
W2004 County Road S, Freedom

## Meeting Preliminaries

* The meeting was called to order at 6:00 PM with committee members Joe Zellmer, Amy Feltz, Tara VanCaster, and Margo Fox present. Paul Hermes was noted as arriving shortly.
* A motion to verify the meeting posting and adopt the agenda was passed with four votes in favor and zero against.
* The open comment period had no speakers.

## Park Ordinance Review

* The committee agreed to review the ordinances section by section, starting with the current version. A reorganized draft submitted by Amy Feltz will be integrated and reviewed at a future meeting.
* The discussion on park signage and revised ordinances (agenda item 4A) will be postponed until the September meeting.
* Committee members and Justin were asked to submit their proposed changes or questions regarding the current ordinances by August 20th.
* The goal is to compile these suggestions and share them electronically before the next meeting to facilitate a more efficient discussion.
* Fees or Dedications
	+ It was suggested that the Park Committee should have a consultative role or say in the site review process for proposed park sites, which is currently handled exclusively by the Planning Committee.
	+ The committee will take questionable language to the Town Board for feedback before finalizing changes in September.
* Town Park System
	+ A change was proposed to subsection 1 to include "visitors" in addition to "current and future residents" as beneficiaries of the Town Park System.
	+ The language in subsection 4 regarding committee member terms needs to be reworked to officially reflect the current practice of staggered terms, preventing all members' terms from ending simultaneously.
	+ It was suggested that subsection 8, concerning maintenance, be updated to explicitly include "public facilities" like pavilions, not just "parks."
	+ A new subsection (F) was proposed for section 8, which would task the committee to "establish and maintain a master plan and make recommendations toward capital improvements and establishing prioritization of future improvements."
* General Ordinance Review
	+ A suggestion was made to add the word "trail" to the ordinances, specifically in reference to a potential future trail along County E.
	+ The group identified a need to define terms such as "town official," "sporting activities," and "park hours" within the ordinance for clarity.
	+ The rule against "bill posting" (C3) was discussed to determine if it applies to commercial advertising or personal notices, noting a separate town ordinance on signage already exists.
	+ The necessity of a rule against "throwing stones" (C4) was questioned, as there is no known history of this being an issue in the parks.
* Prohibited Activities and Weapons
	+ It was agreed that rules regarding hunting, trapping, and the discharge of firearms or weapons (including bows and arrows) should be consolidated into a single, simplified ordinance.
	+ The group felt that a separate, detailed section on prohibited activities (H) was "overkill" and its content could be merged with the main rule on weapons (C6).
	+ The rule against cleaning fish in parks (C22) was discussed, with the conclusion that it should be kept if it addresses a known, recurring problem.
	+ Uniform Controlled Substances Act: A question was raised to confirm with Attorney Stegfeller that this act is still current.
	+ Unmanned Aircraft (Drones): The committee discussed whether the current language prohibiting "remote and radio controlled model airplanes, helicopters, and similar devices" adequately covers modern drones. It was noted that overarching FAA standards may already address this, but the ordinance might need to be updated for clarity.
* Fires and Grills
	+ The rule restricting fires to "designated picnic areas" (C7) was identified as problematic because these areas are not clearly marked.
	+ The discussion addressed how to handle exceptions for grills used during special events or for tailgating at sports tournaments.
	+ It was suggested that a general clause could be added to allow certain activities if "approved by either town official or via independent agreement."
* Vehicle Regulations and Park Access
	+ E-Bikes and Scooters: The group acknowledged the growing popularity of e-bikes and scooters and the need to address them in the ordinance. Key concerns included safety on trails shared with pedestrians, but no final decision was made on whether to allow them.
	+ Speed Limits: The 10 mph speed limit (C11) was considered unenforceable without posted signs. It was suggested that the "reckless driving" ordinance (C13) might be sufficient to address dangerous vehicle operation.
	+ Parking and Park Hours: A significant conflict was noted between stated park hours (7 a.m. to 11 p.m.) and a parking ordinance prohibiting parking from 11 p.m. to 5 a.m. (C14). This inconsistency impacts early morning park users and needs to be resolved.
* Animals in Parks
	+ There was a consensus that rules for dogs should be applied consistently across all town parks, not just Lions Park.
	+ The group agreed that dogs should be prohibited from playgrounds and athletic fields but supported removing "lawns" and "picnic areas" from the list of prohibited areas.
	+ A specific leash length, such as 6 or 8 feet, was preferred over a general "under control" clause to ensure safety.
	+ The need for an enforceable consequence, such as a fine under a littering ordinance, for owners who do not clean up dog waste was raised.
* Outdated and Redundant Ordinances
	+ The group agreed to remove the outdated ordinance regarding horses and carriages (C15).
	+ The rule against removing tree protectors (C16) was deemed redundant, as it could be covered by a general rule against damaging park property.
	+ The ordinance against golfing (C17) was also seen as redundant, which led to the broader point that "sporting activities" needs a clear definition.
* Park Hours
	+ Proposed Opening Times: The discussion centered on finding a suitable opening time for the parks.
		- An initial suggestion of 5 a.m. was considered potentially too early due to noise concerns for nearby residents.
		- The current 7 a.m. start time for yard waste drop-off was cited as a precedent for limiting early morning noise.
		- Other park systems open at various times, including 7 a.m., 8 a.m., or dawn.
		- 6 a.m. was proposed as a reasonable compromise between early access for users and minimizing noise.
	+ Quiet Hours and Enforcement: The idea of establishing "quiet hours" was introduced, such as from 6 a.m. to 8 a.m. and after 10 p.m., even if the park closes at 11 p.m.
	+ Required Consultation: It was agreed that any proposed changes to park hours must be reviewed with the Public Works department and police officers, as they have significant experience with park activity and enforcement.
	+ Authority to Close Parks: The ordinance text granting the Chief of Police or Town Board authority to close parks was deemed outdated and impractical for emergency situations. It was suggested this authority should be held by a staff-level position, such as the DPW Foreman.
* Park Reservations & Fees
	+ Resident vs. Non-Resident Policy: A major discussion point was whether park reservations should prioritize residents.
		- The current ordinance states parks are "primarily for the non-exclusive use of the residence," which was interpreted as not being strictly exclusive.
		- There was strong consensus that residents should pay a lower fee for rentals than non-residents, as their tax dollars help maintain the parks.
		- The group decided against a policy that would allow a resident to bump a previously booked non-resident, favoring a "first come, first serve" approach for reservations.
	+ Athletic Field Rental Complexity: The conversation revealed significant complexities regarding athletic field rentals.
		- The Freedom Athletic Association (FAA), not the town, currently manages the calendar for field usage.
		- An inconsistency was identified where the school district pays to use the fields, but other outside groups have used them without charge.
		- It was noted that a meeting is scheduled for the fall between the Town and the FAA to review finances and clarify the management agreement.
	+ Path Forward: The committee concluded that Ordinance 1907 cannot be finalized until the Town-FAA relationship and fee structure are established. A suggestion was made to separate the ordinance language for town-managed buildings from the language for FAA-managed fields.

## Park Committee Membership and Structure

* A discussion was held regarding the potential expansion of the committee from five members to seven, which is a common size for park committees in Wisconsin. An increase to nine members was also mentioned but considered less likely.
* It was proposed that the committee create designated seats for major stakeholders, specifically the FAA and the school district, to improve communication and ensure their inclusion in discussions.
* The committee debated whether these designated members should be voting members or non-voting (ex officio) advisory members.
	+ The consensus leaned toward making them non-voting advisory members to avoid potential conflicts of interest, as noted in a prior attorney meeting.
	+ It was pointed out that the Parks Committee does not have reciprocal voting rights on the school board or FAA, supporting the case for an advisory role.

## Lyons Park Master Plan

* Dan from MSA presented a proposal to create a master plan for Lyons Park, intended to provide a concrete, long-term vision and avoid the "piecemeal" development that occurred at VFW park.
* The proposal includes two main components:
	+ A Park Master Plan that would determine the appropriate size and location for a new building, a splash pad, and parking.
	+ A separate Town Hall Site Concept to explore the feasibility of relocating town hall facilities to the park, adjacent to the fire station.
* Several external factors necessitate a holistic plan for the Lyons Park area, including the expansion of the Country Villa property and the town's potential need for a new town hall.
* The Lions Club, which has pledged $100,000 in $20,000 increments over five years, had planned to pave a path around the park's pond. This project was put on hold over concerns that the pond may need to be expanded to support future development, which would require digging up the newly paved path. This situation underscored the need to get more information before building permanent structures.
* A previously submitted design-build plan from Fox Cities Builders was deemed unsuitable for several reasons.
	+ It was noted that any project using taxpayer funds must be put out for public bid to adhere to the town's procurement policy.
	+ Specific design flaws identified by MSA included:
		- The structure was a pole building, not a more durable cinder block building appropriate for a park.
		- The 8-foot ceilings were considered too low for an open, public-use building, where 10 to 12-foot ceilings are preferred.
		- A single, rentable covered patio could create user conflicts with other park visitors, such as families using a future splash pad.
		- The design lacked a family changing room and included an unnecessarily large storage area for the type of splash pad system being considered.
* Members generally supported the master plan concept as a good planning practice and a way to be responsible with taxpayer dollars. However, there was hesitation to approve the plan immediately, with some feeling the town board should first provide clear direction on its long-term plans for a new town hall.
* A significant concern was that investing in a master plan now could be a waste of money if it becomes irrelevant due to future decisions by the town or other developers.
* Frustration was expressed over the town's slow progress, as the Lions Club has been waiting for over three years to move forward with their donation and project.
* It was also stated that when public funds are involved, a slow and transparent process is necessary to avoid wasting money by having to redo work.
* The committee agreed to put the park master plan on hold pending more information on the Town Hall and Country Villa projects, as those developments could impact the park's design, such as a potential expansion of the stormwater pond.
* There is general support for the Lions Club's project, but members want to ensure it proceeds in the right order and meets town design standards, such as requiring 10 to 12-foot ceilings instead of 8-foot ceilings.
* For public projects, a "design-bid-build" delivery method is preferred over "design-build" to ensure competitiveness and transparency, a position supported by the League of Wisconsin Municipalities.

## Project Development Timelines

* Country Villa Project
	+ The project is currently in discussion phases, with lot line adjustments being made to accommodate oddly laid out lots.
	+ An incentive agreement is pending, but there is no finalized development agreement, which has caused delays.
	+ The realistic timeline for building is next year, with completion estimated for the end of that year.
* Town Hall / Municipal Building Project
	+ A feasibility study for a new municipal building is estimated to take five to six months.
	+ A solution is needed before 2028 for election purposes and to address the current lack of storage space for town equipment.
	+ A previous, larger proposal for a $9.9 million complex failed at referendum after the town had already spent $400,000 on planning.
	+ It remains unclear if a new project would need to go to a referendum for funding.

## Park Donation and Memorial Program

* Program Goal
	+ The primary goal is to create uniformity and a more aesthetically pleasing appearance in the parks by establishing a standard for donated benches and other amenities.
	+ The current park benches are a mix of many different styles, materials, and colors, and some are not properly secured.
* Proposed Standard Bench
	+ A specific bench style from the company Barco is recommended. It is made of durable, low-maintenance materials like recycled plastic and powder-coated aluminum.
	+ The cost is approximately $1,000 for a 4-foot bench and $1,175 for a 6-foot bench. A memorial plaque costs an additional $200.
	+ The company provided good service for a repair on an 8-year-old bench, reinforcing the choice.
* Discussion and Program Expansion
	+ Some members expressed a preference for benches with lettering engraved directly into the material rather than using small plaques, and for color options such as green.
	+ The program could be expanded to offer other donation options at different price points, such as picnic tables (including ADA-accessible models), trash cans, or pet waste stations from the same product line.
* A motion was passed to recommend the Barco brand as the preferred vendor for park amenities, citing a positive past experience with ordering and service.
* The committee aims to establish a standardized donation program to ensure uniformity across the parks.
* Memorial Bench Recommendation
	+ A motion was passed to recommend the Sterling Memorial Bench from the Barco brand as the standard for donations.
	+ The preferred color is forest green.
	+ Dedications are to be engraved directly onto the bench itself, rather than using a separate plaque.
	+ This recommendation will be taken to the town board for approval at the end of the month.
* Picnic Table Discussion
	+ The committee discussed adding picnic tables to the donation program, noting that the current tables are forest green.
	+ They decided against including umbrellas with donated tables due to risks of them disappearing, breaking, or being blown away.
	+ A decision on a specific picnic table model was deferred to allow for more research on options and plaque placement.
* "Friends of the Park" Program Proposal
	+ An idea was proposed to create a "Friends of the Park" program for general financial donations.
	+ This fund would allow the town to purchase smaller, necessary items that are unlikely to be sponsored individually, such as trash can enclosures or dog poop bag stations.
	+ Donations could be of any amount, making it more accessible than sponsoring an entire bench, and donors could be recognized on a large sign.

## D1 Project and Sewer Line Updates

* The D1 project is currently at a standstill while waiting for a concrete company to pour the path and dugout floors.
* The fence installation is scheduled for the week of the 18th.
* The large set of bleachers, funded by the Fast Pitch Club, is scheduled for delivery in the last week of August.
* The project's substantial completion deadline remains the end of August.
* Sewer Line Repair
	+ The existing clay sewer lateral from the bathrooms has failed, causing backups.
	+ A local company, Emin E, has offered to replace the line via directional boring, which will minimize restoration costs.
	+ The company is making a "very generous donation" to help with the project, significantly reducing the cost to the town.
	+ Work is expected to begin as soon as Friday and be completed within approximately 10 days.

## Budget and Future Planning

* The committee will prepare for the upcoming budget season in October by prioritizing projects.
* A previously created grid listing concerns for each park will be reviewed to establish an itemized list of priorities for the town board.
* A member suggested that addressing drainage issues at VFW park should be the foremost priority before tackling other projects.
* The committee discussed the need for its own annual capital improvements budget to allow for better long-term planning and reduce dependence on project-by-project board approval.
* The next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, September 3rd at 6 p.m.
* Agenda items will include:
	+ Discussion on Chapter 19 park ordinances and related signage.
	+ Ideas for picnic tables for the donation program.
	+ The "Friends of the Park" donation program.
	+ An update on the Lions Park planning proposal.
	+ A review of the budget priorities grid.

## Open Issues & Risks

* The final decision on expanding the committee's size from five to seven members is unresolved.
* It remains undecided whether the proposed designated seats for the FAA and school district will be voting or non-voting (advisory) positions.
* A potential conflict of interest was identified as a risk if representatives from stakeholder organizations are granted voting rights on the committee.
* The town has not yet established a policy for allowing or prohibiting e-bikes and scooters in parks.
* It remains unclear whether concealed carry is permitted in town parks.
* Park operating hours (7 a.m. - 11 p.m.) conflict with the overnight parking ban (11 p.m. - 5 a.m.), creating issues for early morning park visitors.
* The term "sporting activities" requires a formal definition to clarify which activities are permitted or prohibited.
* It is unclear if a specific littering ordinance and fine can be applied to owners who fail to clean up their dog's waste.
* The 10 mph speed limit is considered unenforceable without posted signs in the parks.
* The final decision on park opening/closing times and the implementation of "quiet hours" remains unresolved pending feedback from other departments.
* The policy for park reservations, including resident preference and a differential fee structure for non-residents, needs to be formally defined.
* It is unclear who should have the authority to close parks during emergencies, as the current ordinance is outdated.
* The inconsistency of charging the school district for field use while not charging other non-resident groups is a significant issue that needs to be addressed.
* Revisions to Ordinance 1907 are dependent on the outcome of a future meeting between the Town and the FAA to clarify financial responsibilities and management of athletic fields. Without this clarification, a comprehensive policy cannot be created.
* It is unresolved whether the committee will approve the MSA master plan proposal for Lyons Park or wait for more guidance from the town board.
* The town's long-term plans for relocating the town hall and the potential impact of the Country Villa expansion on park infrastructure remain unclear.
* Investing in a master plan now could be premature and result in wasted funds if major decisions about adjacent land use change the park's requirements.
* Continued delays may damage the relationship with the Lions Club, which is ready to invest funds but is growing frustrated with the lack of action.
* Proceeding with individual projects without a cohesive master plan could lead to a poorly designed park and inefficient use of taxpayer and donated funds.
* Moving forward with the $20,000 park master plan before the Town Hall and Country Villa projects are defined risks wasting funds if the park design requires significant changes.
* The final decision on the style, color, and memorialization method (engraving vs. plaque) for the new standard park benches has not been made.
* It is not known if the town can fund a new municipal building from its budget or if it will require a voter referendum.
* It is unresolved how to handle existing memorial benches when standardizing to a new model, including funding for replacements and respectfully disposing of the old ones.
* The town has no records of agreements for existing donated benches, creating uncertainty about original donor stipulations.
* The D1 project is delayed waiting on a concrete subcontractor, which could impact the August 29th completion deadline.
* The Parks Committee does not have a dedicated annual budget, which hinders its ability to execute a master plan without seeking board approval for every item.

## Action Items

 [ ] Take Amy Feltz's suggested ordinance layout and integrate it with the current version for review at the next meeting.
 [ ] Have Dana check and rework the language in ordinance 19.02, subsection 4, to accurately reflect the staggered terms of committee members.
 [ ] Amy Feltz to type up her comments and suggestions for the ordinance revisions.
 [ ] Present questionable language from the ordinance review to the Town Board for input before the September committee meeting.
 [ ] Administrator Carlson to ask the town attorney for updated language regarding the dog ordinance (section F).
 [ ] Administrator Carlson to ask the town attorney if state statutes govern concealed carry in parks or if a local ordinance is required.
 [ ] Consult with Attorney Stegfeller to confirm the Uniform Controlled Substances Act is still current.
 [ ] Run proposed changes to park hours by the Public Works department and police officers for their input.
 [ ] Ask police officers about current enforcement practices for individuals using parks before official opening hours.
 [ ] Committee members are to send their compiled suggestions for ordinance revisions to a designated point person.
 [ ] The designated point person will consolidate all feedback into a single document and provide it to Justin.
 [ ] Justin and park committee members to provide suggested language changes for the park signage ordinance by August 20th.
 [ ] Formally ask the Town Board to provide more information and direction on its plans for potential new buildings and to give updates on the Country Villa project.
 [ ] The Town Board member who chairs the Parks Committee will work to move the related development projects forward to unblock park planning.
 [ ] The administrator will seek proposals from firms that conduct feasibility studies to present to the board at the August town board meeting.
 [ ] Paul will type up the formal motion requesting information and direction from the Town Board.
 [ ] Take the approved bench recommendation to the town board.
 [ ] Research and present ideas for picnic table donations at the next meeting.
 [ ] Re-share the park concerns grid with all committee members for review before the September meeting.