



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Valpo Parks Addresses Future of Banta Activity Center and Senior Programming

Valparaiso, IN – Valpo Parks Director Kevin Nuppau and the Valpo Parks Board recently met with select City Council members, Banta Activity Center members, and the Banta Neighborhood Association Executive Committee to discuss the future of the Banta Activity Center and senior programming in Valparaiso.

Located at 605 Beech Street, the Banta Activity Center has a long history of serving the community. Originally constructed in 1924 as the Banta School, named after Valparaiso's first school superintendent, William Henry Banta, the building served as a kindergarten and elementary school until 1972. In 1978, the Valparaiso Parks Department reopened it as a senior center. Today, the two-story, 14,184 square foot facility operates as an activity and events center, as well as a central meeting point for the Banta neighborhood. It is open to individuals aged 50 and over Monday through Friday (9 am - 3 pm), offering annual memberships for \$65 or daily access for \$7. The center has 247 members and offers various programs and activities for the roughly 65 individuals that attend daily. The Banta Activity Center is also a Northwest Indiana Community Action Nutrition site which provides free lunch to seniors (60+) on weekdays at 11:30 AM. Approximately 30 individuals participate in the daily lunch program.

For several years, the City of Valparaiso and the Valpo Parks Board have explored the possibility of relocating senior programming to a more accessible and efficient facility. While previous attempts have not been successful, the commitment to enhancing senior programming in an improved location remains a priority. The recent purchase of the former McGill factory on Lafayette Street by the Redevelopment Commission has prompted a current evaluation of this site as a potential new home for senior programming. This due diligence process will involve careful consideration of various factors and the engagement of relevant stakeholders.

As part of the relocation process, the Valpo Parks Board is assessing the Banta Activity Center's long-term viability within its operational framework. The 100-year-old building faces significant structural and cosmetic issues, creating a considerable financial burden on the Valpo Parks general operating and capital budgets. A 2019 building assessment by Shive Hattery estimated renovation costs at \$3,054,911 to ensure the facility's structural soundness for the next 50 years. While Valpo Parks has implemented strategies to manage these financial pressures and maintain a positive experience for members, the potential relocation of senior programming would render the Banta Activity Center without a primary operational purpose for the department.

Consequently, the Valpo Parks Board will review and vote on a Resolution to solicit proposals for the sale of the Banta Activity Center at their meeting on Tuesday, May 27th. If approved, Valpo Parks Director Kevin Nuppnau will issue a Request for Proposals (RFP) with a submission deadline of July 25th. Submitted proposals will be opened, and public input will be received at the Park Board meeting on July 29th. Staff will review all proposals and present a recommendation to the Board on August 26th. The Valpo Parks Board reserves the right to accept or reject any or all proposals. Any awarded Real Estate Purchase Agreement will be contingent upon the purchaser obtaining approval to rezone the property from its current Public Space (PS) designation by both the Plan Commission and City Council to accommodate their proposed use.

The Valpo Parks Board will require adherence to the following conditions for a proposal to receive favorable consideration and potential award of the property:

- The proposed project will not negatively impact the Banta neighborhood's residential character.
- The existing building will not be demolished.
- Valpo Parks will retain ownership of the northern park, playground, and green space.
- Senior programming will continue uninterrupted in the current building for a minimum of three years, and up to five years, or until a suitable alternate location is established.
- The property will be successfully rezoned to align with the buyer's intended purpose.

This process was initiated through discussions with key stakeholders in the community and neighborhood, and Valpo Parks is committed to continuing with openness and providing ongoing opportunities for public input. To further clarify the process and the Valpo Parks Board's position, a schedule of relevant meetings and required approvals, along with a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ), is available on the Valpo Parks website.

“The City of Valparaiso and Valpo Parks are committed to delivering exceptional programming for our senior community. While the Banta Activity Center has a long history of service spanning over a century, we believe that relocating our senior programs to a more modern and accessible facility will allow us to elevate the quality and scope of offerings in Valparaiso,” said Valpo Parks Director Kevin Nuppnau.

About Valpo Parks:

Valpo Parks is dedicated to enriching our community by designing meaningful spaces, creating impactful experiences, and promoting healthy lifestyles.

About Banta Activity Center:

The Banta Activity Center is open Monday - Friday from 9 am - 3 pm. It is a warm and friendly environment for adults ages 50 and up where you can take part in any of a wide variety of activities, for a nominal fee, paid either annually (\$65) or semi-annually (\$40) or (\$7) per day.

The Banta Activity Center has also been used for various services in the past such as senior flu shots, community voting site, and tax prep assistance for seniors.

The Banta Activity Center also rents a multi-purpose room with kitchen and restroom access for family or group functions.

Contact:

Kevin Nuppnau
Director
219-462-5144
knuppnau@valpo.us