



VALPARAISO/CENTER TOWNSHIP BOARD OF PARKS & RECREATION
Regular Meeting Minutes
September 30, 2025

The regular meeting of the Valparaiso Park/Center Township Board was called to order at 6:00 p.m. on Tuesday, September 30, 2025, at the Forest Park Golf Course Welter Room. President Tim Warner presided.

Members present: Tim Warner, Kevin Cornett, Mark Hardwick, Martin Sonnenberg, Don Clark and Kay Magnetti. Also present were Park Director Kevin Nuppau, Assistant Director Tristan Leonhard, Recreation Superintendent Madison Bell, Event & Venue Director Dan McGuire, Enrichment Director Katie Ridinger, Event & Venue Coordinator Bo Thorgren, Jessica Kroenke of Parks Maintenance, Administrative Assistant Tracy Betustak and Paul Reed.

MINUTES:

Motion: Mark Hardwick made a motion to approve August 26, 2025, regular meeting minutes as presented. Kay Magnetti seconded the motion. A voice vote was taken and unanimously carried.

Motion: Kevin Cornett made a motion to approve September 18, 2025, special meeting minutes as presented. Don Clark seconded the motion. A voice vote was taken and unanimously carried.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

None in advance. Brent Wagner of 1401 Forest Park Avenue, was in person and provided public comment. Mr. Wagner is a local architect and is on the Historic Preservation Commission. He inquired about the public input process for projects like the sale of the Banta Center and the purchase of the McGill Building. Kay Magnetti explained the process followed for the RFP of the Banta Center. She conveyed that keeping the façade of Banta preserved as much as possible was important to the park board as well and was included in the RFP. They feel the Welter family understands and agrees with that. Kay was also part of the Review Committee. Tim Warner explained that the sale of the building has many steps yet to go through before it is finalized, including approval from the Plan Commission.

COMMUNICATIONS:

Valpo Parks Update - Kevin Nuppau gave the update. A handful of people from the Parks Department and Parks Foundation had the chance to attend the IPRA Foundation Dollars for Scholars Fall Golf Outing in LaPorte. It's always good to engage with other Parks professionals and to expose our elected officials to what Parks & Rec mean to us and the rest of the state. Thank you to those who attended and to Centier and CapTrust for sponsoring foursomes.

Will Park received a \$20,000 grant through V.U. and their partnership with U Chicago Medicine to renovate the basketball court. On September 23, we had a joint ribbon-cutting. We are thankful for their partnership.

Popcorn Festival – A big thank you to our team for all their efforts for a successful Popcorn Fest and to Valpo Events and all the city services.

Berkley Park – We were approached by Nicholas Ralph, a VHS student and part of Troop 907, to do a rain garden at Berkley Park. We have a little bit of a drainage issue there. Troop 907 built the rain garden at no cost to us. They coordinated with our staff in terms of what species of plugs to put in and the installation. It's a very detailed process, and if you've ever worked with the Eagle Scouts, they've got it pretty buttoned up. We are thankful for their contribution and hard work.

Handprint Wall at ValPlayso – Thirty-one years ago the handprint wall was installed to commemorate the 1st ValPlayso playground. Over the years, wear and tear have caused several of the tiles to break. Maintenance replaced about 239 tiles on the walls recently. We sold the new tiles at \$50 each and this past Saturday Tracy, Kevin Cornett, Melanie Steider and ladies of Tri Kappa helped restore the walls and filled them with the handprints of community children.

Paychex – Our team is transitioning to a new time and attendance system which will be the same for all city departments.

Lastly, our senior staff is beginning a new book. It's about 4 types of human behavior and how to effectively communicate with them in business and in life. Tim suggested the board should also read it. Kevin explained we each handed down our last book, The 5 Levels of Leadership, to another employee in our charge.

Valpo Parks Foundation Update - Kevin Cornett – Friends and Legends is Thursday, Oct 2 at Butterfield Family Pavilion. You can still register.

The Foundation Executive Committee had its kickoff meeting. The next step is a 3-4 hour retreat with the full board in November.

We have three new Foundation board members who will start their term in January 2026. They are Drew Sarkisian, John Scott and Josh Schoon.

Discovery Day Camp Summer Recap – Katie Ridinger

Katie gave a review of the summer of camp. One highlight was a dedicated nature area that was established. The hours were modified this year and worked out well. We had the same returning counselors and for the first time had more applicants than open positions. This year, we received over \$3000 more in sponsorships. The fee assistance amount doubled over last year. Looking beyond summer, we are looking at offering camps during other school breaks.

FINANCIALS:

Tristan Leonhard – The General Fund budget is going to City Council on October 13th for the first reading. The second reading will be October 27th. We've been working on the NRO side of the budgets for the past several months. We plan to introduce the pricing grid for next year at the October meeting. We will do the NRO budget at the November meeting.

It was a fairly standard report for August looking at the fund report. A couple numbers of interest, are the NRO operating revenue for August shows \$477,000 which is a little high. That is from the golf cart purchase. We receipted that money in as revenue and that will go back out for the simulators in November. Tristan also spoke about the Creekside Debt Bond Reserve. The debt reserve shows how well golf is doing. The Debt Reserve is a percentage of revenue that goes into that account. We hope to pay off the Creekside Bond early.

The General Fund Balance as of August 30, 2025, is \$926,809. The NRO Balance is \$884,604. The total balance of the two funds is \$1,811,414. Looking at our overall General Fund Appropriation we are still on track for all the transfers from the NRO to the General Fund.

As we continue to go deeper in the year, we continue to track a little better in the budget. We will discuss that later in the meeting.

Tristan pointed out in the NRO report a couple of expenses. At Central Park Plaza, August 25 over August 24, quite a few expenses when you look at year over year in August. We are happy to report that we are in the process of putting new LED lights in the park. Forest Park showed the \$100,000 golf cart revenue. One important note at the bottom of the report it shows the year-over-year difference, looking like we are in the positive by almost \$600,000. But this includes the \$100,000 cart revenue and Memorial Opera House in 2025. In 2024, we had a very large skatepark bill around \$265,000.

Motion: Mark Hardwick made a motion to approve the financials as presented. Martin Sonnenberg seconded the motion. A voice vote was taken and unanimously carried.

CLAIMS: Tim Warner advised that claims documents were provided to members in advance of tonight's meeting. There were no questions.

Motion: Martin Sonnenberg made a motion to approve all presented monthly claims subject to appropriations balances. Mark Hardwick seconded the motion. A voice vote was taken and unanimously carried.

DIVISION REPORT:

The Division Report was provided to the Members in advance of tonight's meeting for their review. Tristan pointed out that multiple parents have commented that Discovery Forest is going incredibly well for the kids. Katie provided a detailed description of what is available at Discovery Forest. Tristan also mentioned that Forest Park Golf Classic is coming up in 3 weeks.

BOARD ACTION:

November Meeting Date – Kevin Nuppnau asked to move November's meeting date from November 25 to November 18 due to Thanksgiving.

Motion: Mark Hardwick made a motion to approve the November 18 meeting date. Kevin Cornett seconded the motion. A voice vote was taken and unanimously carried.

US Fish & Wildlife Expanded Agreement – Kevin Nuppnau reminded everyone that we have worked with US Fish & Wildlife on multiple occasions including Creekside Park putting in 25 acres of wildflowers. Kevin requested approval to expand the acreage at Creekside by an additional 22 acres. We would no longer be farming any of these acres. It is a 10-year agreement. There is no cost to us. We have a grant. We will mow it twice a year.

Motion: Martin Sonnenberg made a motion to approve the US Fish & Wildlife Expanded Agreement. Kay Magnetti seconded the motion. A voice vote was taken and unanimously carried.

Trackman Golf Simulator Prices – Tristan Leonhard stated the current date for simulator install is November 6-8. Today we'd like to propose our pricing for the simulators for this upcoming winter season. Tristan shared a comparison chart. Creekside is currently \$30/hour for a group regardless of how many players. He recommends \$40/hour. The league this year we'd like to charge \$25 per entry per team. We have two seasons. The seasons would be 8 weeks. So asking for approval for \$40 hour group rate for simulators and \$25 per team for the season.

Motion: Mark Hardwick made a motion to approve the rates as presented. Don Clark seconded the motion. A voice vote was taken and unanimously carried.

Central Park Plaza Winter Pricing – Tristan Leonhard shared price history. This year, we've kept most of the prices flat across the board. We made a slight change to the admission booklet, so the price has dropped. Madison Bell explained some changes to youth hockey. We're excited about the Central Park team creating events and new reasons to come to the ice. More to release soon.

Motion: Don Clark made a motion to accept the CPP Winter Pricing as presented. Mark Hardwick seconded the motion. A voice vote was taken and unanimously carried.

Part-Time Pay Scale Amendment – Tristan Leonhard - We have two positions that are not on the pay scale and those are the learn-to-skate instructor beginner level with a pay band of \$12/hour to \$15/hour and advanced level at \$16/hour to \$20/hour. We ask for approval of those two positions.

Motion: Mark Hardwick made a motion to approve the part-time pay scale for learn-to-skate beginner and advanced instructors. Martin Sonnenberg seconded the motion. A voice vote was taken and unanimously carried.

OPEN TOPICS:

Golf Irrigation Project Update – Tristan Leonhard gave an update. We've got a large shipping container by the 7th hole to hold some of the pieces of the irrigation system set to arrive. We are still targeting February to start on that system. On the pumping plant we opened the bids at a Park Board meeting and then at Board of Works we officially approved the lone bid from George E. Ley. So the pumping plant contract has been executed with the same company. They'll be doing all the work at once. We'll start some of the pump plant work this year.

General Fund Infrastructure Project – Tristan Leonhard – We are going to pave the entire Horticulture Department parking lot. We'll be spending about \$50,000. We'll also crack seal the Dog Park parking lot. We are also replacing the entire drain in the Maintenance barn. Then H3 concrete will pour and replace the concrete. That will cost \$40,000. Lastly, we have finalized the purchase of 6 AED's.

Tim Warner asked about pickleball lighting. Kevin Nuppau replied that we are still waiting on Tower Park and Kirchhoff Park to see how much extra funds will be needed to close those out. We have the infrastructure in place out there and we know the budget to install lighting if we do that project. So it is still on the list, but not something we've committed to at this point.

Banta Center Update – Kevin Nuppau – The next step in our process is Plan Commission on October 7th at 5:30 pm. We've been working with City Planner Bob Thompson on all the proper applications, public notices, letters to neighbors, etc. That will be a rezoning. Coming up, we'll have to pay for a survey to be done. The park, parking lot just south of the park and green space to the west will still be parks.

rePLAY Project Update – Kevin Nuppau gave an update on current park projects.

- Tower Park – We had to push the ribbon-cutting back a week until the power gets reconnected. The Ribbon-Cutting Ceremony will be Friday, October 10 at 4 p.m. This has been a well-done project, within the timeline and budget.
- Kirchhoff Park – We've had some delays with NIPSCO but expect to have 4 of our meters disconnected on October 2nd. Once that happens we can officially demo the rest of the park. We are over a month behind schedule. Geogh is working really hard to try to keep things moving along. We've had a \$26,000 savings by reallocating some of the dirt from the project to other parts of the park to help with some drainage issues.

Valpo REC Update - Kevin Nuppau – At the Special Park Board meeting we opened the 12 proposals. Since that time, our team has been working hard to review all the pricing proposals and within the design build process, Indiana code, matching those up with their qualitative scores for their ability to do the project. So we are now finalizing that score and working towards who the top score is. The goal is to make a recommendation to the Board of Works, October 10th. From that will be a recommendation for us to engage in an negotiation with that firm. From there we would talk with them about scope and budget and finalize the lump sum price. We'll lock that in as part of the contract and then move into the design phase where public engagement would come into play. We do want to have engagement with the community. We have told all 12 firms that that will be part of whoever is selected.

ADDITIONAL BOARD ACTION:

Kevin Nuppau explained that we have encountered a discipline issue with a minor in several of our programs. They've had several write-ups and discussions. The parents have also been part of the discussions. These issues have involved our participants as well as our staff. We are recommending to suspend this individual for a full year of programming to let things calm down. To try to work with the mother to see what corrective action can be taken to allow that individual to come back. We certainly don't want to take away opportunities for socialization and for growth. But at the expense of the safety and well-being of our participants and staff we feel like this is the best course of action. Maybe a break is what's needed.

Motion: Martin Sonnenberg made a motion to suspend this individual from Valpo Parks programs for one year. Mark Hardwick seconded the motion. A voice vote was taken and unanimously carried.

ADJOURNMENT:

There being no further business, the September 30, 2025, Park Board meeting adjourned at 7:17 p.m.

Tim Warner, President

ATTEST:

Kevin Nuppau, Director