



MINUTES

WATERTOWN PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

DATE: September 3, 2026

TIME: 7:00 PM

LOCATION: Town Hall – Parks and Recreation Conference Room
61 Echo Lake Road, Watertown, CT 06795

I. Call Meeting to Order:

Chairman Bill Donston called the regular meeting to order at 7:04 p.m.

II. Roll Call:

Members Present: Joe McGrail, Tadd Johnson, Pat Rinaldi, Vice Chair, Alan Mickel, Bill Donston, Chair

Absent: Margaret Germain
Sabra Sarandrea
Herm Desena, Town Council Liaison

Chairman Donston noted that a new commissioner, Sabra Sarandrea, has been appointed by the Town Council to replace Karim Belica

III. Public Participation:

- a. Barbara Zulkeski provided a “Five-Year Revitalization Plan” for Adams Road Park. Ms. Zulkeski further provided a rendering and information about grant resources. Barbara is working hard to recruit volunteers to assist with maintenance and improvements at Adams Road Park but wants a guarantee that the Town will reciprocate.

IV. Approval of Minutes:

August 6, 2026, Regular Meeting

Motion: Bill Donston, seconded by Alan Mickel, to approve the minutes of the Regular Meeting of August 6, 2026

Motion passed. All in favor, with Joe McGrail abstaining.

V. Correspondence:

- a. Letters from Thomaston Savings Bank announcing grant awards.
- b. Email regarding the Watertown Lions Club confirming their intention to place “gutter guards” on the Lion’s Pavilion at Veterans Park.
- c. Thank you letter from the Knights of Columbus Council #3594 for the donation of golf rounds.
- d. Letter from M. Ganem, Director, to the Watertown Town Council dated 8-17-26.
- e. Letter of introduction from Joe and Valerie Yankus, new partners at Sunset Grille, dated August 14, 2026.
- f. Monthly report from the department.

VI. Reports:

- A. Chairman –
 - a. Expressed his gratitude to Giuliana Guerrera for her dedication to the Parks and Recreation Department. She has accepted a position with Special Olympics of Connecticut.
- B. Director – A written report is attached to the minutes. The director touched on the status of the tennis courts at Crestbrook Park and the recommendation to replace the oil tanks at Crestbrook Park. The commission discussed leveraging the John Satver Fund to finance the rebuild of the tennis courts.
- C. Sub-Committees – Golf.

VII. Old Business:

- A. Policies and Procedures – No update
- B. Maintenance List Update - Discussed
- C. Account Balances (specials) for Parks and Recreation – No update

VIII. New Business:

- A. Review and Consideration of Submitted Applications for 2026 – None

IX. Adjournment:

Motion: Alan Mickel, seconded by Pat Rinaldi, to adjourn the meeting at 8:58 pm

Motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

William Donston, Chairman
Watertown Parks and Recreation Commission

Approved:

Susan King, Clerk

Adams Road Park

Five-Year Revitalization Plan

Watertown, Connecticut

Clean it. Maintain it. Make it usable. Improve it. Protect the investment.

Executive Summary

The goal of this proposal is to restore Adams Road Park as a clean, safe, attractive and fully functional neighborhood park through a practical five-year plan. The proposal is not intended to create an extravagant destination park. It is designed to make better use of a public property the Town already owns and to provide families, children and local youth sports teams with another usable recreational space.

Proposed Town capital investment: \$100,000 over five years (approximately \$20,000 per year).

Routine mowing, trimming, brush removal, trash collection and ordinary tree maintenance should remain part of the normal Park & Recreation operating budget. The \$100,000 capital plan should be used for improvements that increase the park's long-term usefulness and value.

Why Adams Road Park Matters

- Residents want a clean, safe and welcoming neighborhood park that is maintained consistently.
- Volunteers are ready to assist with an organized cleanup once the Town removes the fallen tree and addresses major hazards.
- Local football and baseball coaches have expressed interest in using the park for practices, which could reduce scheduling pressure on other Town fields.
- A phased plan allows improvements to be budgeted responsibly rather than requiring a large one-time expenditure.

Immediate Priorities

- Remove the fallen tree and major debris.
- Cut back brush, weeds and overgrowth along the fence and residential property lines.
- Establish and document a dependable mowing, trimming and general maintenance schedule.
- Evaluate drainage, uneven ground and areas requiring grading or leveling.
- Address the most deteriorated fence sections. Residents are currently covering some openings with chicken wire as a temporary measure.
- Measure the property-line fencing and obtain competitive estimates for replacement.
- Obtain preliminary estimates for grading, field improvements and a modest playground.

Five-Year Improvement Plan

Year 1 - Cleanup, Safety & Planning

Planning budget: \$7,500

- Remove fallen tree and major debris and address immediate hazards.
- Control overgrowth and make temporary repairs to severely damaged fencing.
- Evaluate trees, drainage, grading and grounds conditions.
- Measure residential property-line fencing and obtain replacement quotes.
- Obtain quotes for grading and recreational improvements.
- Evaluate future parking and access options, including the existing Echo Lake Road access road, potential gated parking, tree impacts and one-way traffic circulation.
- Establish a written routine maintenance schedule.
- Coordinate an appropriate neighborhood volunteer cleanup/service project.

Year 2 - Grounds & Multipurpose Practice Area

Planning budget: \$22,500

- Grade and level appropriate portions of the property.
- Address minor drainage issues and restore turf with topsoil and seed where needed.
- Establish a safe multipurpose practice area for youth football, baseball and other recreation.
- Consult local coaches regarding practical field needs.
- Add basic benches and/or picnic tables.

Year 3 - Recreation & Fence Phase 1

Planning budget: \$30,000

- Install modest playground/recreational equipment and required safety surfacing.
- Add an Adams Road Park sign and appropriate seating.
- Begin Phase 1 of the residential property-line fence replacement, prioritizing the worst sections.
- Pursue playground grants and manufacturer matching programs before purchasing equipment.

Year 4 - Fence & Infrastructure

Planning budget: \$25,000

- Complete additional phases of residential property-line fence replacement.
- Address remaining grading or drainage needs.
- Improve landscaping around entrances and residential boundaries.
- If feasible and funding permits, advance design or site preparation for improved parking and access from the Echo Lake Road side of the park.
- Consider a simple walking path if feasible.
- Make additional practice-area improvements based on actual usage.

Year 5 - Completion & Sustainability

Planning budget: \$15,000

- Complete remaining priority fence sections if necessary.

- Add recreational amenities based on demonstrated park usage.
- Make final field, landscaping or accessibility improvements.
- Establish long-term replacement schedules for fencing, equipment and other park assets.
- Maintain a reasonable contingency for unforeseen improvement costs.

Five-Year Capital Budget

Year	Primary Focus	Budget
1	Cleanup, safety & planning	\$7,500
2	Grounds & multipurpose practice area	\$22,500
3	Recreation + Fence Phase 1	\$30,000
4	Fence + infrastructure	\$25,000
5	Completion & contingency	\$15,000
	TOTAL	\$100,000

Three-Year Fence Replacement Strategy

The deteriorating fence along residential property lines should be treated as a planned infrastructure project rather than addressed indefinitely through temporary repairs.

- Year 1: measure all residential boundary fencing, identify the worst sections and obtain competitive quotes.
- Year 3: complete Phase 1, prioritizing the most deteriorated and safety-sensitive sections.
- Year 4: complete Phases 2 and 3 as available funding allows.
- Final costs should be based on actual linear footage, fence type, access and site conditions.

Parking & Access Plan

Current Parking & Site Conditions

Visitors can currently park along Adams Road or Mallory Road. Although the entire park property is approximately 2.5 acres, the main usable area is only about 175 sq. feet by 175 sq. feet.

Long-Term Parking Concept

As part of the park's long-term improvement plan, the Town should evaluate the feasibility of creating a small parking area toward the back of the park and relocating the primary entrance from Adams Road to Echo Lake Road.

- There is already an access road on the Echo Lake Road side of the property that is rarely used. With appropriate improvements and possibly the removal of a limited number of trees, the access road could potentially be widened to provide access to a small, gated parking area.
- Another option would be to close the existing Adams Road entrance and establish a new entrance and parking area on the opposite side of the park.
- The Town should evaluate how to minimize tree removal while safely widening and improving the existing access road.
- Depending on available space and site conditions, the Town could also explore a one-way traffic pattern with separate entrance and exit points.

- Any parking or access improvements should consider drainage, emergency and maintenance vehicle access, pedestrian safety, neighboring properties, accessibility requirements and the overall character of the park.

Planning Recommendation

This concept is preliminary and is not intended to commit the Town to construction at this stage. The recommendation is to include parking and access in the site evaluation and long-term planning process so that feasibility, costs, tree impacts and potential traffic patterns can be reviewed before future improvements are designed.

Community Partnership

- Residents are prepared to participate in an organized cleanup once major hazards are handled by Town personnel.
- Neighborhood families and children can participate in appropriate beautification/service projects.
- Local football and baseball coaches can help determine how the open space can best serve youth practices.
- Local businesses may be approached for sponsorships or donations for benches, picnic tables, landscaping or other discrete amenities.
- Volunteer participation should supplement - not replace - the Town's responsibility for routine maintenance of a municipal park.

Grant & Outside Funding Strategy

Outside funding goal: \$25,000-\$50,000 over five years.

Outside funding can either reduce the Town's direct cost or increase the total value of improvements while keeping the Town's five-year capital commitment capped at \$100,000.

- GameTime Community Champions: a current manufacturer funding/matching opportunity for eligible playground and recreation equipment. The 2026 application deadline is October 23, 2026.
- KABOOM!: community-built playspace partnerships can support playgrounds and other play spaces when a community meets current eligibility and geographic requirements.
- Monitor Connecticut recreation, accessibility, open-space and community-development grant cycles for future opportunities.
- Seek local business sponsorships, donations and in-kind contributions where appropriate.
- Before purchasing playground equipment, research available grants and manufacturer matching programs to maximize every Town dollar.

Potential Funding Impact

Town five-year capital ceiling	\$100,000
Outside funding target	\$25,000-\$50,000
Potential total improvement value	\$125,000-\$150,000
Average Town capital investment	\$20,000/year

Requested Actions from Park & Recreation

- Recognize Adams Road Park as an active neighborhood park that should receive routine maintenance.
- Remove the fallen tree and address immediate safety and cleanup needs.
- Develop and adopt a written three- to five-year improvement plan for Adams Road Park.
- Obtain actual estimates for grading/drainage, residential fencing and a modest playground.
- Evaluate the feasibility and cost of a small parking area and improved access using the existing Echo Lake Road access road.
- Consider a five-year capital ceiling of \$100,000, phased through annual budgets.
- Commit to researching grants and matching programs before major equipment purchases.
- Work with residents, volunteers and local coaches as partners in the revitalization.

Conclusion

Adams Road Park does not need to be extravagant.

It needs to be clean.

It needs to be safe.

It needs to be maintained.

And it needs to be useful.

A realistic five-year plan can get us there.

Reference Resources

Connecticut Community Foundation - Staver Fund / Watertown Recreation

Highest-priority local funding lead. The Staver Fund has supported maintenance and improvements to Watertown recreational facilities. Ask the Town/Commission about future Staver allocations for Adams Road Park.

Website: <https://connct.org/staver-grants-2024/>

GameTime Community Champions Playground Grant

Manufacturer matching-funds opportunity for eligible playground and recreation equipment. Current 2026 application deadline: October 23, 2026.

Website: <https://www.gametime.com/funding/playground-grant>

GameTime Playground Grant Application

Direct application page for the Community Champions program.

Website: <https://www.gametime.com/funding/playground-grant/application>

KABOOM! - Apply for a Grant

Community-built playground and playspace partnerships. Monitor for Connecticut eligibility/open opportunities.

Website: <https://kaboom.org/become-a-partner/apply-for-a-grant/>

KABOOM! - Current Playspace Opportunities

Current geographic and project opportunities for community-built playspaces.

Website: <https://kaboom.org/community-built-playspaces/need/>

Connecticut DEEP - Recreational Trails Grants

Municipalities may apply for trail planning, design, construction, restoration and accessibility projects. Grants can cover up to 80% of project costs with a 20% match. Useful if Adams Road Park includes a walking loop or trail connection.

Website: <https://portal.ct.gov/deep/outdoor-recreation/trails/crt--funding>

AARP Community Challenge

Local governments are eligible. Potential fit for benches, accessible seating, walkability, shade and other multigenerational public-space improvements. Monitor the next application cycle.

Website: <https://www.aarp.org/livable-communities/community-challenge/aarp-community-challenge.html>

Lowe's Community Impact Grants

Supports physical renovation and revitalization of community spaces, including parks. Municipalities can be grant recipients. The 2026 nomination period has closed; monitor for future opportunities.

Website: <https://corporate.lowes.com/our-responsibilities/community-impact/faqs>

Connecticut STEAP - Small Town Economic Assistance Program

State capital funding for eligible municipalities and quality-of-life projects, including recreation. No STEAP round is currently open; keep Adams Road Park grant-ready for the next round.

Website: <https://portal.ct.gov/opm/igpp/grants/steap/small-town-economic-assistance-program---steap>

Connecticut Small Cities CDBG Program

Potential municipal funding for eligible public-facility/accessibility improvements when federal national-objective requirements are met. The Town should determine whether an Adams Road Park project could qualify.

Website: <https://portal.ct.gov/DOH/DOH/Programs/Small-Cities-Program>

Connecticut Small Cities CDBG - Application Materials

Current application materials and deadlines for the Small Cities program.

Website: <https://portal.ct.gov/doh/doh/additional-program-pages/small-cities-application-materials>

Kubota Hometown Proud Grant

Annual nonprofit opportunity supporting community projects such as parks, trails and public spaces. The 2026 program offered \$25,000 cash plus a \$25,000 equipment voucher; would require an eligible nonprofit partner and other program requirements.

Website: <https://www.kubotausa.com/your-vision-our-mission-lets-build-it-together-apply-for-a-50000-kubota-hometown-proud-grant-today>

Connecticut DEEP - Grants & Financial Assistance

General state resource to monitor for new recreation, open-space, accessibility and environmental funding opportunities.

Website: <https://portal.ct.gov/DEEP/Business-and-Financial-Assistance/Grants-Financial-Assistance/Grants-and-Financial-Assistance>

Planning Note: Grant availability, eligibility, award amounts and deadlines can change. Park & Recreation should verify current requirements before budgeting, applying or purchasing equipment. The strongest immediate local lead is the Staver Fund; GameTime is the most time-sensitive playground-equipment opportunity identified for 2026.

Additional National Recreation & Community Funding Resources

National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) - Grant & Fundraising Resources

High-priority clearinghouse for current park, recreation, youth sports, accessibility and infrastructure grants. Check frequently because opportunities change.

Website: <https://www.nrpa.org/our-work/Grant-Fundraising-Resources/>

NRPA - 2027 Youth Sports Mini-Pitch/Lighting Activation Grant

\$20,000 cash plus opportunity to request \$50,000-\$100,000 in-kind infrastructure support from Musco Lighting for a lighting system or Mini-Pitch. Applications due October 23, 2026. See NRPA's current grant page.

Website: <https://www.nrpa.org/our-work/Grant-Fundraising-Resources/>

NRPA / Nike - Increasing Access for Girls and Women in Sports

\$20,000 awards for eligible local park and recreation agencies to increase sports participation for girls and support women coaches. Applications due October 23, 2026.

Website: <https://www.nrpa.org/our-work/Grant-Fundraising-Resources/>

NRPA / Nike - National Girls and Women in Sports Day Microgrant

\$5,000 microgrants for eligible park and recreation agencies to host sports events and activations for girls and women. Applications due October 23, 2026.

Website: <https://www.nrpa.org/our-work/Grant-Fundraising-Resources/>

Musco Sports Lighting / U.S. Soccer Foundation Soccer Fund

Potential support for Mini-Pitch systems and soccer-field lighting. NRPA lists quarterly application dates of March 31, June 30, September 30 and December 30.

Website: <https://www.nrpa.org/our-work/Grant-Fundraising-Resources/>

NRPA x MLS GO Play Fund

Supports local park and recreation agencies with soccer participation costs and programming. Current applications are due December 31, 2026; becoming an MLS GO League operator is part of eligibility.

Website: <https://www.nrpa.org/our-work/Grant-Fundraising-Resources/>

Walmart Spark Good Local Grants

\$250-\$5,000 local grants that can support community needs and cleanup projects. Recognized government entities can be eligible; the 2026 Cycle 3 application window runs August 1-November 30.

Website: <https://www.walmart.org/how-we-give/program-guidelines/spark-good-local-grants-guidelines>

NRPA - Park and Recreation Professionals' Guide to Fundraising

Useful resource for building a broader financing strategy, identifying donors, creating a case for support and diversifying funding beyond traditional grants.

Website: <https://www.nrpa.org/publications-research/best-practice-resources/park-and-recreation-professionals-guide-to-fundraising/>

Funding Strategy Note: Treat Adams Road Park as several fundable components - playground, youth sports, walking/accessibility, fencing/infrastructure, trails, benches/signage and beautification - rather than relying on one grant to finance the entire revitalization.

Mesara Family Foundation

Potential conservation/education funding source for a defined Adams Road Park green-space revitalization component, such as native plantings, landscaping, trail/walking improvements, environmental education/signage, benches or related outdoor recreation improvements. The Foundation favors smaller, high-

impact grants and primarily funds Michigan organizations, but may consider compelling projects in other geographic areas. Grants are limited to eligible 501(c)(3) organizations, so Watertown would need to confirm whether an eligible nonprofit partner or fiscal sponsor could apply on behalf of the project. Applications are accepted on a rolling basis and reviewed quarterly. Suggested target request for a defined park component: approximately \$7,500-\$15,000.

Website: <https://www.mesarafamilyfoundation.org/grants>

B. Zulkoski ADAMS ROAD PARK – CONCEPT PLAN

Restoring What We Had – A Safe, Clean, Usable Neighborhood Park

Within Existing Footprint: 175 ft. x 175 ft. (30,625 sq. ft. / 0.70 acres)

CURRENT CONDITION (FROM VIDEO)



Overgrown grass, limited use



Fallen branches and debris



Existing picnic area – needs cleaning and repair



Overgrowth along fence line

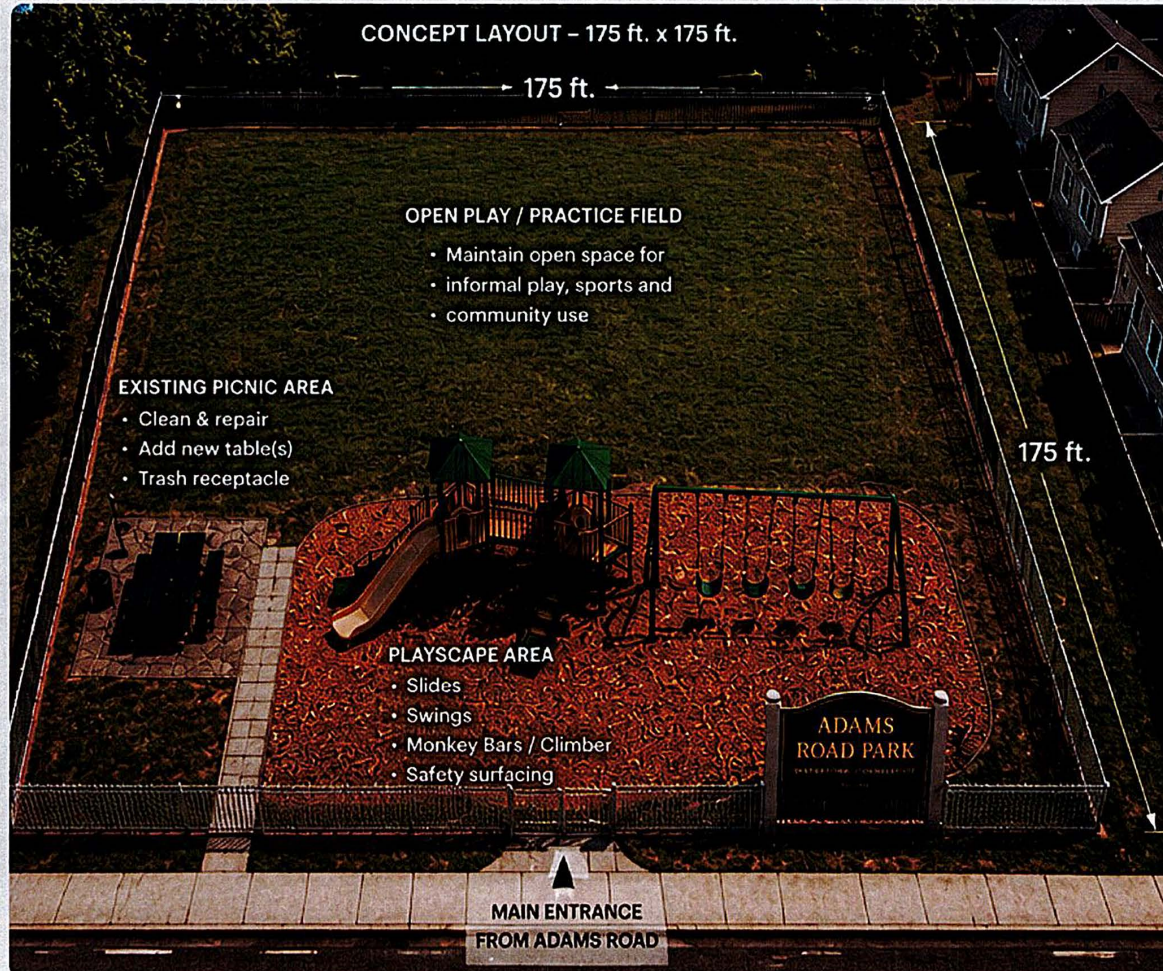
PARK SIZE

175 ft. x 175 ft.
(30,625 sq. ft. / 0.70 acres)
*approximate usable area

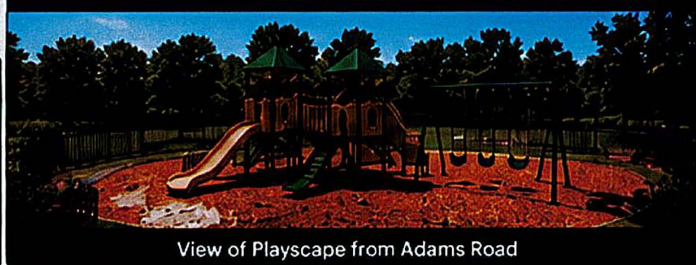


View of Restored Picnic Area

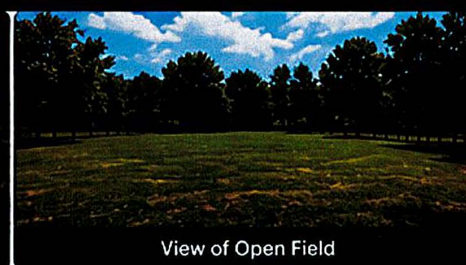
CONCEPT LAYOUT – 175 ft. x 175 ft.



PERSPECTIVE VIEWS – HOW THE PARK COULD LOOK



View of Playscape from Adams Road



View of Open Field

PLAN HIGHLIGHTS

- Restore a safe, clean, usable neighborhood park
- Maintain large open field for play and practice
- Restore playground equipment (slides, swings, monkey bars)
- Clean up existing picnic area and add seating
- Maintain chain link fence around entire park
- Low-impact improvements that fit the neighborhood character
- Add trash receptacles and a park bench

ACCESS / FUTURE CONSIDERATION

Evaluate existing access from Echo Lake Road for possible future use for parking and secondary entrance (no construction proposed at this time).

PARTNERSHIPS & FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

- Grants (state, federal, private foundations)
- Corporate sponsorships
- Bench/picnic table donations
- Garden Club plantings
- Scout projects / volunteer clean-ups
- Community fundraising

Goal: Maximize outside funding to reduce Town expense



OUR VISION

A restored neighborhood park that is safe, clean and inviting – bringing back what we once had for the children and families who live here today and for generations to come.

We are not asking for something new – we are asking to restore what Adams Road Park once had.

• *A small investment over time can make a big difference for our neighborhood.*

Our website is undergoing updates. We appreciate your patience as we update and look forward providing an improved website experience.

An official website of the United States government. Here's how you know...


[What We Do](#)
[Ways to Serve](#)
[Partner With Us](#)
[Connect](#)
[APPLY](#)

FY 2027 AmeriCorps Seniors RSVP

<https://www.americorps.gov/funding-opportunity/fy-2027-ameri-corps-seniors-rsvp>

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About RSVP

Established in 1971 and now one of the largest senior volunteer programs in the nation, AmeriCorps Seniors RSVP engages people ages 55 and older in a diverse range of volunteer activities. AmeriCorps Seniors RSVP volunteers tutor children, help prepare simple taxes, assist victims of natural disasters, provide nutrition/food support, facilitate opioid and substance abuse education workshops, and serve in their communities in many other ways. AmeriCorps Seniors RSVP volunteers choose how, where, and how often they want to serve, with commitments ranging from a few hours to a maximum of 40 hours per week. While serving, AmeriCorps Seniors RSVP volunteers improve their own lives by staying active and civically engaged. To read the statute that regulates the AmeriCorps Seniors RSVP program, view the [Uniform Guidance](#), [5 CFR 200](#) and [RSVP Federal Regulation](#).

Application Deadline

Applications are due by 5:00 p.m. Eastern Time on Tuesday, October 20, 2026.

Competition Documents

[Fiscal Year 2027 AmeriCorps Seniors RSVP Notice of Funding Opportunity](#)
[Appendix A: AmeriCorps Seniors Grant Application Instructions](#)
[Appendix B: AmeriCorps Seniors RSVP Performance Measures Instructions](#)
[Appendix C: Terms and Definitions](#)
[Appendix D: Training and Technical Assistance Resources](#)
[Appendix E: Unduplicated Volunteer, Federal Share, and Match Calculators](#)

Funding Priorities

AmeriCorps Seniors RSVP programming is designed to meet community needs. Applicants may propose activities intended to address community needs by thoroughly explaining the unmet need and activities to be completed by volunteers to address that need. In addition, AmeriCorps is interested in programming that addresses agency priorities. AmeriCorps Seniors RSVP priorities for this funding opportunity are:

- Supporting Older Adults and Caregivers:** Provide respite, support groups, system navigation, care coordination, and resources for older adults, including custodial grandparents, and caregivers.
- Helping Older Adults Re-enter the Workforce:** Offer job readiness, mentoring, training, and remove barriers to employment for older adults (volunteers provide services, not seek jobs).
- Building Strong Families:** Support parents in helping children succeed, mentor parents, connect families to resources, and strengthen community partnerships.
- Preventing and Mitigating Fraud and Scams:** Use digital navigators and other strategies to protect older adults from financial fraud and exploitation, including emerging AI-driven scams.
- Reducing the Number of People Who are Homeless:** Develop or renovate affordable housing, assist people experiencing homelessness in finding and maintaining permanent housing, and address housing needs for vulnerable populations.
- Supporting Behavioral Health Initiatives:** Improve mental health, reduce isolation, prevent substance use, provide harm reduction tools (Naloxone, fentanyl test strips), peer support, and recovery services.

Training and Technical Assistance Resources

Frequently Asked Questions

[FY 2027 AmeriCorps Seniors RSVP Competition FAQ](#) (Updated posted 8/20/2026)

Training and Technical Assistance

Enhance your knowledge and skills with our upcoming training sessions. Explore the list below and register today!

- [FY 2027 RSVP Competition YouTube Playlist](#)

Access all pre-recorded training sessions in one place through our YouTube playlist. Watch the full collection of recordings.

- [Introduction to AmeriCorps Seniors - Pre-recorded \(Recording | Slides\)](#)

Discover AmeriCorps and AmeriCorps Seniors, explore funded programs, and see how these initiatives meet community needs through inspiring volunteer activities.

Federally funded -
This could potentially
help P + R establish
a Senior Center based
volunteer program that
connects older residents
with meaningful community
service opportunities.

For example:

- supporting seniors + care-givers.
- reducing social isolation
- fraud - scam prevention
- work force assistance
- strengthening families

55+ - developed programs

TO: Watertown Parks and Recreation Commission

FROM: Michael E. Ganem, Director of Parks and Recreation

DATE: September 3, 2026

SUBJECT: Director's Report – August 2026

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

August brought both notable achievements and unexpected operational challenges to our department, highlighting the resilience, rapid response, and proactive mindset of our team. From securing competitive grant funding to navigating emergency infrastructure repairs and addressing critical staffing transitions, our staff and local partners worked tirelessly to serve the Town of Watertown.

KEY DEPARTMENTAL MILESTONES & HIGHLIGHTS

- **Personnel & Staffing Transition — Special Events & Recreation:** The department is navigating a significant staffing loss with the departure of Giuliana, our Special Events and Recreation Coordinator. Giuliana played an integral role in planning, coordinating, and executing our expanding portfolio of community events. While this transition creates immediate bandwidth and operational challenges for our remaining team, leadership is actively reviewing coverage options, event logistics, and recruitment steps to ensure program continuity.
- **Emergency Infrastructure Response at Crestbrook:** Following a traffic accident that damaged a sanitary well at Crestbrook Park Golf Course, our department moved into immediate emergency response mode. Major props to our departmental staff, town partners, and dedicated local contractors who acted without delay. Their swift coordination and technical expertise safely restored utility service and minimized operational downtime.
- **Thomaston Savings Bank Foundation Grant Awards:** I am pleased to announce that our department was awarded two community grants from the Thomaston Savings Bank Foundation to bolster local services:
 - **Social Services & Food Pantry:** Funding dedicated to sanitation and facility cleanliness upgrades to maintain a clean, safe, and welcoming environment.
 - **Recreation & Aquatics:** Targeted support to expand learn-to-swim instruction and promote essential water safety for local youth.
- **Proactive Maintenance & Resource Management:** In a climate defined by limited funding, ongoing supply chain bottlenecks, and long vendor lead times, our department is staying ahead of the curve. We have audited park conditions and established a proactive maintenance and procurement plan—stretching every dollar and securing materials early to keep our fields, grounds, and amenities in top shape.
- **Summer Season Wrap-Up:** Seasonal aquatics and summer recreation programming officially concluded a vibrant and successful season, with high participation across all age groups right through the final days of August.

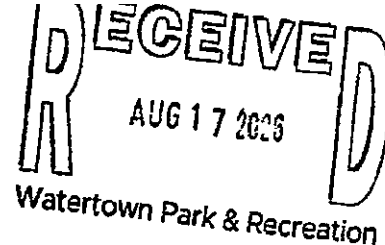
Respectfully submitted,

Michael E. Ganem

Director of Parks and Recreation

August 17, 2026

To the Members of the Watertown Town Council,



Good evening, members of the Town Council. My name is Michael Ganem, Director of Parks and Recreation. I am privileged to have the opportunity to speak before you this evening.

I am here tonight representing the Parks and Recreation Commission and its recommendation that the Town Council approve the lease assignment for the Town's restaurant at Crestbrook Park Golf Course.

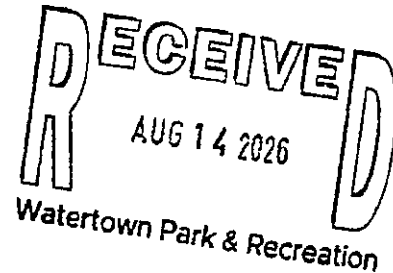
Before I share the short biography of Joe and Valerie Yankus with you, I want to take a moment to give a heartfelt thank you to Joe Romano. I have had the pleasure of working with Joe over the last couple of years. I've also had the opportunity to share great stories about him and my late father, including their shared passion for sports and hard work. Joe is going to be deeply missed at the restaurant, but he assures us that he will continue to share his love for Watertown and its proud history—particularly through his ongoing commitment to Parks and Recreation.

I also look forward to welcoming the new partnership of the Yankuses and Steve Martino. Steve, as you know, maintains strong roots in Watertown, and his experience will be instrumental in ensuring the success of this new venture.

Now, through the Chair, I would like to present a brief biography of Joe and Valerie. I have met with them on several occasions. In fact, in my former profession as a real estate broker, Valerie and I shared many professional experiences. I have full confidence that the Yankuses' vision for the highest and best use of the restaurant hits the mark. This transition will require a significant investment of time and dedication, and it is my hope that the Town will support this new partnership in every feasible way.

JOSEPH AND VALERIE YANKUS

24 Juniper Road
Southington, CT 06489
(203) 910-2756
vlyrealestate@aol.com



Dear Honorable Town of Watertown Council Members,

In partnership with Stephen Martino of the Sunset Grille Restaurant, Joe and Valerie Yankus would like to share a small amount of information pertaining to their careers and personal life so that the Town may have a more personal and professional look at both their previous and current lives as well as their intentions as to their future hopes to grow the Sunset Grille, along with Steve, into an even more wonderful venue for the Town.

Joe and Valerie bring decades of combined business, hospitality and customer service experience to Sunset Grille at Crestbrook Park Golf Course.

Joe has an extensive background in the food and beverage industry including many years serving as a Beverage Manager for both the Sheraton and Hilton Hotels. His experience in hospitality operations, food and beverage service and management and guest relations along with his strong business acumen altogether provide a strong foundation for the continued growth of Sunset Grille.

Valerie brings more than 10 years of restaurant and banquet experience, including waitstaff and event service, along with an extensive background in high end customer service, business ownership, real estate, marketing and creating welcoming spaces and experiences for clients and guests.

Together, Joe and Valerie have successfully owned and operated their own businesses for over 35 years. They are also the proud parents of four beautiful children and grandparents to three.

In partnership with Steve, their goal for Sunset Grille is to build upon the restaurant's existing strengths and the natural beauty of its setting at Crestbrook. They hope to enhance the overall dining and guest experience, expand private and community events, develop new revenue opportunities, and create additional partnerships with local residents, businesses, organizations and the Town of Watertown.

Joe and Valerie look forward to becoming an even greater part of the Crestbrook community and helping Sunset Grille continue to grow as a welcoming destination for golfers, residents, families, celebrations and community gatherings.