



It is the mission of the Urbana Park District to:

- Improve the quality of life of its citizens through a responsive, efficient, and creative park and recreation system,
- Pursue excellence in a variety of programs, parks, and special facilities that contribute to the attractiveness of neighborhoods, conservation of the environment, and the overall health of the community.

**NOTICE AND AGENDA OF MEETING  
URBANA PARK DISTRICT ADVISORY COMMITTEE (UPDAC)  
TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 18, 2025  
7:00 PM  
PLANNING & OPERATIONS FACILITY  
1011 E. KERR AVENUE  
URBANA, IL 61802**

**I. Call to Order**

**II. Public Comment**

*Any member of the public may make a brief statement at this time within the public participation rules of the Board.*

**III. Approval of the Minutes of the October 28, 2025 Meeting**

**IV. New Business**

- A. UPD Strategic Plan: Graphic Facilitation Exercise with David Michael Moore
- B. Action to Change Regular UPDAC Meeting Time to 6:00 PM

**V. Reports**

- A. UPDAC Chair
- B. Board Representative
- C. Director's Report
- D. Capital Projects Report

**VI. UPDAC Member Comments and Open Discussion**

**VII. Adjourn**

***Upcoming meetings:***

***December – NO MEETING  
January 27, 2026  
February 24, 2026  
March 24, 2026  
April 28, 2026  
May 26, 2026***

**\*\*\*This month's secretary is Kelsey Beccue\*\*\***

Note: The Meeting Agenda and Supporting Materials are on the UPD website at <https://www.urbanaparks.org/urbana-park-district-advisory-committee-updac>.

**MEETING MINUTES  
 URBANA PARK DISTRICT ADVISORY COMMITTEE (UPDAC)  
 TUESDAY, OCTOBER 28, 2025  
 7:00 PM  
 PLANNING & OPERATIONS FACILITY  
 1011 E. KERR AVENUE  
 URBANA, IL 61802**

The meeting of the Urbana Park District Advisory Committee (UPDAC) was held Tuesday, October 28, 2025 at the Urbana Park District (UPD) Planning & Operations Facility at 7:00 PM. The notice and agenda of the meeting were posted at the park district administrative office and at the location of the meeting. Copies of the notice and agenda were received by each member of the committee and by local newspapers, radio, and television stations at least forty-eight hours before the meeting in compliance with the Open Meetings Act of the State of Illinois. A copy of the notice and agenda is attached to the minutes. Also available for inspection are all documents that were reviewed or approved at the meeting.

UPDAC Members	PRESENT	ABSENT
Hannah Sheets, Chair	X	
Eusebio Briseño	X	
Lauren Chambers	X	
Lori Choquette	X	
Sara Curtis	X	
Carmen Franks	X	
Matthew Fletcher	X	
Sylena Harper	X	
Lauren Karplus		X
Lucia Maldonado		X
Martha McSims		X
Sara Rand	X	
Rachel Spencer	X	
Ashley Sims	X	
Gretchen Madsen Webb	X	

**Others Present:**

Laura Hastings, Commissioner;  
 Rachel Lenz, Executive Director;  
 Corky Emberson, Superintendent of Recreation;  
 Janet Soesbe, Community Program Manager;  
 Jameel Jones, Outreach & Wellness Manager;  
 Leslie Radice, Aquatics Manager;  
 Mark Schultz, Public Information & Marketing Manager;  
 Kyle Mills, Athletics Supervisor;

Amy Banner, Environmental Program Manager;  
Kelsey Beccue, Development Manager

**I. Call to Order and Introductions**

Hannah Sheets called the meeting to order at 7:02 PM.

**II. Public Comment**

There was no public comment.

**III. Approval of the Minutes of the September 23, 2025 Meeting**

Hannah presented the minutes of the September 23, 2025 UPDAC Meeting for approval.

*Rachel Spencer made a motion with a second from Sara Rand to approve the minutes of the September 23, 2025 UPDAC Meeting. A vote was taken and passed unanimously.*

**IV. New Business**

**A. Recreation Program Review**

The Urbana Park District (UPD) Recreation Department managers introduced themselves to UPDAC and presented on the activities and accomplishments over the summer. Corky mentioned that this is a preview of the annual Recreation Statistics Report received by the Board every February. Each program manager then went on to present information on their specific program area.

Mark Schultz, Public Information & Marketing Manager, presented primarily on the implementation of VoyagerNetz, a new text platform for people to use to communicate with the district. People can both text the district with questions, and receive alerts about specific areas they are interested in. Corky commented that this was implemented because of recommendations from the second Diversity Lab study, which showed that targeted text communication was something desired by the communities we are striving to reach. Sylena asked how long the response time from the district is. Mark responded that the goal for response time is one business day. Hannah asked who at UPD is responding to queries. Mark responded that Marketing monitors the platform and handles most responses, but they will also forward to specific program managers if a more detailed response is required. Mark said that VoyagerNetz is replacing Rainoutline for weather cancellations for programs and events. VoyagerNetz will be heavily promoted via UPD and other community outlets.

Leslie Radice, Aquatics Manager, presented on Aquatics activities from the summer, noting that the swim lesson program has grown significantly in 2025. Overall, visits to the Crystal Lake Park Family Aquatic Center remained steady from 2024 to 2024, though member entries increased slightly and daily admissions decreased slightly. Matt asked if staff receive pool passes as a way of promoting retention. Leslie said

that they do and are generally appreciative. Leslie also spoke about the participant to staff pipeline created through the swim programs at UPD.

Next, Athletics Supervisor, Kyle Mills, updated UPDAC on Athletics programming over the summer. He focused primarily on Rec Camp, which is a new program and saw excellent participation, with 387 participants over the nine-week camp. He commented that the set-up of the Health & Wellness Center (HAWC) with the separate entrance for campers worked really well. He also provided some statistics on other youth programs, noting that soccer continues to be our most popular program. Finally, Kyle talked about a new intramural program that we are working on the school with to try to create additional athletics opportunities for kids in our community, and which can also act as a participant pipeline to bolster some of our own youth athletics programs. Eusebio commented that he participated in adult volleyball, which he found to be a great program. He suggested that UPD do a t-shirt for league champions to help promote the league and increase and retain participation.

Community Program Manager, Janet Soesbe, gave updates on Summer Arts Camp and Pre-K Programs, special events, and Lake House visits. Camps and Pre-K Programs saw a combined 665 participants over the summer. Special Event attendance was excellent, particularly the Crystal Lake Park Art Fair, which saw 2,700 people over two days, and Neighborhood Nights, which saw 1,775 people over the series, even though several of the concerts were either cancelled or postponed due to weather. Finally, she noted that the Lake House rentals are doing very well this year.

Jameel Jones, Outreach & Wellness Manager, presented on participation across several areas: Play Days in the Park, special events, Urvana events, and tabling events. Skate Fest continues to be a popular draw with 165 attending this year's event. Urvana has been requested for several community events as well, and has drawn 2,216 participants at those events. He also spoke about participation in Wellness Programs with free outdoor fitness classes Yoga in the Park, Zumba in the Park, and Tai Chi in the Park, seeing 665 combined participants. Traditional indoor fitness classes have also seen good participation at the HAWC with 1,905 participants choosing to use Fitness Flexi passes. Corky updated UPDAC on HAWC facility numbers: 2,006 members, 50,816 visitors, and all \$30,000 of OSF scholarships spent on memberships for 400 people.

Environmental Program Manager, Amy Banner, provided updates on Anita Purves Nature Center (APNC) programs. Key highlights included 11,429 visitors to APNC, excellent camp participation with 469 youth in Nature Day Camp. Carmen asked about openings in Nature Day Camp, noting that it's often full. Amy said that Nature Day Camp is very popular and people can go on a waitlist. She said people do get into camp from the waitlist, but it is often very long. Janet noted that this year, camp

registration will be delayed until February 7 to give everyone more time to understand their summer schedule needs and better accommodate working parents.

Corky thanked staff and commented on UPD being a You Belong Here organization. Hannah asked if UPD still partners with CU Special Recreation for inclusion aides. Corky responded that we do, but we also have subs if the need is greater than what CU Special Recreation can provide for inclusion services.

## **V. Reports**

### **A. UPDAC Chair**

Hannah reminded UPDAC about the date change for the November meeting, noting that it will be on November 18, 2025, which is the third Tuesday in November. She also shared information about the upcoming Day of the Dead Bike Ride and Turkey Trot.

### **B. Board Representative**

Laura reminded everyone on UPDAC that they should sign up to take minutes. Kelsey noted that she had a sign-up sheet to pass around. She also commented on the upcoming Cupcake 5K fundraiser for CU Special Recreation.

### **C. Director's Report**

Rachel recapped the Pride Parade, UPD Pumpkin Carving Party, and the KRT project. She also updated UPDAC on the Board Meetings beginning at 6:00 PM instead of 7:00 PM, and asked UPDAC if they would also consider changing the time of their meetings to be consistent with the board and to allow everyone to get home earlier in the evening. UPDAC response was generally favorable to the proposed time change, and Kelsey said UPDAC could formally vote to change the time to 6:00 PM at their next meeting, with the change to begin with the January 2026 meeting.

### **D. Capital Projects Report**

Rachel gave updates on the KRT Pavilion, Bakers Lane Trail, McCullough Creek Project, and the Busey Woods Bridge.

## **VI. UPDAC Member Comments and Open Discussion**

Sara Rand commented on a visit to Sola Gratia Farm with Kern McCalla and Amy Banner.

Laura talked about the Pride Parade and commented on the chickens who walked in the parade.

Kelsey updated UPDAC on t-shirt progress, noting that she had shared some information with the UPD Leadership Team.

Rachel reminded UPDAC of the upcoming First Anniversary Celebration of HAWC on January 3, 2026.

Carmen asked about the need UPD has for teen staffers and mentioned that a member of City Council was interested in potentially providing funds to UPD to hire teen staffers.

Matt asked what the best thing UPDAC could do is. Kelsey responded that UPDAC members can act as advocates and connect people to the UPD mission. Rachel said providing perspective on the work of UPD is very important. Lori said being a promoter of Urbana parks.

Rachel commented on youth baseball in the community and at the park district.

Lori asked about the location of trash cans at parks and suggested moving them closer to pavilions. She also said that visibility of trash cans is an issue and people over look them.

Sylena asked about the vacant Walgreens and CVS on Philo Road and if the park district had any plans for them. Kelsey responded that she wasn't sure of the ownership of those properties, but that the City would likely have interest in how to best utilize those buildings.

Eusebio asked about the possibility of HAWC membership price increases. Corky said for now all fees are remaining the same.

## **VII. Adjourn**

Hannah adjourned the meeting at 8:45 PM.

Respectfully submitted by Kelsey Beccue

## 1. **Where does your passion intersect with the work you do at UPD?**

This opening question had two aims: 1) For staff to share about themselves at their table, and 2) Discover what energizes staff about their work

### **We love:**

- The outdoors
- Serving the public and bringing smiles to others
- Meeting new people
- Creative problem solving
- Making a difference by doing what we love

### **We care about:**

- Being a leader among community partners
- Improving the lives of citizens
- Unique programs and events (We are “fun-providers”)
- Having UPD be renowned outside of Urbana–City of Trees!
- Making a generational impact
- The impact we have on our staffers
- Authenticity
- Health and wellness
- Being a “third-space” for our community

## 2. **What should UPD focus on in the next 3-5 years?**

Staff was given the following prompts to help guide their feedback:

- I would start this project
- I would solve this problem
- I have this idea or innovation (or renovation)
- I would focus on elevating this aspect of UPD’s service

This section is organized by how many votes (stars) each topic received from the UPD staff.

## Highest Priority: 3+ Stars

### Expanding without neglecting (4 stars)

- Understanding how limitations (programs/facilities/staff) affect quality of service and community perception
- (Let's expand this!)

### Internal Culture (4 stars)

- Breaking silos (received 2 stars)
- A culture of giving, also, sharing information between departments
- Culture may also involve issues of staff development, onboarding, delegation
- Building stakeholders; supporters and volunteers continuing their involvement/investment in UPD

### Succession Planning (3 stars)

- Sharing institutional knowledge
- Ensures **consistency** and internal resilience
- (Perhaps a focus with recent staff hires)

### Greenways and safe connections (3 stars)

- Saline Greenway to Busey Woods
- Integrate trails, green areas
- Accessible wooded areas
- Expanding access to Busey Woods, pathway improvement

## Mid Priority: 2 Stars

### Extend the Kickapoo Rail Trail

- Open the Perkins Road Site
- Connect to Prairie and Weaver Park—funds are available for these park improvements
- We have momentum with the Health and Wellness Center

### Invest in staff development to elevate service across the district with consistency

- Qualities of UPD staff mentioned: inspiring, reliable, knowledgeable, dedicated
- Look for shared goals
- Cross-train employees
- Streamline onboarding staff
- Happy Staff = Better Parks!
- Consistent surveys (feedback opportunities)

### Transportation for all

- Reducing barriers for school districts to participate
- Events that are bike/walk/bus accessible

### Internal Trust and Communication

- Trust needed “up and down the ladder”—Managers trusting their staff and staff trusting leadership
- Departmental info sharing needed
- Knowing when to say “yes” and when to say “no” with feedback
- Better communication platform / workflow platform with staff

### Pollinators are good for bees-ness

## Lower Priority: 1 Star

Improve the aesthetic appeal of sports fields

- Refurbish fences
- Resolve irrigation research

We need more variety with our athletics

- Kids need [more] soccer, softball, and baseball programs
- Retaining volunteer coaches will be key

Continue making trails, parks, ADA accessible

- Universal design
- Look at park accessibility at events

Create partnerships where both sides contribute and both sides win (two-way street)

Develop policy around AI and its environmental impacts

The previous plan served us well: You Belong Here, Health & Wellness, Placemaking, Connectivity and Operational Excellence

Encourage being active at all ages, particularly our senior population

Recreation and fitness to improve mental health

- Potential areas for outdoor fitness (unsure whether this would be a formal fitness station, or merely suggested activities to do in the outdoors)
- Parks as a third space improves community resilience

Job shadowing opportunities

- Work with high school career centers

Optimize our data-driven decision making

- Staying up-to-date with tech

Be mindful of financial uncertainty/struggle in the community

- How does the larger economy affect our goals and programming

More doggie poop stations

## Other Mentions

- Reaching underrepresented groups
  - Potentially by offering child care at events
- Trail mapping system and wayfinding for Crystal Lake Park
- Natural areas restoration, a place for calm reflection–escape to nature!
- Opportunities to be educational! Give experts within UPD a platform to share their knowledge, front-facing opportunities with the public.
- Improve camps and programming
  - We need space to expand camps
- Year-round restrooms
- Dog park events/programming
- Quality over quantity
- Scholarship program needs a consistent process and should not be limited to youth
- In-house IT (information technology)
- The labyrinth at Crystal Lake needs more attention
- An independently owned indoor pool
- Expand the Lake House and increase profitability
- Continue marketing and outreach to elevate public image and awareness
- Keeping public art in focus, particularly art with an environmental purpose/message
- Be a leader in climate action
- You belong here!
  - Be welcoming to all
  - Put intention and action behind that statement
  - Take a holistic approach