

Parks and Recreation

Department Review

Let's start with the positive:

- Improved After-hours Coverage- Union, Non-Union, After-hours Phone Service
- Relationships with User Groups- User group meetings, relationship building, and setting expectations
- Improving Levels of Service- baseball diamonds, soccer pitches, and other playing surfaces
- Parks Capital Improvements- Lakeside & Lions Playground Equipment, Repko Dog Park
- Field and Ice Allocation Policy- used to determine suitability of playing surfaces
- Health and Safety- Improved Facility Inspections and Fire Safety

Director - Fresh Set of Eyes

My impression of the department so far:

Parks and Recreation is subject to a disproportionate amount of public scrutiny and political pressure when compared to other areas of operations.

Assets are diverse and visual, resulting in competing interests and opinions on priorities.

There are many assets, properties, and facilities in comparison to internal staff resources.

There is need for improved policies outlining service levels and priorities

Brief Summary of Facilities:

16 Facilities:

- Most are aging and/or have been neglected from an asset management standpoint.
- Maintenance work includes daily fire inspections, cosmetic repairs, plumbing, HVAC, etc.
- Limited resources and competing priorities play a role in their current condition.

Eight Rental Spaces - Grovedale, Pavilion, Unico, Ridgeview, Arena (x3), Marina:

- Available for community groups, private rentals, internal programs, and external programming.
- Set-ups, take downs, and cleanup for rentals are completed by parks staff.

Marina

- Staff maintain the docks and boat slips.
- Boat launch requires attendance during summer months.

Brief Summary of Parks and Properties:

Sixteen Active Parks

- Require in-house grounds maintenance and grass cutting.
- Monthly inspections of playground equipment.
- Splash pads, playing surfaces, washrooms, and other amenities maintained by staff.

Nine Passive Parks

- Grass cutting by contractor.
- Workorders and refuse completed by staff.

Three Beaches

- Groomed by staff.
- Washrooms maintained by staff.
- Splash pads, playing surfaces, washrooms, and other amenities maintained by staff.

Open Spaces

- Linden Beach and Repko Dog Parks
- Union Beach
- 48 other properties, easements, ROW's

Staff Resources:

Kingsville

- 1 Director
- 1 Manager
- 1 Supervisor
- 10 Full-Time Union Staff
- 5 Part-Time Union Staff

Amherstburg

- 1 Director
- 1 Executive Assistant
- 3 Managers
- 1 Supervisor
- 12 Full-Time Union Staff
- 16 Part-Time Union Staff
- Plumber
- Electrician
- Facility Attendants

Essex

- 1 Director
- 1 Administrative Assistant
- 1 Manager
- 2 Assistant Managers
- 11 Full-Time Union Staff
- 11 Part-Time Union Staff
- 2 Part-Time Customer Service Reps

Recent Competing Priorities:

Demand for improved playing surfaces and extended seasons

- Requested by user groups.
- Noticeable improvement to ball diamonds and soccer pitches.

Marina

- Slip owners continually want improvements at the marina.
- Requests for improvements to surrounding beach and amenities.

Commemorative Assets

- Stone Bridge at Park, Carnegie Greenspace, Veterans monument in park.

Garden Beds

- The Horticultural Society gave up nine garden beds at the beginning of 2024. Maintenance of these gardens has impacted operations.

Grounds Maintenance and Landscaping

- Communities in Bloom competition (2025).
- Prohibitions on pesticides and licensing for spraying have caused issues.

Community Group Supports

- This is important but drains staff resources. e.g., A large contingent of staff provide support to Kingsville Music Fest, Fantasy of Lights, etc.

Challenges (Present and Future):

Volunteerism is dwindling

- Kingsville has been heavily reliant on volunteerism to supplement services.
- It is difficult and time consuming to recruit volunteers for services that many feel are already paid for through taxation.

Number of Assets

- Staff are spread too thin. This has led to a culture that prioritizes quantity over quality.
- There needs to be a better balance of work completed in-house and outsourced. This can be difficult in a unionized environment.

Oversight

- There is not enough oversight and supervision of work. Especially outside of regular business hours.
- Supervisors and Managers work excessive amounts of overtime and are constantly interrupted by phone calls.

New Assets

- The Cottam Community Centre will result in service level increases and renewed focus in Ridgeview Park (rentals, facility cleaning, maintenance of surrounding areas)
- Development is resulting in the addition of new dedicated parkland (Valente, Youseff)

Near Future:

- Facility Specific Booking Policy
- Parks and Recreation 2040 Plan
- Waterfront 2040 Plan
- Business Plan for the Grovedale
- Mettawa's Park Development

Recommendations

1. Administration to develop service level policy for Council's consideration (Winter 2025)
2. Administration to prepare a Parks and Rec 2040 Plan (timeline 2025)