**From:** Pomeranz, Jeff A.
**To:** City Council
**Subject:** 6-20-2025 Council Communications - 473
**Date:** June 20, 2025 8:14:49 PM
**Attachments:** Chief Dostal Letter.pdf
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image003.png

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- Casino Update
- Animal Care & Control Update
- Nitrates and Drinking Water Safety Update
- Fireworks Update
- Parks & Recreation Director
- Heat Impacts at Old MacDonald's Farm
- 26th Street SW Bridge Over Prairie Creek
- Bender Pool Annual Maintenance
- Code Enforcement Update
- Youth Sports Summer Participation Growth
- Fire Department Hiring Update
- Ride The Districts! Bike Ride
- Parks & Recreation Newsletters


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**Casino Update**

Site preparation and infrastructure coordination for the Cedar Crossing Casino & Entertainment Center continue following this week's court ruling upholding the casino's state-issued gaming license. City teams are working alongside the developer to integrate flood protection, utilities, and traffic improvements into the site — keeping the $275 million project on track for its December 31, 2026, opening. A segment of the Cedar River Flood Control System and associated road improvements are incorporated into the design, with future connections to the planned Greenway Parks system.

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**Animal Care & Control Update**

Cedar Rapids Animal Care & Control (CRACC) has been transparent about recent changes to public hours at the shelter due to temporary staffing shortages and increased animal intake, reducing their ability to get animals adopted. Public feedback, including several emails to the City Manager's Office and City Council, has indicated support for the shelter, staff, and the animals in their care. The City has coordinated an immediate response to address the needs, including additional temporary staffing, interdepartmental job-sharing, and expanded volunteer efforts. We will also conduct a third-party review of CRACC operations and facilities in the coming weeks to address concerns regarding available space, staffing levels, and long-

term needs, ensuring CRACC can continue to meet our community's and pets' expectations and needs. Chief Dostal will share the attached update on the City's actions to the CRACC Facebook page today; we will also share his update in reply to the email messages received. To keep you informed, weekly updates will begin next week outlining progress and reinforcing the City's commitment to compassionate and effective animal care.

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**Nitrates and Drinking Water Safety Update**

In response to recent news about elevated nitrate levels in other parts of Iowa, we launched a new webpage to help our community learn more about our water source, nitrate trends, and the proactive steps we take to ensure safe, great-tasting drinking water. The page outlines how our well system naturally filters nitrates and highlights long-term conservation efforts to protect the Cedar River watershed.

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**Fireworks Update**

From 6/1–16, the Joint Communications Agency received 17 fireworks-related calls for service. No fires or injuries have yet been reported. The Fire Marshal's Office reviewed 16 fireworks display applications this season; 10 inspections were completed by the end of this week. We launched an early and proactive public messaging campaign to help residents understand what is permitted under both local rules and new state laws. We will continue to monitor activity, respond to concerns, and share timely updates throughout the fireworks season to keep our community safe and informed.

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**Parks & Recreation Director**

Carrie Mardorf's first day as Parks & Recreation Director will be Monday, 6/23. An Iowa native, Carrie most recently served as Superintendent of the Vicksburg National Military Park in Mississippi. She brings extensive experience in public lands management and executive leadership. Thank you to Amanda Grieder for her interim leadership and the Parks & Recreation team's continued dedication throughout this time of transition.

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**Heat Impacts at Old MacDonald's Farm**

To protect the animals at Old MacDonald's Farm from heat-related stress, Parks policy requires pen closures on days when outdoor temperatures exceed 90 degrees, in alignment with humane-care standards. On these days, while animal pens are closed, farm grounds remain open. With several hot days in the forecast, we anticipate upcoming closures. Staff will monitor conditions daily, post on-site signage, and share updates through the City's communication channels.

**26th Street SW Bridge Over Prairie Creek**

In May, we received a report of significant damage on the deck of the 26th Street SW bridge over Prairie Creek. We brought in a contractor to remove the deteriorating concrete overlay so engineers could fully assess the damage. Approximately 35% of the bridge deck requires repairs — the overlay has reached the end of its useful life, and the deterioration is expected to continue beyond current damage, even if temporary patches were applied. Total repair costs are estimated at $375,000. Given the bridge's low daily traffic volume and the availability of alternate routes, it will remain closed as we identify funding and prepare bid documents for repairs. Nearby property owners, including ITC, ADM, and the CRANDIC Railroad, are receiving direct updates. We will continue to share progress as we work toward a safe reopening.

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**Bender Pool Annual Maintenance**

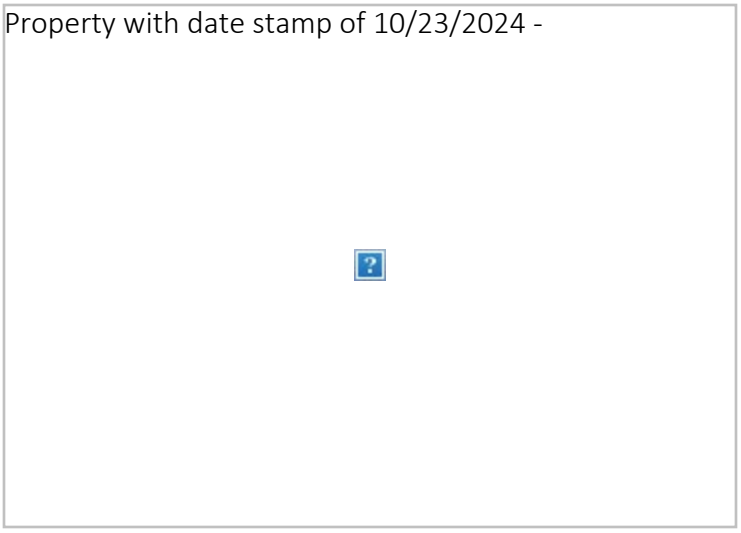
Bender Pool will be closed 6/27–7/20 for annual maintenance. Staff will use the time to complete tile repairs, floor stripping and sealing, touch-up painting, and other routine work. The closure has been communicated since February via facility signage and City communications channels. The closure was planned for the summer season when outdoor pools are open. Find schedules at CityofCR.com/OutdoorPoolSchedules

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**Code Enforcement Update**

The City's Code Enforcement Division continues to make progress in proactively addressing vacant and neglected properties throughout Cedar Rapids. A recent success involved a former rental home at 1444 Bever Avenue SE, which had been without water service since 2023. After the Regional Economic Development Institute (REDI) lost funding to rehabilitate the property, it was donated to Hope Community Development Association (Hope CDA) through coordination with a City code enforcement officer. In May, Hope CDA also acquired a long-vacant home at 1516 6th Avenue SE with a history of housing violations.

Alongside these strategic partnerships, the City is also leveraging Iowa Code 657A.10B to take legal possession of abandoned homes. We acquired seven properties through this process in the past two years as part of our ongoing efforts to revitalize neighborhoods and return properties to productive use. Three of them are scheduled for demolition by 8/1 due to unsafe conditions. The Code Enforcement Division is coordinating with the Community Development & Planning Department and Public Works' Real Estate Division to manage the future disposition of all properties.

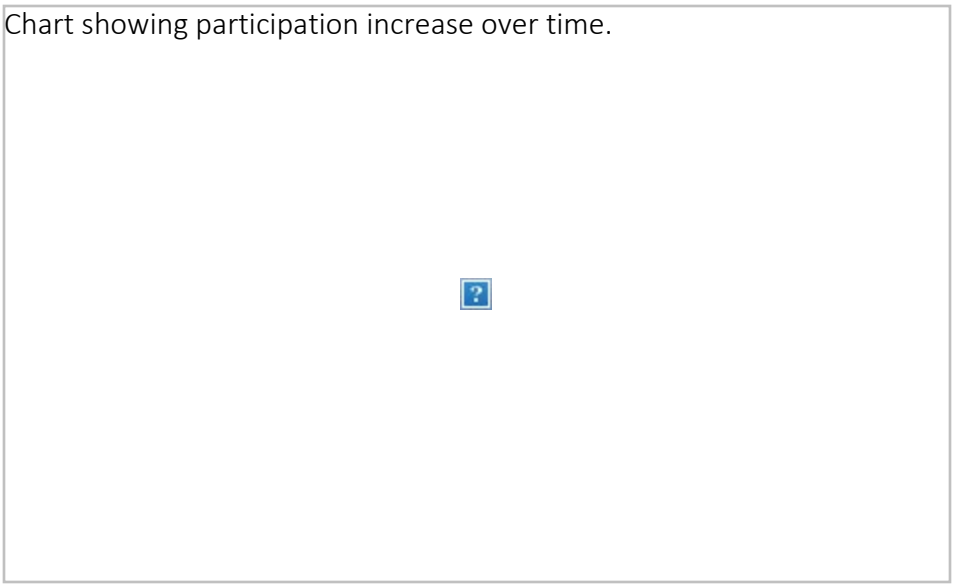



*1444 Bever Avenue SE*

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**Youth Sports Summer Participation Growth**

Participation in Parks and Recreation summer youth sports programs has steadily increased over the past few years, rising from around 600 participants in 2019 to nearly 1,200 in 2025. This sustained growth reflects the strong interest in recreational opportunities and the continued efforts of our staff to expand, enhance, and promote our quality programming.




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**Fire Department Hiring Update**

Seven new firefighters joined the Class of 2025 Cedar Rapids Fire Department Academy training last week. With the announcement of three current firefighters' pending retirements, the team acted quickly to bring three additional trainees on board for this year's class. All come with experience in other fire departments and blend well with the current trainee

group. Human Resources teamed up with the Fire Department to alleviate what could have otherwise been a months-long staffing shortage. We look forward to Academy graduation later this summer.

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**Ride The Districts! Bike Ride**

More than 80 community members joined our annual Ride the Districts! bike ride last Saturday. The 12-mile route started with informational updates at Cedar Lake and included educational stops along the CeMar and Grant Wood trails. Hall Bicycle helped sponsor this year's free shirt given to participants.

Bike ride participants gather for a group photograph.



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**Parks & Recreation Newsletters**

The June edition of *PlayTimes* highlights all the ways to make the most of summer with Cedar Rapids Parks & Recreation — including swim lesson registration, summer day camps, Old MacDonald's Farm, Rollin' Recmobile stops, and Summer in the Square. The latest *Golf News* features event results, construction updates, and tips to keep your game on track. A full list of City newsletters is available at CityofCR.com/Subscribe.