

RECREATION

Support of:

1. A recreation department with adequate/improved facilities to carry out a meaningful program.
2. Sufficient neighborhood playgrounds within walking distance of all children (no major barriers) and the setting aside of parcels of land for recreational purposes in newly-annexed areas.
3. Continued county land acquisition to maintain the recommended ration of 15 acres per 1000 people.
4. A community recreation center to serve all ages.
5. Wider use of public school facilities for all age groups.

A study, "Recreation: Evaluation of Community Needs and Facilities", was adopted by members in April, 1966 and continued in April 1967. At that time there were eleven city parks and a municipal swimming pool, maintained by a city parks superintendent. A parks commission composed of the superintendent and five members appointed by the mayor advised the city council on parks matters. A city recreation department was supervised by an appointed director and a 16-member citizens' recreation council (one from each ward and three at large) appointed by the mayor. The recreation department carried out a broad program of organized activities including a youth center with a nine-member youth council. (*Parents Magazine* for six years awarded them a Youth Achievement Award for their weekly activities and community service.)

Portage County had thirteen parks, one of which (Jordan) was being enlarged. They were maintained by a seven-man committee appointed by the county board chairman to terms of seven years. The county board had approval over the amount of money spent, but not on the manner of spending it.

The study committee ascertained what programs and facilities were available to the public in both Stevens Point and Portage County, comparing these local conditions with standards recommended by the National Recreation Association. In October, 1967 a LWV-SP publication showing the results of this study was made available to interested parties, including the recreation committee of the Chamber of Commerce, which was about to embark on a study of city recreation facilities. Programs offered by the schools, the college, and various service clubs, as well as commercial enterprises (bowling and golf) were included in the list of recreational facilities available.

In comparison with the acreage-per-person recommendation of the NRA (15 acres per 1000 population), the county came up a little short (13.9 acres per 1000) including the Jordan Park acquisition.

The city met the NRA recommendation (1 acre per 100 population) exactly, but distribution was poor, three-fourths of it being concentrated in the two largest parks. The city park and recreation program rated well, but the recreation program was

handicapped by inadequate physical plant and lack of indoor swimming facilities. Ordinances have since been enacted by both city and county requiring developers to set aside land or money for park purposes.

The original position included support for—a swimming pool to be included in the next junior/senior high school build. League lobbied in vain for this when Ben Franklin was being built, and that part of the consensus was dropped when the support position was adopted in April 1968. That support position also included support for “construction of a community recreation center to serve all ages.

“Let’s Play Ball Together—Funding Parks and Recreation” was the theme of a Town Hall meeting sponsored by the League and the Town Hall Committee in January 1970. By this time the parks commission and recreation council had merged into the Parks and Recreation Commission. Because the city offered the only supervised recreation in the area, city taxpayers were sometimes squeezed out of the very programs for which they were footing the bill. Subsequently, the municipalities of Park Ridge and Linwood agreed to give financial support to the programs. Residents of other communities are charged for Participation.

In 1969 a YMCA program was organized, located in the old fire station on Strongs Avenue. In 1972 the Y acquired the Pacelli High school building on Division Street and later added a swimming pool and physical fitness facility. At the annual meeting in April 1975, the words “the construction of” were deleted from Item 4 and “center” changed to “facilities.” It was felt that expansion of and support for the Y and recreation department facilities was preferable to the construction of an additional center.