

White Paper #2

Jackson County & City of Jackson
Joint Recreation Plan & Operations Study

Introduction

It is important to have a complete understanding of the similarities and differences between the park systems of Jackson County and the City of Jackson in order to complete the Joint Recreation Plan and the Joint Operations Study currently under development for the two jurisdictions. Accordingly, a series of white papers will explore those similarities and differences. This white paper provides:

- The composition of the commissions established by each jurisdiction;
- Descriptions of the recreation departments in both jurisdictions;
- Any special relationships with other recreation providers; and
- The funding structures behind both park systems.

Organizational Structures

The organizational structures of the two park systems are very different.

Jackson County

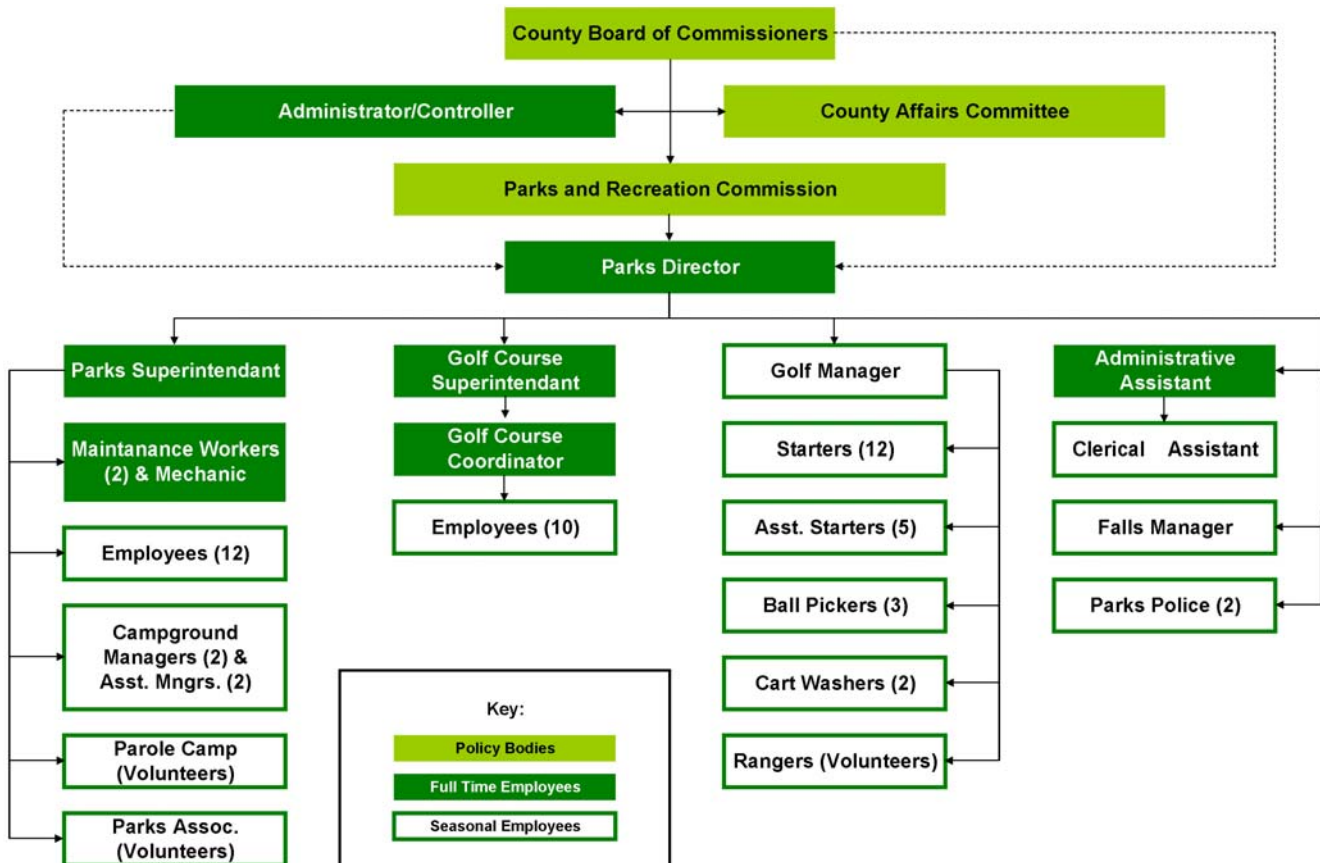
Jackson County's park system is established under the authority of Public Act 261 of 1965, *County and Regional Parks* (MCL 46.351 et seq)¹. The County Board of Commissioners created the Parks and Recreation Commission to recommend the policies under which the park system operates. The Parks and Recreation Commission reports to the County Board of Commissioners via that body's County Affairs Committee (see the organizational chart). The following members comprise the Parks and Recreation Commission:

- The Chair of the Road Commission, or a Road Commissioner designated by the Chair;
- The County Drain Commissioner, or an employee designated by the Commissioner;
- A member of the Region 2 Planning Commission residing in Jackson County, since a county planning commission does not exist; and
- Seven members appointed by the County Board, including at least one but not more than three County Commissioners.

The Parks Director reports to the Parks and Recreation Commission as well as the County Board. The Director is in charge of 7 full-time employees, 53 seasonal employees, and a variety of volunteers (see the organizational chart). The Parks Superintendent and the Golf Course Superintendent are the chief deputies of the Director, along with the Administrative Assistant. The Golf Course Coordinator, a mechanic, and 2 maintenance workers comprise the remainder of the fulltime staff. The Golf Manager is in charge of the 22 seasonal employees (i.e., starters, assistant starters, ball pickers, and cart washers) and the volunteers (i.e., rangers) who staff the Cascades Championship Golf Course and the Cascades Short Course. The Falls Manager is in charge of Cascades Falls programs. The Pleasant Lake and Swains Lake Campgrounds each employ a manager and assistant manager. The Parks Superintendent and the Golf Course Coordinator are in charge of 12 and 10 seasonal employees, respectively. A clerical assistant and 2 park police officers report to the Parks Director.

¹ Please see White Paper #3 for a complete listing of the state enabling acts which would permit the merging of the park systems operated by Jackson County and the City of Jackson.

Organizational Chart



City of Jackson Parks & Recreation Facility & Programs

The City of Jackson's park system is established under the authority of Public Act 156 of 1917 (*MCL 125.51 et seq*)². The City Council created the Parks and Recreation Commission to recommend the policies under which the park system operates. However, Ella Sharp Park is overseen by the Ella Sharp Park Board of Trustees due to the terms of the park bequest (see the organizational chart). Both bodies report to City Council. The following members comprise the Parks and Recreation Commission:

- 1 member of the City Council and 4 city residents appointed by Council;
- 1 member of the Jackson Public Schools' Board of Education and 3 school district residents appointed by the Superintendent and approved by the Board; and
- 3 ex-officio members (e.g., the City Manager, the Chair of the City Planning Commission, and the Superintendent of Jackson Public Schools).

The Ella Sharp Park Board of Trustees is comprised of the following members:

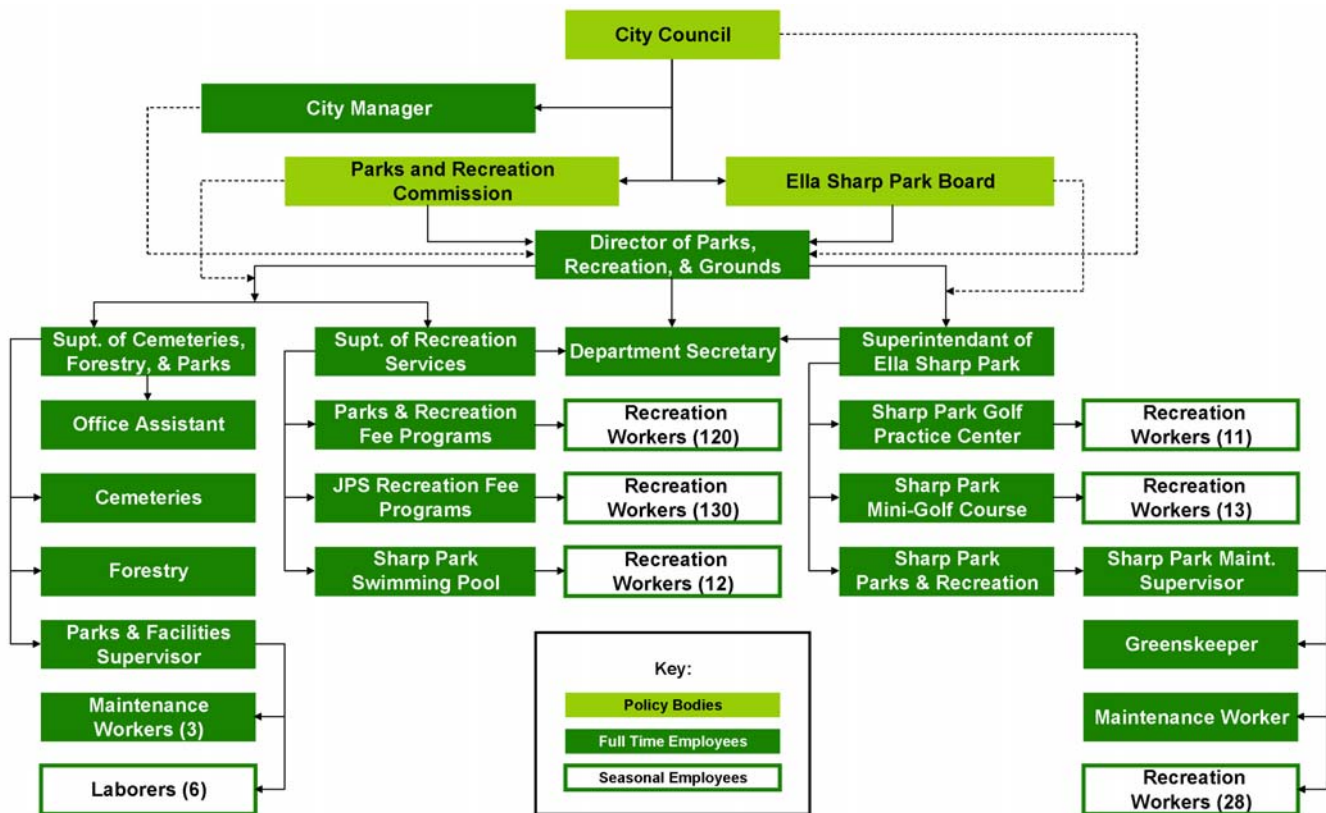
- 1 member of the City Council appointed by the Council; and
- 4 city residents appointed by the Mayor and confirmed by City Council.

Please note that three of the four city residents appointed to the Parks and Recreation Commission are also appointed to serve as members of the Ella Sharp Park Board.

² Please see White Paper #3 for a complete listing of the state enabling acts which would permit the merging of the park systems operated by Jackson County and the City of Jackson.

The Director of Parks, Recreation, and Grounds reports to the Parks and Recreation Commission, the Ella Sharp Park Board, and the City Manager. The Director is in charge of the 11 full-time employees and 320 seasonal employees who maintain parks and provide recreation programs as well as other personnel (please see the organizational chart). The Superintendents of Ella Sharp Park; Cemeteries, Forestry, and Parks; and Recreation Services are the chief deputies of the Director, along with the Departmental Secretary. The Superintendent of Ella Sharp Park oversees the fulltime Maintenance Supervisor as well as the 24 seasonal workers which staff the Golf Practice Center and the Mini-Golf Course. A fulltime greenskeeper, a maintenance worker, and 28 seasonal recreation workers labor for the Maintenance Supervisor. The Superintendent of Cemeteries, Forestry, and Parks oversees the fulltime Parks and Facilities Supervisor as well as other staff who maintain the City’s cemeteries and street trees (please see the organizational chart). The Parks and Facilities Supervisor oversees 3 fulltime maintenance workers and 6 seasonal laborers. The Superintendent of Recreation Services oversees the 120 seasonal workers who provide the Parks and Recreation Fee Programs, the 130 seasonal workers who provide the Jackson Public School Recreation Fee Programs, and the 12 seasonal workers who provide the programs held at the Sharp Park Swimming Pool

Organizational Chart



Signature Facilities in the Parks

The Jackson City Parks and Jackson County Parks, as well as various for-profit and nonprofit organizations, operate signature facilities in various parks which are considered destinations on their own:

Jackson County

The following signature facilities operate in Jackson County Parks:

- **Cascades Falls** — The 500 foot long, 64 foot high, and 60 foot wide facility, first displayed to the public in 1932, is located in Sparks Foundation County Park. Admission fees and donations help Jackson County Parks maintain the 6 fountains, 16 falls (11 illuminated), colored lights, and associated support equipment.
- **The Cascades Championship and Short Golf Courses** — The 18-hole Cascades Championship Golf Course and the 9-hole Cascades Short Course and Driving Range are located in Sparks Foundation County Park. Both of the courses are maintained by Jackson County Parks. It is the policy of the Jackson County Board that the golf courses pay for themselves. Consequently, no general funds are spent on the courses.
- **The Cascades Manor House** — The Manor House, a long-time community gathering place located in Sparks Foundation County Park, is available for weddings, other private and corporate events, and brunch every Sunday and on select holidays. The lease agreement with the Cascades Park Foundation consists of a monthly fee plus a percentage of the monthly income. The Foundation maintains the Manor House.
- **The Cascades Ice Cream Co** — The ice cream stand, located in Sparks Foundation County Park, serves walkup and drive-through customers each summer. The lease with the owner of the business is based on a percentage of the income the business generates each month. The owner of the business maintains the ice cream stand.
- **Campgrounds** — County parks located at Pleasant Lake and Swains Lake host campgrounds with 60 and 56 modern campsites, respectively. The campgrounds are maintained by Jackson County Parks.
- **Concession Stands** — Concession stands located in Grass Lake, Vandercook Lake, Swains Lake, and Pleasant Lake County Parks are rented out to local entrepreneurs each summer for a monthly fee. The stands are maintained by Jackson County Parks.

City of Jackson

The following signature facilities operate in City of Jackson Parks:

- **Ella Sharp Museum of Art and History** — The Museum, a non-profit institution, brings the visual arts and the area's history to visitors through exhibits and onsite and outreach programs. Located in Ella W. Sharp Park, the Museum is comprised of 8 galleries, the 19th century Hillside Farmhouse, and other exhibits. The Museum's board maintains the facility.
- **Peter F. Hurst Planetarium** — The facility, operated by Jackson Public Schools serves both students and the community. The planetarium, located within Ella W. Sharp Park, houses a Spitz Model A-4 star projector under a 30 foot dome.
- **Ella Sharp Golf Course, Golf Practice Center, and Mini-Golf Course** — The 18-hole golf course, the golf practice center, and the 18-hole miniature golf course, located in Ella W. Sharp Park, are maintained by Jackson City Parks. The fees collected by these facilities are used for their maintenance.
- **Nixon Skate Park** — The skateboard facility, located in Nixon Park, is maintained by Jackson City Parks. The fees collected by these facilities are used for their maintenance.
- **Olympic Swimming Pools** — Jackson City Parks maintain Olympic-sized swimming pools in Nixon and Ella W. Sharp Parks. The fees collected by these facilities are used to fund their maintenance and the programs they support.
- **Recreation Centers** — Jackson City Parks maintain the Boos Recreation Center in Loomis Park and the Martin Luther King Center. The fees collected by these facilities are used to fund their maintenance and the programs they support.

Partnerships

The park systems have partnered with other organizations/agencies to provide parks and recreation services:

Jackson County

Jackson County Parks benefit from the following partnerships:

- **Jackson County Parks Association** — The Association donates financially to capital improvements projects, provides volunteer maintenance, and promotes the park system.
- **Friends of the Falling Waters Trail** — The organization was a key partner in the development of the linear park. It continues to assist in the ongoing maintenance and promotion of the facility.
- **Local Fire and Police Protection** — The Summit Township Fire Department oversees fire safety during the firework displays hosted in Sparks Foundation County Park several times each summer. The Jackson Police Department, the Jackson County Sheriff's Department, and Michigan State Police patrol the Sparks Foundation County Park during the special events held each summer.
- **Cascades Inc.** — The group organizes the annual Cascades Civil War Muster which is hosted in Sparks Foundation County Park at the end of every August. Civil War battles are reenacted and period arts and crafts are on display during the Muster.
- **Grass Lake County Park** — Grass Lake Charter Township and the Village of Grass Lake help to maintain the County Park. For example, the Township mows the park and the Village turns the water service for the bathrooms on and off each spring and fall.

City of Jackson

City of Jackson Parks benefit from the following partnerships:

- **Jackson Public Schools (JPS)** — The school district is the City's most important partner regarding parks and recreation. That partnership includes, but is not necessarily limited to the following examples of cooperation:
 - A district-wide 0.2 millage funds the City's recreation programs.
 - JPS appoints 4 of the 9 members of the Parks and Recreation Commission.
 - Various city recreation programs utilize JPS athletic facilities (e.g. Withington Community Stadium (Dungy Field), school gymnasiums, etc.)
- **Jackson Area Catholic Schools** — Various city recreation programs utilize the athletic facilities of Lumen Christi High School, Jackson Catholic Middle School, the Queen of the Miraculous Medal School, St. John the Evangelist Elementary School, and St. Mary Star of the Sea School.
- **Area Foundations and Other Donors** — The Consumers Energy Foundation, the Weatherwax Foundation, the Jackson Community Foundation, the Dart Foundation, and other anonymous philanthropic organizations/individuals have donated funds to various projects.

Capital and Operating Budgets

The capital and operating budgets of the park systems differ:

Jackson County

Jackson County's fiscal year runs from January 1st through December 31st. The 2009 capital budget for the park system is \$75,000.³ The park system's operating budget for 2009 is \$1,633,640.⁴ The operating budget is divided into a couple of different funds:

³ The capital budget for the park system fluctuates on an annual basis, based upon allocations from the County Board.

County Parks Fund — The county parks fund — which covers all park facilities except the golf courses — accounts for 60.5% (\$988,378) of the budget. The County provides 56.5% (\$588,018) of the county parks fund revenue through its general fund and another 7.6% (\$75,000) from a dedicated out county parks fund. Another 6.3% (\$61,851) of revenues is transferred from the golf courses fund to pay for the use of maintenance equipment. The remaining 29.7% (\$293,509) of the revenues come from the following sources:

- Administration (Cascades Manor House, Cascades Ice Cream Company, and miscellaneous) — 6.6% (\$65,000)
- Pleasant Lake Campground (rental income, camping and pavilion fees, and miscellaneous) — 3.2% (\$32,005)
- Cascades Falls (admissions, concessions, museum donations, souvenirs, weddings, sales tax revenue, sponsorships/donations, and miscellaneous) — 12.6% (\$124,805)
- Parks general (rental income, sparks park pavilion, reimbursement, firewood sales, and miscellaneous) — 2.5% (\$25,099)
- Swains Lake Campground (rental income, camping, pavilion, and dump station fees, and miscellaneous) — 4.7% (\$46,600)

Only the Cascades Falls and the Pleasant Lake and Swains Lake Campgrounds generate more income than expenses. However, the same would most likely be true of the Cascades Manor House and the Cascades Ice Cream Company if the revenues they generated were not listed under administration in the budget. Finally, 4.3% of the county park fund is transferred to the County's delinquent tax fund.

Golf Courses Fund — The golf courses fund — which covers the operation of the Cascades Championship and Short Golf Courses — accounts for the remaining 39.5% of the budget. It is the policy of the Jackson County Board that the golf courses pay for themselves. Accordingly, no general funds are spent on the courses. In fact, 9.6% of the revenues are transferred to the county parks fund to pay for the use of maintenance equipment. It is also interesting to note that the profits from the Cascades Championship Course are used to cover the shortfall in the Cascades Short Course and the transfer of funds for maintenance equipment to the county parks fund. Revenues are generated through the following: sales tax revenue, handicap fees, gift certificates, golf accessories, golf balls, golf club rentals, range balls, greens fees, electric cart and pull cart rentals, concessions, sponsorships/donations, reimbursements, a junior golf league, and miscellaneous.

2009 Operating Budget

Key	County Parks Fund	Revenue	Expense	Net
208100	Administration	\$65,000.00	\$269,601.00	-\$204,601.00
208697	Pleasant Lake Campground	\$32,005.00	\$24,313.00	\$7,692.00
208699	Cascades Falls	\$124,805.00	\$88,454.00	\$36,351.00
208701	Parks General	\$25,099.00	\$163,950.00	-\$138,851.00
208702	Swains Lake Campground	\$46,600.00	\$25,150.00	\$21,450.00
208710	Out County Parks	\$0.00	\$75,000.00	-\$75,000.00
208717	Parks Equipment	\$0.00	\$170,666.00	-\$170,666.00
208728	Sparks Park	\$0.00	\$110,674.00	-\$110,674.00
208764	Parks Police	\$0.00	\$18,394.00	-\$18,394.00

(continued)

⁴ The operating budget will decrease in 2010 due to the loss of three (3) full-time employees.

2009 Operating Budget (continued)

Key	County Parks Fund	Revenue	Expense	Net
208981	Operating Transfer In			
	Transfer In - General Fund	\$558,018.00	\$0.00	\$558,018.00
	Transfer In - Out County Parks	\$75,000.00	\$0.00	\$75,000.00
	Transfer In - Golf Fund*	\$61,851.00	\$0.00	\$61,851.00
208982	Operating Transfer Out	\$0.00	\$42,176.00	-\$42,176.00
	Subtotal	\$988,378.00	\$988,378.00	\$0.00
	Golf Courses Fund			
218700	Cascade Golf Course	\$550,701.00	\$461,938.00	\$88,763.00
218703	Short Course	\$94,561.00	\$121,473.00	-\$26,912.00
218982	Operating Transfer Out*	\$0.00	\$61,851.00	-\$61,851.00
	Subtotal	\$645,262.00	\$645,262.00	\$0.00
	Total	\$1,633,640.00	\$1,633,640.00	\$0.00

*cost of equipment use

City of Jackson

The City of Jackson's fiscal year runs from July 1st through June 30th. The 2009-2010 capital budget for the park system is \$169,827, including \$25,827 for public art placed throughout the City.⁵ The park system's operating budget for 2009-2010 is \$2,881,158. Separating the cemetery and forestry programs from the budget of the City's Department of Parks, Recreation, and Grounds, the City's general fund accounts for 52.4% (\$1,510,546) of the park system's operating budget⁶. General funds are used to fund Nixon Memorial Park, the Sharp Park Swimming Pool, parks and facility maintenance, and the general administration of the Department of Parks, Recreation, and Grounds. The Ella W. Sharp Park operating fund accounts for another 25.8% (\$744,413) of the budget, including the \$46,300 in revenues generated by the \$1,086,810 Ella W. Sharp endowment fund. Funds generated from the fees charged for recreation programs, and funding generated by a millage throughout the Jackson Public School District, account for another 10.2% (\$294,299) and 8.7% (\$250,000) of the budget, respectively. Funding for the construction of the Sharp Park practice center account for the final 2.8% (\$81,900) of the budget

2009-2010 Operating Budget

Key	Gen. Fund - Parks and Recreation	Budget
101-692	Parks, recreation, & Grounds Admin.	\$714,740.00
101-697	Parks & Facility Maintenance	\$522,172.00
101-698	Lt. Nixon Memorial Park	\$142,368.00
101-699	Sharp Park Swimming Pool	\$131,266.00
208	Ella W. Sharp Park Operating Fund	\$744,413.00
296	Recreation Activity Fund	\$294,299.00
297	JPS Recreation Millage Program Fund	\$250,000.00
583	Sharp Park Golf Practice Center Fund	\$81,900.00
	Total	\$2,881,158.00

⁵ The capital budget for the park system fluctuates on an annual basis, based upon allocations from City Council.

⁶ It is important to note that the administrative costs attributed to the cemetery and forestry programs are not separated in this analysis. Nor is the use of park maintenance workers and laborers for cemetery and forestry tasks.