

**Park
Commission**

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Tajalli Hodge, Chair
Dave Streeter, Vice Chair
Brad Hine, Treasurer
Jeff Neel, Secretary

Commissioners:
Edward Burnett
Darrell Kirby
Star Smith

Charter Township of Ypsilanti

**YPSILANTI TOWNSHIP PARK
COMMISSION**

REGULAR MEETING

Date: Monday, October 3, 2022

Time: 6:30 P.M.

LOCATION

Board room-1st floor
Ypsilanti Township Civic Center
7200 S. Huron River Drive
Ypsilanti, Michigan 48197



Ypsilanti Township Park Commission

7200 S. Huron River Drive • Ypsilanti, MI 48197

TAJALLI HODGE • DAVID STREETER • JEFF NEEL • BRAD HINE
EDWARD BURNETT • DARREL KIRBY • STAR SMITH

REGULAR MEETING AGENDA

MONDAY, October 3, 2022

6:30 P.M.

- I. Call to Order**
- II. Roll Call**
- III. Determination of Quorum**
- IV. Approval of Agenda**
- V. Approval of Minutes from the September 12, 2022 regular meeting**
- VI. Citizens Participation**
- VII. Reports**
 - A. Staff Reports**
 - B. Commissioner Reports**
- VIII. Unfinished Business**
 - A. Continue discussion of Park Hours**
- IX. New Business**
- X. Announcements**
- XI. Recommendations to the Township Board**
- XII. Adjournment**

**CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF YPSILANTI
PARK COMMISSION
PROPOSED MINUTES OF THE SEPTEMBER 12, 2022 REGULAR MEETING**

*Park Commission Agendas and Minutes are available on the township website at
<https://ytown.org/park-commission>*

I. Call to Order

Commission Hodge called the meeting to order at 6:31 p.m. at the Ypsilanti Township Civic Center.

II. Roll Call

Commissioners Present: Tajalli Hodge, Jeff Neel, Brad Hine, Ed Burnette, David Streeter

Commissioners Not Present: Starr Smith, Darrell Kirby

Staff Present: John Hines, Mike Hoffmeister

III. Determination of Quorum

Quorum present.

IV. Approval of Agenda

Motion to approve agenda made by Hine

Seconded by Neel

Motion Carried Unanimously

V. Approval of Minutes – August 2, 2022 Regular Meeting

Motion to approve minutes made by Streeter

Seconded by Hine

Motion Carried Unanimously

VI. Citizens Participation

None

VII. Reports

A. Staff Reports

Mike Hoffmeister, Residential Service Director

- Loonfeather Park: new sub-contractor for ADA rail. 4 – 6 weeks till completion but the rest of the park is open.
- Citizen for Hewen's Creek Park: citizens help with opening and closing of park.
- Sidewalk repairs are ongoing.
- Tennis court renovations. 2 separate grants – pursuing a package deal for design and may be able to package the construction contracts (depending on approval from agencies.) Community Center still in approval and Clubview is approved.
- Crosses planted in front of Township Hall to show support for veterans. Looking to place 22 per day representing the number of daily veteran suicides. Check with John if interested in volunteering.
- Green Oaks Golf Course in good shape. Retrieved 370 golf balls from irrigation system (from vandalism.)

Mike Hoffmeister reporting for Robin Castle-Hine, Quality Assurance Specialist

- Rosie The Riveter event was a success. Sponsored by DTE and OHM. 82 total booths and generated revenues of \$2260. \$300 profit from parking fees.

- Ford Lake Summer Jazz Festival summary: very successful despite a few rainy dates. 3800 cars parked. John Lawrence generates money from sponsorship revenues.
- Park Season officially over; great work from staff. 3400 parking tickets issued but only 2 went to court.
- Park revenues up \$18,000 in 2022 season.

John Hines, Recreation Services Manager

- Community Center renovations are complete.
- Scholarship supported by DTE: awards 50% of registration fees for children for a year. No limit to numbers but there is a limit of \$250/child/year.
- Cornhole tournament August 27th. 9 teams participated and looking to host another in the fall.
- Registrations for fall programs trending up.

B. Commissioner Reports

Tajalli Hodge: 1) Chicago parks experience – could Township supply large versions of family board games (like Jenga) that families could check out? 2) West Willow Farmer Market supplier of fresh produce asked to insure parking? Miscommunication and misunderstanding according to John Hines. 3) Sugar Brook Park weeding and tree planting events planned (discussed later in the meeting.)

VIII. Unfinished Business

Continued discussion of park hours: Commissioner Hodge conducted a survey of park employees; 8 responded and results are:

Safety Issues: darkness at closing time, being alone, large groups and irate citizens are uncooperative, drug use.

Actions taken over summer that corrected some issues: earlier closing times, support for closers, better signage (and in multiple languages), enforcement of tickets.

Suggestions for Help? Larger signage, clear hours, commissioner visits, better lighting

Hardest to close: those with water sports, where consumption of alcohol on the lake is impossible to police.

Incidents: fires (South Hydro), hostility towards rangers and employees.

Suggested hours: varied responses. 9 pm in summer, dusk otherwise.

Discussion: Steve LeDuca (Bemis Rd, west of Hewens Creek) - closed gate at Hewens Park during first part of summer and experienced same issues. Went to park multiple times to avoid locking people in. Also felt unsafe on some occasions. Posted signs help. Mike Hoffmeister: when gates are locked, people park on Bemis Road. Suggestions are to check with other communities and with Washtenaw County sheriff's office about supporting park staff efforts.

IX. New Business

Resolution 2022-10: MDNR Land & Water Conservation Fund Project. This is a matching grant for construction at Community Center Park (filed in 2020 but state and federal agencies are behind in processing grants.)

Motion to approve Resolution 2020-10 made by Streeter

Seconded by Hine
Motion Carried Unanimously

Three Year Tree Maintenance Agreement with ReLeaf Michigan. 10 trees paid for by DTE will be plant in Sugar Brook Park. This agreement addresses maintenance issues like watering, pruning, and monitoring health of newly planted trees.

Motion to approved maintenance agreement made by Streeter
Seconded by Burnette
Motion passed unanimously.

X. Public Hearing
None

XI. Announcements
Park organization and operations review and orientation meeting immediately after meeting.

XII. Recommendation
Motion to recommend Resolution 2020-10 to township board made by Neel
Seconded by Streeter
Motion passed unanimously.

Motion to ReLeaf Michigan recommend to board made by Hine
Second Streeter
Motion passed unanimously.

XIII. Adjournment
Motion to adjourn: Streeter
Seconded: Burnette
Meeting Adjourned at 7:23 p.m.

Minutes taken and prepared by Jeff Neel, Secretary

Input on Ypsilanti Township Park Hours

8 responses

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What safety issues do you face in your position with the current park hours?

8 responses

Being alone after dark in a park is my most concerning safety issue. There have been times when I have had park-goers become verbally combative with me when they are still in the park after closing, usually when we have to take pictures of license plates. Aside from the flashlight we have in the ranger truck and the ranger truck headlights, there is next to no lighting in the parks. At South Hydro park, people frequently have camp fires lit (against twp ordinance), always after dark. The walkway down to the grassy area is incredibly steep and narrow, not easily accessed during the day, much less in the dark. There is no way of knowing how many people are down there when its dark and the water noise from the damn makes it almost impossible to just yell down.

1. when closing parks after dark you run into all types of people. some that are cooperative and others that are not.
2. after dark sometimes you have people you can not locate.
3. when locking rest rooms you never know what you are going to find when you are the only one in the park.
4. Darkened out windows in cars.

Visitors have become more aggressive towards rangers when trying to enforce park rules, particularly in regards towards locking the gates. Gate closers are "expected" to wait for visitors to pack up their possessions or prep their boats for departure. Gate closers get paid to lock each park; they are not paid by the hour.

Just being in the parks well after dark and encountering a large group of patrons still in picnic areas or parking lot and they have been consuming alcohol or other substances and not respecting your request for them to exit park (taking their own good time)

I honestly feel like I don't have any safety issues in my position

one main issue would be that most of the time when closing parks it is dark.

The current park hours are nice. Opening at dawn isn't really much of an issue, maybe some cars and some boats waiting for us to open the gates, but those folks are always kind and understand that they have to wait for us. Never an issue, just want to be on the lake early I guess. As for closing, there are a good amount of issues, but it doesn't have much to do with the hours specifically. I will say if anything the 9pm closing helps. After working here last summer as well, people respond to the specific 9pm close a lot better than just "dusk". I would say it's usually smaller crowds still here after close compared to last year. That being said the safety issues I face with the park hours is that at close I deal with all sorts of people being irritable that I'm asking them to leave the park even though they closed 30 min. ago.

As a female gate closer/park ranger/Gate attendant I have faced SEVERAL safety issues with the current park hours.



Park goers literally have no respect for any of the staff, I have been cussed at, threatened, and yelled at all for just closing the gates. My safety has been in jeopardy several times.

IT'S DARK!!!! Finding people in the dark is hard, it's even more concerning when I have to get out of my car to close/open a gate. The surroundings are dark, you always have to keep an eye over your shoulder for people coming out of nowhere and you have to move extremely quickly.

On several occasion it has taken me over 2 hours to close all gates. Parks are always packed with people even after dark.

I have been screamed at and threatened for taking pictures of people's license plates while I was closing the park.

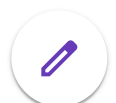
I have had people chase me down in their cars while closing the park.

I have caught several people having sex in their cars in several parking lots.

I have caught several people doing drugs in there car and I have even caught someone shooting up in the heritage bathroom before. Again, as I gate closer/park ranger I am expected to physically walk up to these people and tell them that they need to leave because the parks are closing.

I've had several people lining up for the gates to open. As I get out of my car I have people ambushing me complaining that I am wasting their valuable fishing time.

I've had to close down parties with 100s of people while it was just me closing down the park. It's literally 1 person vs 100 people. It's sketchy and scary.



How do you feel these safety issues could be corrected?

8 responses

Keeping rigid park closing times (9:00pm) helps visitors with rule clarity. I have had to lock in significantly fewer people this summer when the close time is 9:00 than last year when it was duck and changing every day. I have also encountered a large amount of visitors who do not speak/read English as their first language. While its not practical to put all of the signage in multiple languages, at least covering the major rules (park closing time, boat trailer parking only, etc.) in popular non-English (Arabic, Spanish) languages might help mitigate the issues. As far as the camp fires, more signage down on the fence or illuminated signage that can be read in the dark might help.

By closing parks at 9 PM you have a set time and most of the summer it is still light so you can see what is going on around you when closing.

The sheriffs department should issue fines to those locked in the parks. The judge should not be throwing out parking tickets just because the violator shows up to court. Basically, enforce the laws and ordinances already on the books.

Simple- make sure people know what time they are expected to be "Out of Park"
Also inform the public that there is No overnight camping or parking in the parks after closing. I have also encountered situation where people park their cars and then walk the trails and not returning at closing time. North Bay is the worst followed by Ford Heritage.

NA

Two way the issues could be fixed would be to make the closing times earlier and get a plug in spot light to be able to see people in the dark.

I think they could be corrected with the introduction of specific hourly closing times. As I already said I believe that the 9pm closing time helped compared to last season. The main points of confusion, noticeable to me, are that people are still unaware of the new closing time saying that that's not how it worked last year, or that that's not how they remembered it. By implementing it all year round I think it would help especially since we are not necessarily there all year round, the closers would still be helped by the times not varying between seasons.

The park absolutely needs set hours and the set hours need to be known. There needs to be a sign out in front of every park clearly stating the EXACT time the gates will open and close.

When I tell people the gates are closing they always say 1 of 2 things....

1. "Oh I didn't even know that the park closed"

Or

2. "I don't even know when dusk or dawn is"



Is there anything you feel the Park Commission can do to help with these issues?

7 responses

Setting park closing times to be rigid X in the summer and Y in the winter so there are less times for visitors and staff to keep track of.

make sure the public is informed that the parks close at 9pm and when renting out the shelters the person renting the shelter needs to be informed of closing time and that they are responsible to make sure the area is cleaned and everyone is out of the parks on time.

Place camera's at each gate to record incidences of violence or violations. This would give gate closers a sense of security.

I've said for years that we post large visible signage with definite opening and closing times for summer and winter hours. Also, have gate attendants pass out open/close time on card or sheet with each entrance into the park.

We should also remind boaters and ice fish people that they have to be out of park at closing time and not getting off water at closing time.

Therefore there wouldn't be any questions especially with closing time.

NA

I think one of the best things the Park Commission can do is to come down and actually see what its like trying to close several parks at night and realize that there wasn't a night this summer that I could start to close parks at 9pm and get home before 10pm. That aside, enforcing concrete times that the parks close would certainly help everyone manage their time better, especially between us and the public.

There needs to be direct hours for gates and direct hours for bathrooms.

There needs to be more lights throughout the parks.



Which parks are the easiest to close?

8 responses

Lake Side, Ford Heritage, Ford Lake

None they all have different types of people. I have locked people in every park all have been when i was not able to find them.

North Hydro Park. Visitors seem to be nicer and compliant. North Bay Park. Visitors are too far down into the park which allows the gate closer to lock up without interference.

Ford Heritage, Lakeside,

Lakeside, North Hydro and Loonfeather

Ford Lake Park- Since its the last park to be closed i almost never have someone to lock in.

I wouldn't say any of the parks are necessarily easy to close. Some parks, such as Ford Heritage Park and Lakeside Park usually don't have any issues, but depending on the night, whether it's soccer games at FHP or a birthday party at LSP, you can have a parking lot of cars that outwardly refuse to move.

Honestly it depends. You just never know what's going on at a park that day until you pull up. One day there might be a huge park at loon feather, and another day it might be completely empty. One day there could be a huge party at 2 parks and the rest could have a few stragglers. It literally just depends on the day. There honestly is never an easy night, there's always something going on.



Which parks are the hardest to close and why

8 responses

North Hydro - People are usually not paying attention to their time and often launch kayaks/canoes and travel down river to Bellville lake, EMU Boat Launch - there is no signage posted stating closing time or park rules, Loon Feather - people are usually down on the dock or having medium to large parties in the pavilions and we have to wait for them to clean up so they don't leave a mess or deal with them when they get angry they're getting locked in, North Bay - people walk down on the path where the ranger truck PA can't be heard and don't keep track of their time.

North hydro and north bay. People tend to come in late and go for walks or are fishing. A lot of the people from the area that use the parks are aware of the times and will park outside the park so they will not be locked in.

Ford Lake Park. Majority of visitors are men with a sense of entitlement. They are out on their boats all day drinking alcohol. When they return from the lake they believe they can take all the time they want to pack up regardless of the position of the sun or time of day. Loon Feather Park (which is appropriately named). Visitors do not care about rules. They openly carry alcohol and smoke drugs. The park is their toilet and litter trash with little regard for others.

North Bay- because of people parking and going out to island, Ford Lake- people out on water late during the summer and ice fishermen out on lake during the winter

Ford lake park because it has two different sides to it and has lake access to boats so people are always staying late their along with people who play basketball there and hang out with eachother once dark.

Also North Bay park because people are always in that park past dusk people of the walking trails

North Bay Park- most people that I have to lock in are out on the boardwalk until around 9:30 For almost all the parks people don't read the signs that we close at 9.

Ford Lake Park I would say is the absolute hardest, with the most shelters, and the boat dock. The boat dock and the guests that use it present the most issues, as they usually start to bring their boats up out of the water right at closing time keeping us much passed close, and usually arguing in some fashion. That being said even the folks who are courteous still do this on the regular. Loonfeather Park is notorious for having folks that don't follow the rules at the park. Luckily this summer has been a little better, maybe thanks to the 9pm closing time, but I know last summer there was never an easy night locking up.

I have the most problems at Ford and Northbay. The parks are huge and they're always busy. People hide in the weirdest places and people park their car in the strangest places.



If you have had a challenging or alarming thing happen at the park after closing, please explain what happened and how far after closing it was.

7 responses

people not recognizing the park closes at 9 and then taking their time when returning to their vehicles/packing up their belongings is challenging, especially when there are still other parks to close - usually happens within an hour after closing. Ground fires at South Hydro are always difficult to deal with and usually result in a call to the sheriff. These have been anywhere from 9 p.m to as late as midnight this year. At north bay this year, there was a party and shelter rental where they thought they rented for 8 hours instead of until 8pm, when I got there to close the park at 9:30, the parking lot was still full. I made the announcement and told several visitors they had a couple minutes before I had to lock the gates. After I locked the bathrooms, I started taking pictures of license plates and a group of about 10-15 people became incredibly hostile, yelling at me, calling me expletives, calling the sheriff and coming up to me. I called John Hines to explain to him what happened and then had to wait for the sheriff to get there to explain to them as well which set me back until about 9:50/10:00 and still had 5 parks to close.

Here is a few things over the summer.

1. North bay had a large shelter rental. Informed theme of closing time and that helped . At 9pm there was still 50 cars in lot and parked on side of entrance. Informed sheriff of the problem and we both arrived at 9:45pm . All but 8 cars gone but it was still after 10:10 PM before park could be locked up.
2. Have had to wait for boats to be loaded up so they could leave. Ford lake is the last park to close do to boaters .
3. Lake side have had cars parked in lot with darkened out windows so you cant see inside of cars and will not respond. So when you go to lock gates they speed past you.
4. darkened out windows are bad in all parks any time of day and park in back of parks most of the time will not respond.
5. Have had people walking or fishing in park after closing by walking in. Its just alarming when you see someone when you have already checked for cars.

Their were several incidents of abuse and threats. One particular incentive involved a single male, approximately 40 to 50 years of age. The sun set about 45 minutes ago and it was completely dark. I had locked the entrance gate to the Ford Lake Park, I was proceeding to lock up the bathrooms at Pavilion 1 when the man drove through the exit to enter the park. He parked at the tennis courts. I followed him and informed him that the park was closed and he needed to leave. He got hostile and demanded to know my name. I gave him my supervisor's name and showed him my badge. I went back to the exit and waited for the man to leave so I can lock up the exit to discourage others from driving through again. The man approach the gate and again got out of his vehicle. He was menacing and called me a fucking asshole among other choice names. I told him to leave the park. He drove through the gate and got out of his vehicle again. Same menacing language peppered with threats to my job. I locked the gate then called the police. The man drove away. I was so rattled that I didn't think to get his license plate. The police later told me that the man was there in the park that late at night because he wanted to set free a field mouse he had caught. Sounds reasonable (sarcasm).



Then there was the time I caught a man naked in Ford Lake Park molesting his car door. He was not aggressive and left the park peacefully.

The worst I've ever had was a drunk lady at Loonfeather who was refusing to get off the ground and get into a car with her party she was with and they kept asking me to help them (which I refused to) so I let the cops know and locked them in. Wasn't terribly bad

On one of my training days we had a jeep that got stuck in the grass at Ford Heritage Park. I also had a camper that jumped the curb at North Bay Park

There have been a handful of situations with guests that simply don't want to leave and usually choose getting in my face to me know that they won't be going anywhere. This usually leaves me to take pictures of license plates and lock them in, but once or twice I've had a situation where that feels too unsafe and I am left to call the sheriff for dispersal. It doesn't help that usually it's groups that stay way later than close for one reason or another, and I am vastly outnumbered. I don't consider myself intimidating, but I am a larger guy and realize that. That being said there are still situations I feel unsafe dealing with at these parks at 10pm or later. There was a specific time that I felt deeply uncomfortable dealing with when a car got stuck in mud at Ford Heritage Park, because it seemed a couple was looking for a more *private* place to park. When I found them half an hour after close the man approached me with a hatchet in his hand, walking up close to me as it's already dark in the park. I asked him to stay where he was and asked what was going on. He had it in his hand as he was using it to try to dig his car out, for some reason, and explained the situation. While I don't really care because I handled the situation and got a reasonable explanation for the ordeal, I feel that is the kind of situation I can't really be expected to deal with as a non-commissioned Park Ranger making less than I do at my full time job.

How long it takes you to close on a park just depends on the day. I've had days where it took me over an hour to close down a park (I always start closing at dusk).

(When I say after dark it means it was well past closing time by at least 30 mins) completely dark

The most alarming situation was at loon feather I had a guy walking around with a machete after dark.

At least in one park every night someone is approaching you, whether it's to yell at you for taking a picture of their license plate, or to tell you that they didn't know that the park closed, or to complain to you that the park shouldn't close (and so on) but still these people are approaching me in a dark situation and I am not allowed to use anything to protect myself. I just have to hope and pray that they're not dangerous or that they don't have anything dangerous on them.

As stated above, I have caught people having sex, doing drugs, and doing other very weird things in their car after dark at every park.

I have had several times where I've told people that parks were closing and they literally just



look at me and do nothing about it, so at that point I have to lock them in, and at that puts me in danger because it's one person locking in 50 people and people get extremely angry.

I have been ambushed at Parks for closing them.

Again, as stated above I have been tracked down, I've even had people waiting for me at the park the next day while I'm closing to yell and scream and threaten me for locking them in the night before.

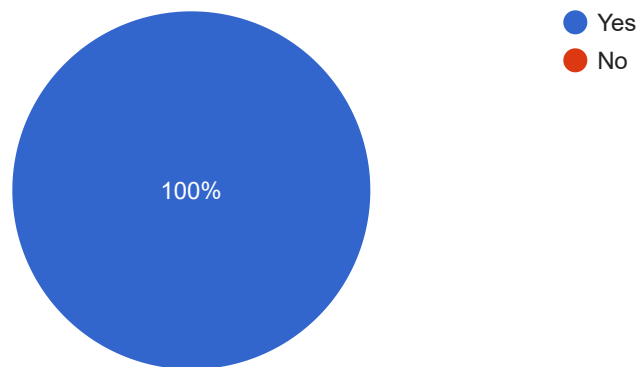
I have had to kick out several high people, people who were intoxicated, and people who are just mentally stable. Again, it's just me approaching them in the dark by myself after hours.

Consider that it gets dark at different times throughout the year. From November - February, the sun sets between 5 and 6:30p. In March (after day light savings starts), the sun sets around 8:00p and continues to set later until the summer solstice in July where the latest the sun sets is around 9:30p. After, day light shrinks. By the end of July, the sun is setting around 9. By the end of September, it sets around 7:30, and by the end of October, it sets around 6:30.



Should there be different park closing times throughout the year?

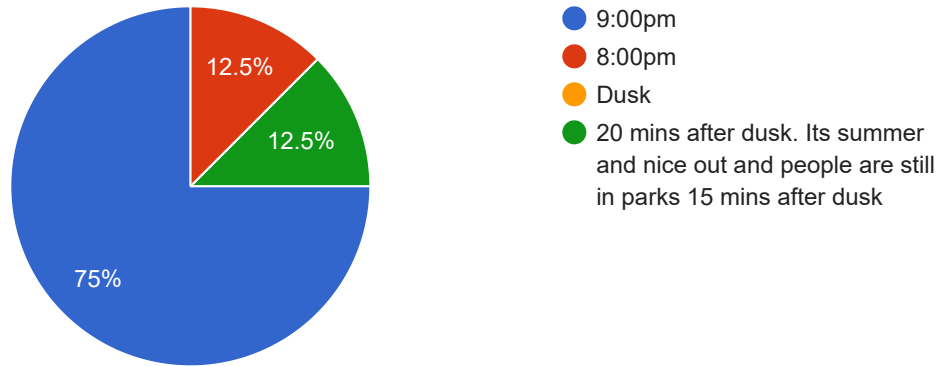
8 responses



When should the parks close in the summer?



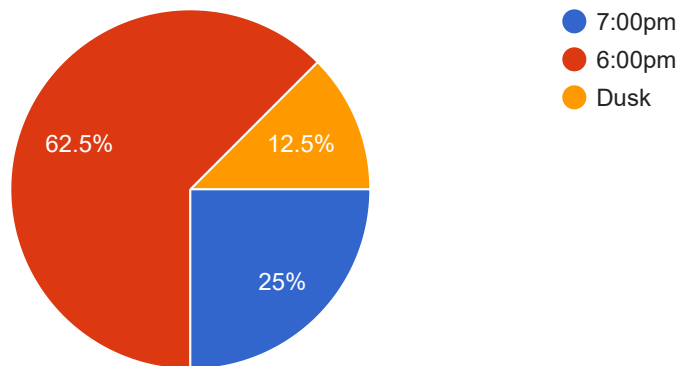
8 responses



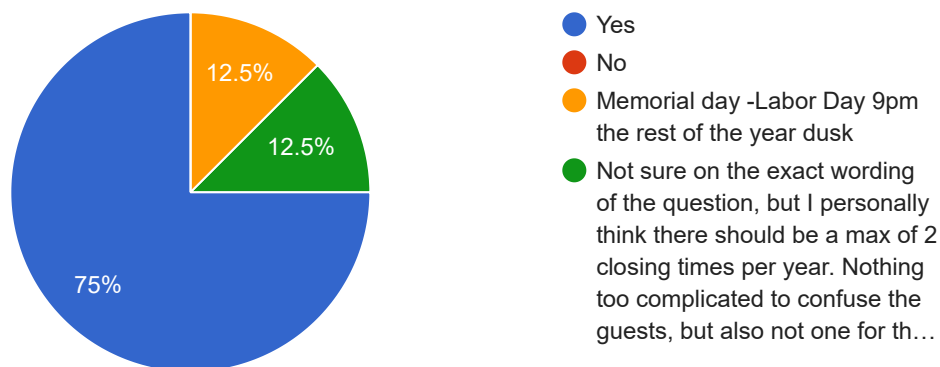
What time should the parks close in the winter?



8 responses

Should there be multiple closing times that change throughout the year?
(For example, Memorial Day - Labor Day hours, November - February hours, etc)

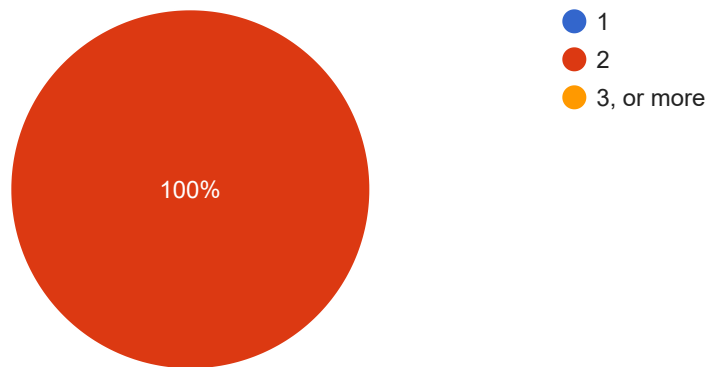
8 responses



How many closing options should there be?



7 responses



Is there anything else you would like to add?

7 responses

It will not mater what time you close or open the parks you will always have people that will not follow the rules and want to argue with the closing time. By having a set time it is harder for them to argue for 9pm is 9pm not 9:05pm.

The previous question is a bit vague.

We need to be consistent in our hours of operation. Remember, in the summer fishermen have a different opening/ closing mindset and in the winter, ice fishermen have a different mindset

I feel as if the closing times can not be any earlier than sunset. There are too many people that know gates get locked 15 mins after dusk. I think we would constantly be locking people in and then everyone we talk to it would be different than what they have been told in the past. Winter times parks are not busy so I think from like December 1st until end of February there should be set hours. 7-6 maybe?

another thing we write up the most is people parking in the boat lot at Ford Lake Park.

I think the "Dusk" option of a closing time is not the best option. I understand that we want people to be able to enjoy our parks as long as possible, me included as I would also like the option to enjoy the parks when I'm not working. This being said, it is a little too vague and lets guests "choose" what time they think dusk is as I have had conversations with guests last year about "sundown" vs "no more light in the sky".

I have met some really awesome people throughout the years working for the parks but the bad it definitely outweighs the good. I truly believe that visible set hours can at least safely help people understand that there is a closing time and that action will be taken if your car is in the park after that set closing time.



Google Forms

