

Proposal Response

Self-Service Kayak Rental Kiosk

Submitted by: **Stephanie & Ben Peters – Simply Paddle, LLC**

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Location

This proposal is for the **River Point District**. While both locations are viable, we believe River Point District offers the highest potential for impact due to its proximity to downtown, the SS Badger terminal, and new residential developments.

Stephanie & Ben Peters

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Ben and Steph Peters are a Manitowoc couple with a shared mission: to help more people see the city's natural beauty and recreational potential through ecotourism. Our idea for a kayak rental kiosk grew from years of conversation about how to connect residents and visitors more closely with the river that runs through the heart of Manitowoc. When we discovered a model that made access simple, safe, and self-guided, we knew we had found the perfect way to help Manitowoc residents and visitors experience our waterfront in a whole new way.

Steph, a Manitowoc native, returned home in 2020 to lead the Health Department and now serves as the YMCA's Director of Community Engagement, cultivating strong partnerships and local connections. Ben has lived in Manitowoc for over 20 years, raising two sons and sharing his passion for water recreation with others. His leadership roles at Americollect and now as Director of Impact Strategies at United Way of Manitowoc County have strengthened his connections throughout the city and his commitment to improving local quality of life.

Together, we combine strategic leadership, community connection, and a genuine love for the outdoors, qualities that will ensure this project is both functional and deeply meaningful for Manitowoc.

Project Approach

Our approach combines proven technology with hands-on community stewardship. We will install and operate an Outdoor Vending Solutions self-service kayak rental kiosk, a secure and solar-powered system designed for ease of use, low maintenance, and maximum safety. This kiosk model provides lockers for paddles and personal flotation devices (PFDs), racks for kayaks and paddleboards, and a touchscreen payment system that allows users to select equipment, sign waivers, and pay by credit card—all without needing an app or staff onsite. We will also serve as a recreational hub, offering various community programs tailored to both residents and tourists.

Operations Plan

We will work closely with the City of Manitowoc to finalize the precise kiosk location. Once approved, we will pour a concrete pad as the foundation for the rental kiosk, with all costs covered by us. Installation will occur in early spring of 2026, with operations beginning by May 2026.

The kiosk will feature:

- Equipment: Two tandem kayaks, four single sit-on kayaks, and two paddleboards.
- Safety Gear: U.S. Coast Guard approved PFDs and high-quality paddles stored securely in lockers.
- Seasonal Schedule: Rentals will be available daily during daylight hours from spring through fall.
- Energy Source: The kiosk will be fully solar powered. We would welcome the opportunity to utilize existing storage space at Manitou Park for winter storage, providing our own transportation and labor. If that space is unavailable, we will store all equipment offsite at our expense.

All customers must sign a digital liability waiver prior to renting equipment. This includes a commitment to wearing the provided PFD at all times while on the water. The primary renter must be 18 years or older.

Customer Service Plan

Even though the kiosk operates unattended, our customer service model will ensure immediate, responsive support.

- A 24/7 phone number will be clearly displayed at the kiosk.
- We will have remote access to the kiosk to assist users in real time, including unlocking equipment, processing payments, and handling reimbursements.
- All inquiries or incidents will be logged, tracked, and resolved promptly.

Through this hybrid of automation and personal support, renters will have confidence that help is always available.

Maintenance Strategy

We are committed to maintaining an operation that reflects pride in Manitowoc and respect for its public spaces.

- Weekly Cleaning and Inspection: All kayaks, paddleboards, paddles, and PFDs will be checked for damage, cleaned, and sanitized.
- Ongoing Monitoring: The kiosk's automated system tracks door and equipment usage to ensure everything is properly returned and secured.
- Annual Maintenance: Before each rental season, equipment will undergo a full inspection and service.
- Aesthetic Upkeep: The kiosk exterior will be kept clean and attractive, reflecting positively on the River Point site.

Safety and Signage

Safety and education are central to our approach. We will:

- Install clear signage warning that these are not sea kayaks and that renters should remain within the harbor.
- Integrate City of Manitowoc Water Trail signage, identifying paddling routes, distances, and approximate times right at the rental kiosk.
- Provide this same information online at our project website, ensuring visitors can plan their route before arrival.

Community and Marketing Strategy

Our kiosk will serve both residents and visitors, supported by strong local marketing and community engagement.

Marketing Channels:

- Collaborations with Visit Manitowoc, the SS Badger, local motels and vacation rentals, and downtown businesses.
- Cross-promotion through digital and print materials that highlight the opportunity to paddle a two-mile section of the Ice Age Trail directly from Manitowoc's waterfront.
- Presence on our own website and social media featuring trail maps, local attractions, and safety information.

Community Engagement:

- Special Events: Singles mixers, *Paddles & Pints* at Petskull Brewing, family paddles, homeschool outings, and business team-building events.
- Equity Access: Collaborations with Big Brothers Big Sisters and foster care programs to provide free or reduced-cost kayak experiences for children and families who otherwise might not have access.

Our familiarity with the Manitowoc community, combined with our networks across local agencies, businesses, and nonprofits, will allow us to create events and partnerships that go far beyond a typical self-rental operation.

Type/Brand of Equipment

- **Kiosk System:** Outdoor Vending Solutions 8-kayak unattended kiosk.
- **Watercraft, Paddles, and Safety Gear:** See **Appendix A. Equipment Specification Sheet: Kayak and SUP Fleet Procurement**

Technology Overview: Self-Serve Kiosk System

Our proposal centers on utilizing a proven, high-durability, self-contained kiosk system manufactured by Outdoor Vending Solutions. This system is specifically designed for unattended, seasonal outdoor operation, ensuring high reliability and a seamless user experience for the City of Manitowoc.

1. Kiosk Architecture and Equipment Housing

The rental station is a modular, all-steel construction designed for maximum security and ease of setup.

- **Physical Structure:** The system comprises two main components:
 - **Locker Module:** Houses all Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), including Personal Flotation Devices (PFDs) and paddles. The lockers are approximately 15 inches wide and 2 feet deep.
 - **Rack System:** Securely locks the kayaks and paddleboards (SUPs). Each module is 5 feet wide and 4 feet deep.
- **Installation:** The unit arrives assembled and palletized. It is designed to handle uneven surfaces and does not require a concrete pad, allowing for low-impact installation at River Point parkland space. We are happy to include a concrete pad if the city prefers, and have included this in our proposal.
- **Security:** Equipment is secured using electronic locks tied to the central vending system. The machine verifies the proper return of all items before completing the transaction, including ensuring the locker door is closed and the watercraft is locked in correctly.

2. Digital User Experience and Transaction Flow

The system guides the customer through the rental process using a simple, intuitive touch-screen interface.

Step	User Action	System Response & Requirement
1. Waiver Acknowledgment	Customer taps to begin.	Customer must agree to all liability waivers displayed on the touch screen before proceeding.
2. Selection	Customer selects watercraft type (single/tandem kayak or SUP) and rental duration (hours).	Prices and total cost are dynamically displayed.
3. Payment	Customer swipes credit card or uses contactless payment (Apple Pay, Google Pay).	Payment is processed via the Cantaloupe processor. The system currently supports Credit Cards, Apple Pay, and Google Pay.
4. Equipment Release	Transaction is confirmed.	The locker door for the PFD/Paddles opens, and the selected watercraft is electronically unlocked from the rack.
5. Equipment Return	Customer swipes the same card.	The machine matches the last four digits, re-opens the locker, and unlocks the watercraft space for return.
6. Finalization	Customer locks equipment, closes door.	The machine computes the final duration, applies up-charges if necessary for overages, and completes the rental.

3. Power, Connectivity, and Remote Operation

The system's infrastructure is built for reliability in remote settings.

- **Connectivity:** The kiosks utilize a 4G secure and encrypted telemetry system designed to automatically find the strongest cell signal in the area (Verizon or AT&T).
- **Power Option:** We propose the Solar Power Option (at a cost of \$900) to ensure placement flexibility and environmental sustainability, which works reliably in the Manitowoc region from April through October. The system can also be switched to an AC power unit if needed.
- **Safety Compliance:** The machine is electronically programmed to comply with safe boating regulations by automatically shutting off vending between the hours of dusk and dawn. The operator can also remotely shut down the machine in the event of inclement weather.
- **Remote Control:** A secondary router and cradle points allow our fleet vendor to **remotely take control of the machine** via computer or smartphone to troubleshoot, reopen lockers (for forgotten items), or manually return equipment, ensuring high-quality, efficient customer service.
- **Warranty:** The entire system is covered by a 3-year warranty, with spare materials provided to minimize maintenance delays.



Implementation Timeline

Milestone	Date
Agreement Finalization	December 2025
Site Preparation & Installation	April 2026
Launch	May 2026
Initial Program Evaluation	October 2026

Fee / Revenue Model

Public Rental Rates

We will offer family-friendly, competitive pricing designed to ensure accessibility for local residents while remaining consistent with other kayak and paddleboard rental operations in the region.

Equipment Type	Base Price	Additional Hour
Single Sit-On Kayak	\$25 (for 2 hours)	\$10/hr after
Paddleboard (SUP)	\$25 (for 2 hours)	\$10/hr after
Tandem Kayak	\$30 (for 2 hours)	\$10/hr after

These rates are intentionally set to be affordable for families and competitive within the Northeast Wisconsin region, ensuring Manitowoc residents and visitors have accessible access to the water.

Regional Pricing Comparisons

City	Provider / Model	Rates
Sheboygan	Sheboygan Quarry Beach & Park (staffed rental)	Single kayak \$15/hr; tandem \$18/hr; SUP \$15/hr
Green Bay	Rent.Fun self-serve kayak kiosk	Kayak \$12.50/hr
Appleton	Rent.Fun self-serve kiosk (RiverHeath)	Kayak \$20 for 2 hours (~\$10/hr)
Green Bay area	Hang Loose Rentals (staffed mobile rental)	Kayak \$15 for 1 hr, \$20 for 2 hrs, \$30 for 3 hrs

These examples demonstrate that our proposed rates fall within or just above regional averages, aligning with Manitowoc's market as a waterfront community and tourism destination. Our pricing balances affordability for residents with sustainability for long-term operation and maintenance.

City of Manitowoc Partnership Model

This project will be 100% self-financed by Stephanie and Ben Peters. We will assume full responsibility for installation, insurance, maintenance, operations, and programming. To ensure mutual benefit, we propose a revenue-sharing model that is simple, transparent, and beneficial to both parties.

Revenue-Sharing Structure

- The City will receive 10% of gross rental revenue from all kiosk transactions, remitted at the end of each operating season.
- Based on projected use (175-250 rentals per season), this would yield approximately \$450-\$670 annually for the City in Year 1.
- As participation grows through marketing, tourism, and community events, City revenue will increase proportionally.

Administrative Simplicity

Our revenue-sharing model is intentionally low-maintenance for City staff.

- We will provide a season-end financial summary showing total rentals, gross revenue, and the corresponding 10% City share.
- We will handle all customer service, equipment maintenance, and programming coordination, eliminating the need for Parks & Recreation staff involvement.

This arrangement ensures the City benefits from new recreational access and revenue without assuming operational or financial risk.

City Requirements

We request a site license or permit from the City of Manitowoc to place and operate one solar-powered self-service kayak kiosk at the selected location, with City approval of exact placement, aesthetics, and signage.

The City would provide:

- Site authorization and coordination: Approval for kiosk location, concrete pad installation, and signage review.
- Grounds maintenance: Routine mowing and landscaping around the kiosk as part of regular park maintenance.
- Launch and dock maintenance: Continued maintenance of the public launch and dock to ensure safe, accessible operation.
- Promotion and wayfinding: Inclusion of the kiosk in City and Visit Manitowoc listings, a link on the Parks & Recreation webpage, and permission to install small wayfinding signs guiding visitors from parking areas to the launch site.
- Security support: Inclusion of the kiosk area in routine Parks & Recreation or public safety patrols, if applicable.
- Single point of contact: A designated City staff member to coordinate any operational questions, seasonal reviews, or scheduling for City programming use.
- Winter storage (if available): Optional storage space at Manitou Park. We would handle transportation, labor, and insurance for all stored equipment.

The following would remain the responsibility of the kiosk operators:

- Pouring and paying for the concrete pad foundation and any required permits.
- We will obtain and maintain Commercial General Liability Insurance meeting the coverage limits required by the City of Manitowoc. The policy will name the City of Manitowoc as an additional insured. Fabricating and maintaining all safety, instructional, and wayfinding signage.
- Managing all customer service, maintenance, programming, and financial reporting.
- Providing the City's 10% revenue share and an annual summary report of rentals, community events, and maintenance.

References

While this project represents our first direct venture into operating a self-service kayak kiosk, our professional backgrounds include extensive experience managing community programs, partnerships, and facilities that require safety oversight, scheduling, and public accountability. The following professional references can attest to our ability to successfully implement and sustain projects of this scope and community importance.

Name	Title & Organization	Relationship	Contact Information
Julie Grossman	CEO, Manitowoc-Two Rivers YMCA	Stephanie's direct supervisor; can speak to her leadership, project management, and community engagement experience	jgrossman@mtrymca.org 920-482-1512
Ashley Bender	Executive Director, United Way of Manitowoc County	Ben's direct supervisor; can speak to his operational management, partnership building, and program oversight experience	ashley@unitedwaymanitowoccounty.org 920-374-4361

Name	Title & Organization	Relationship	Contact Information
Bob Ziegelbauer	Manitowoc County Executive	Stephanie's former supervisor during her tenure as Health Officer; can speak to her leadership, accountability, and ability to manage complex public initiatives	bobziegelbauer@co.manitowoc.wi.us 920-683-5107

These references, while not connected to prior kayak or small-business operations, reflect our consistent professional record of managing complex, public-facing projects that emphasize safety, reliability, and positive community impact. Each can speak directly to our readiness to launch and sustain this project with the same professionalism, accountability, and community-minded approach demonstrated throughout our careers.

Proof of Insurance

We will provide a **Certificate of Liability Insurance** meeting all City requirements upon selection and prior to installation.

Appendix A. Equipment Specification Sheet: Kayak and SUP Fleet Procurement

Section 1: Fleet Summary

Model	Classification	Quantity	Max Passenger Capacity
Perception Tribe 9.5	Solo Sit-on-Top	4	1 Adult
Perception Tribe 13.5	Tandem Sit-on-Top	2	2 Adults + 1 Child/Pet
iRocker Blackfin Model X	All-Around Inflatable SUP	2	1 Adult (up to 485 lbs)
Total Fleet		8	10 - 12

Section 2: Detailed Product Specifications (Kayaks)

- The Perception Tribe series is selected for its superior stability, user-friendliness for beginners, and robust rotomolded polyethylene construction, ensuring longevity and minimal maintenance in a high-turnover rental environment. Both models feature a sit-on-top (SOT) design, which is inherently self-bailing and easy for users to re-board.

2.1. Perception Tribe 9.5 (Solo Kayak)

Specification	Metrics	Operational Justification
Paddler Capacity	1 Adult	Ideal for single renters; shorter length provides excellent maneuverability.
Length	9' 5"	Short and compact; easy to transport and store.
Width	31.5"	Wide beam provides maximum primary stability for novice paddlers.
Boat Weight (Dry)	48.5 lbs	Lightweight enough for single staff or renter to handle.
Maximum Capacity	300 lbs	High capacity accommodates a wide range of body types.
Hull Design	SOT	Self-bailing scupper holes (water drains automatically), making it safe and easy to maintain.
Key Feature 1	Adjustable Framed Seatback	Improved comfort for longer rentals, adjustable for all heights.
Key Feature 2	Stackable Design	Critical for efficient storage and reduced footprint on-site.
Best Use Environment	Flatwater, Slow Rivers, Light Ocean/Surf	High versatility increases rental appeal.

2.2. Perception Tribe 13.5 (Tandem Kayak)

Specification	Metrics	Operational Justification
Paddler Capacity	2 Adults	Caters to couples and families
Length	13' 5"	Sufficient length for tandem tracking and speed.
Width	34"	Extra width ensures superior stability for two or three occupants.
Boat Weight (Dry)	79 lbs	Standard weight for durable tandem SOT; requires two people for lifting.
Maximum Capacity	500 lbs	Extremely high capacity safely handles two adults and necessary gear.
Hull Design	SOT	Self-bailing design is safe and preferred for rental use.
Key Feature 1	Two Adjustable Framed Seatbacks	Provides maximum comfort and support for both paddlers.
Best Use Environment	Flatwater, Slow Rivers	Excellent stability makes it confidence-inspiring for inexperienced pairs.

Section 3: Detailed Product Specifications (Stand Up Paddleboards - SUPs)

- The iRocker Blackfin Model X is an inflatable SUP (iSUP) selected for its industry-leading width, providing maximum stability for novice users. The multi-layer PVC construction ensures high impact resistance and longevity, ideal for rental fleets.

3.1. iRocker Blackfin Model X (Solo All-Around SUP)

Specification	Metrics	Operational Justification
Paddler Capacity	1 Adult	Highly stable, perfect for individual beginners.
Length	10' 6"	All-around length provides good tracking and maneuverability.
Width	35"	Crucial: Industry-leading width for maximum lateral stability; virtually tip-proof for beginners.
Thickness	6"	6" thick boards are far more rigid and support higher weight than thinner boards.
Boat Weight (Dry)	27 lbs	Lightweight iSUP, easy to carry (deflated or inflated).
Maximum Capacity	485 lbs	Very high capacity, can easily accommodate larger users or a parent/child combination.
Hull Design	iSUP	Multi-layer, military-grade PVC construction offers superior durability and ding-resistance in a rental environment.

Key Feature 1	Full-length EVA Deck Pad	Provides maximum grip and comfort over the entire standing area.
Key Feature 2	Multiple D-Rings/Mounts	Allows for tie-downs (cargo, cooler) and optional seat conversion.
Best Use Environment	Flatwater, Mild Chop, Slow Rivers	Exceptional stability in diverse conditions, building user confidence.

Section 4: Accessory Requirements (Excluding Kayaks & SUPs)

Item	Quantity
Paddles (Kayaks - Aluminum/Fiberglass)	8
Paddles (SUP - 3pc Adjustable)	2
PFDs (Life Jackets) (Adult Universal)	14
PFDs (Life Jackets) (Youth)	2
SUP Coiled Leashes (Safety Feature)	2
Whistles / Safety Kits	6

Conclusion

Our vision for Simply Paddle is rooted in community pride - creating more ways for people to fall in love with Manitowoc's riverfront and discover the beauty that surrounds us. With the City's partnership, we can make the waterfront a vibrant and accessible space that reflects the spirit of Manitowoc: welcoming, innovative, and connected to nature.

We appreciate your time and consideration, and we're eager to bring this project to life.