

## SUPERINTENDENT'S JANUARY 2025 REPORT

### COMMUNICATIONS TO BOARD OF PARK COMMISSIONERS

#### Park Superintendent's Monthly Report Summary

Happy New Year! The weather was not as cooperative in the latter half of December as it was at the beginning. This meant we really didn't have sledding, skating, and skiing for winter break this year again. The first half of January looks promising for ice with temperatures forecast below 20 degrees most days. Not a lot of snow in the forecast, so we will have to keep the sledding and skiing opportunities at bay for a bit longer. Of course, the weather does occasionally change, and we may get a foot of great powder on the 10<sup>th</sup>.

As we start 2025, we have a goal on delivering the best possible park system for everyone. We have many tasks to deliver on that goal. As the Commission is aware, there are many competing priorities that could be tackled. We are excited to continue our work planning efforts to establish clearer prioritization for the staff team to ensure we are supporting and diligently working on key initiatives. For 2025, I'm excited to see the team continue our work on sustainable land management, the Parks Equity in Action Plan, the transformation of the Golf Enterprise, growing and sustaining Olbrich Gardens, and other keys as well. I'm also very happy that we are working to instill in our work plan a focus on Communications, Strategic Planning, and Systems Efficiencies. These strategic framework elements are crucial to ensuring that we are evolving and moving forward with intention. We will be presenting more on our work plan in the next couple of months, but it is very exciting to start the year with such a strong plan and team to execute it.

Believe it or not, we are now starting to prepare for the Spring! Parts and equipment orders are being worked on, mowing routes and updates being completed, and working to ensure we have all the talented team members needed to make it all happen. We are actively working with Human Resources to prepare postings of seasonal employment opportunities for lots of positions (and some permanent ones as well). All positions with Parks get posted on the [City's job website](#). We always appreciate everyone sharing the many opportunities to join Team City!

#### Future Commission Items

- Pay to Park in Parks Pilot – Finance Committee [Amendment #2](#) passed and was included in the Operating Budget that the Council Adopted in November. The amendment creates a Pay to Park in Parks Pilot program. An amendment has been introduced to eliminate the pilot program from the Budget. This would create a \$23,900 budgetary gap that the Parks Division would be expected to manage internally. This amendment failed at the Finance Committee on December 2<sup>nd</sup>. The Council considered the amendment to remove the program from the budget on December 10<sup>th</sup>, but the vote failed 14-1. Given it was a budget amendment, it requires 15 votes to be adopted. There is a high likelihood that reconsideration of this item will occur at the first meeting in January. Until there is clarity regarding the outcome of this potential amendment, staff will not be working on this further. I would expect an update to the Commission again on this in February.
- 2025 Division Workplan – The Management Team is finalizing our primary work plan items for the year and corresponding milestones. It is our hope to provide an update to the Commission in February or March.
- Alcohol in Parks – Council President Figueroa Cole has requested that we provide a briefing on the regulation of Alcohol in Parks. Staff is working to assemble historical information as well as current data on this issue. This is taking a little longer than originally planned as we did lose some significant institutional knowledge when former Ranger Supervisor Vroman left the City. We do anticipate providing this report in February.

- Marshall Houses – Parks staff continues to work with Real Estate and the City Attorney’s Office to engage with the property owners of the historic homes in Marshall Park. The goal is to bring an update and potential options for moving forward to the Commission in the next couple of months.
- POSP Update – Parks staff is planning to provide an update on the POSP progress to the full BPC in February or March. The LRP subcommittee has been working diligently on this over the past six months. Staff have been working with the LRP to ensure the first draft is well organized and covers all of the material that ought to be included.
- Olin Houses – Staff are working on a management plan for the Olin Houses as we acquire them. We own three of the houses at this point and would like to have a management strategy in place moving forward. The current plan on the three is working towards demolition on one home, extending the lease on a second, and evaluating options with Real Estate on the third. We do anticipate buying more of these and it would be good to begin developing the plan for holding strategy.

### Personnel Updates

#### Promotions/Hires:

Donna Borowski was hired as a consultant at Olbrich Gardens to assist with the transition as Patti Jorenby (Program Assistant) retires. Donna started on December 9, 2024

#### Departures:

Patti Jorenby will retire from Olbrich Gardens as a Program Assistant on January 6, 2025. Patti worked for the city for 34 years.

Karen Rudolph will retire from Forest Hill Cemetery as a Program Assistant on January 2, 2025. Karen worked for the city for 34 years.

## **Section Updates**

### **Parks Operations**

#### **Central:**

- Prepared and maintained ice rinks at Vilas and Goodman.
- Performed tree pruning in select parks.
- Ecology team performed brush clearing projects at Orlando Bell, Hiestand and Kingston-Onyx parks.
- Led prescribed burns at Demetral, Reindahl and Elver parks.

#### **Conservation:**

- Snow on December 19 allowed staff to roll ski trails at Door Creek Park and Odana Golf Course. Thanks to MadNorSki volunteers for grooming Elver that weekend.
- The Operation Fresh Start crew worked on removing the overgrown woody understory from the point at Turville Point. They also removed invasive shrubs and trees from Heritage Heights Park, adjacent to Heritage Sanctuary.
- Volunteers removed invasive shrubs from Cherokee Marsh Mendota Unit and Owen and worked to reduce downed woody debris at Prairie Ridge.

## **Construction:**

- Completed the “nature play” playground project at Olbrich Park.
- Used a rental excavator to “turn over” stump grubbing piles, haul recycled compost to Wild Waters and unclog the 2 main drainage way culverts for better flow.
- Hauled away old compost piles to make room for future improvements.

## **East:**

- Removed and recycled decommissioned unsafe soccer goals from parks.
- Whole crew removed leaf contaminated ice at Tenney Hockey to allow for smooth ice conditions.
- Parks Arborists began work on removals at Hoyt Park and removals near Olbrich ice rinks.

## **Facilities:**

- The new Door Creek Park shelter was nearing completion with an occupancy date in January.
- A bid was accepted for the Hoover Boathouse renovations in James Madison Park, which includes refurbishing the wood siding, new windows, new doors, and painting the entire building.
- Automatic door locks were installed on the Lake Edge Park shelter.

## **Mall:**

- Prepared machines for snow removal, including salt calibrations.
- Performed minor snow removal, tree pruning and routine services.
- Installed downtown holiday decor including evergreen bough displays, holiday lights, and installed BID’s snowflake lights

## **West:**

- Installed general and hockey ice rinks including support of 5 adopt an ice locations.
- Refreshed playground mulch in numerous parks.
- Forest Hill staff completed leaf cleanup for the season.

## **Community Services – Terrence Thompson**

### **Community Events (Kelly Post)**

- The Community Event team will host the 2nd annual Event Safety Symposium on January 9, 2025, at the Olin Lakeside offices. The symposium is put on by the City of Madison Fire Department, Police Department, and Parks Division. The purpose of the symposium is to provide event safety information and tools to local event organizers to help them plan and operate events with a strong emphasis on safety.
  - We are excited to have two keynote speakers this year: Waukesha Police Chief Thompson (who will discuss the 2021 Waukesha Parade tragedy) and Tim Halbach of the National Weather Service (who will give an overview of NWS severe weather monitoring and advice for outdoor public events).
- Updates to MGO 10.056—Street Use Permit will be on the January 14, 2025, Common Council agenda. These updates are intended to create a more efficient and flexible permitting process for City staff and event organizers.
- The City of Madison Special Event websites have been updated for 2025, except for the Street Use permit website. All forms and pages have been updated with any necessary changes. We will update the Street Use website if the Common Council approves the updates to MGO 10.056.

## **Parks Alive (Debra Alleyne)**

### **Parks Alive 2025 Preparations**

- The preparations for Parks Alive 2025 continue to take shape. Some programming changes are being made to accommodate 2 new NRT groups (Sandberg & Milwaukee St) and subsequent parks that will be added to the roster making it 11 park locations. We have selected merchandise that will encourage physical activity and play in the parks as we have done in previous years with jump ropes and kites. The Parks Alive events will be distributed as follows:
  - There will be one event per park per month for June, July, and August. This will prevent events from being clustered too closely together at the beginning or end of the summer and give residents equal chances to get together throughout the summer.
  - The events will take place from 5pm-7pm. This time shift works better for our partners and NRT support staff, who usually get approved for 2 hours of work time. It also coincides with films that usually start at 6:30pm that redirects attention away from activities.
  - We plan to theme and cluster similar activity types to create a curated, varied experience for participants, which also helps to take the strain off partners to show up to all 36 events.

## **Customer Service (Joanne Austin)**

### **Annual Permit Update**

- Permit sales for 2025 began on November 1, 2024. A new automated email notification was sent to disc golf, dog, and cross-country ski annual permit holders reminding them their current permit would soon expire (12/31/24). In early February 2025, we will send another automated email to lake access permit holders with the same message (lake permits expire 3/31/25). Thus far, we've sold 840 permits (268 disc golf, 191 dog, 60 lake, and 323 cross-country ski). Customers call or stop in at the Parks Lakeside Office for assistance, but most purchase online, and we mail their permits as quickly as possible.

### **Athletic Reservations**

- The transition to using RecTrac software for athletic reservations has been great. We sent our Our Qualifying Discounts Program survey to all 2024 athletic reservation contacts. The surveys are due January 3. We'll analyze the results to determine the most appropriate percentage off discounts we'll offer for the 2025 season. This discount program has been a work in progress, and our goal is to provide equitable discounted rates for everyone who reserves athletic spaces in Madison parks. Groups with agreements with Madison Parks will soon be entering their reservations for 2025, with public users able to request reservations starting mid-February.

## **Recreation Services & Aquatics (Tracey Hartley & Shane Martin)**

### **Winter Recreation**

- The early season snow weather allowed all cross-country ski sites to be open for 6 days. The snow allowed Elver and Odana Hills to be staffed. Elver was open on December 25 and Vilas was open on December 26 for skate rentals. With the cold stretch of weather, we anticipate all skate sites and shelters will be open for the public to rent equipment and purchase concessions.
  - The early season snow and cold temperatures allowed Elver and Odana Hills to be open on December 21 and 22.
  - Good ice at Elver and Vilas allowed them to be on December 25 and 26.
  - With the stretch of below-freezing weather, winter skating locations Elver, Tenney, and Vilas will be open for rentals and concessions.
  - Ski, Snowshoes, and Point of Sale equipment have been purchased, received, and for the anticipated Door Creek shelter opening.

## **Aquatics**

- The Request To Fill for Lifeguards has been submitted, and the job posting will be up this month.

## **Rangers & Volunteers**

### **Rangers (Steve Dray)**

#### **Disc Golf Update**

- Hiestand Disc Golf Course remains open for the winter 2024-2025 season. Fortunately, despite the fluctuating temperatures, we have only had to close it for a few days.

#### **Community Outreach**

- Rangers continue to contact individuals needing shelter during the winter. We have made multiple contacts and referred them to our community partners, who work to find them housing.

#### **Enforcement Contacts**

- Rangers have made 15 enforcement contacts, resulting in 6 warnings and 9 citations. Furthermore, 4 parking tickets were issued in December.

#### **Information Technology Update**

- A new version of SharePoint was rolled out in early December. The Rangers have been diligently updating and migrating all of our information to the new system. This upgrade is significant and will help us perform our jobs more efficiently and effectively.

### **Volunteers (John Weichert)**

#### **Volunteer Events**

- Volunteer Appreciation Event: We successfully hosted this event on December 5, 2024 at the Lakeside offices board room, with 47 attendees out of 70 RSVPs. The taco bar, catered by Hy-Vee, received positive feedback, and everyone enjoyed the evening. For future events, we suggest adding a fun game or icebreaker, offering more giveaways, and considering a larger venue.

#### **Volunteer Program Development**

- Flower Gardening Program: We finalized the plant ordering menu with the self-directed volunteer gardening team. The ordering process will begin in February, with pickup scheduled for May 14.

#### **Volunteer Management Website**

- We are continuing to enhance the Get Connected platform by focusing on:
  - Drafting a foundational waiver.
  - Planning for volunteer profile creation and interest-based opportunity searches.
  - Preparing for the Earth Day 2025 rollout.

### **Warner Park Community Recreation Center (Zach Watson)**

- WPCRC Expansion Update – Steel delivery for the expansion project is still delayed due to the review process coming in later than anticipated. The project schedule cannot be reworked to accommodate the delay until a confirmed date of when the steel will be delivered. Construction will move inside the building to begin the Men's and Women's Locker Room/bathroom remodel and the fitness center relocation.
- The 25th Annual WPCRC Holiday Fest Arts and Crafts Show was hosted on Saturday, December 7th, 2024, from 9:00am-3:00pm. We welcomed over 80 vendors and nearly 1,200 visitors through our doors. After the expansion of the building is complete, we plan to expand the Arts and Craft shows into the new space.