



Madison Parks Division

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**MADISON
PARKS**

DATE: March 20, 2026

TO: Mayor, All Alders, and Board of Park Commissioners

FROM: CJ Ryan, Assistant Parks Superintendent *CJR*

SUBJECT: Steve Stricker American Family Insurance Foundation Agreement for the Use of Cherokee Marsh Conservation Park, North Unit Parking Lots and Driveway

Dear Mayor, Alders, and Commissioners,

The Parks Division has submitted an agreement with the Steve Stricker American Family Insurance Foundation that was introduced at the February 24, 2026 Common Council Meeting (Leg File #[92019](#)). The Board of Park Commissioners considered the request at their March 11, 2026. There were 9 registered speakers, 2 in support, 6 in opposition, 1 neither in support nor opposition. The Board of Park Commissioners unanimously recommended approval of the request to be considered by Common Council.

Background

TPC Wisconsin, which is privately owned and adjacent to the Cherokee Marsh Conservation Park, will again be hosting the American Family Insurance Championship. This event was first held at TPC Wisconsin on June 2-8, 2025. The event not only provides a playing venue for PGA Tour Champions who are 50 and older, but it provides entertainment for the community, economic benefit through tourism and support to numerous local charities each year.

At the request of the Board of Park Commissioners, Parks staff and the Steve Stricker Foundation staff presented findings from the debrief that followed the 2025 event (Legislative File #[89750](#)). Outcomes from the debrief included encouraging earlier planning and coordination with City staff, earlier communication with the public about the impacts to the park and neighborhood, that restriction of traffic to non-residents north of Wheeler Road should continue, and a request to evaluate if park access by vehicle needs to be closed all week. Parks staff also noted that the area of Cherokee Park used by the Foundation was treated with respect and there was no damage to the property. Changes in the proposed 2026 agreement in response to this feedback include opening vehicle access to the park at the end of each event day, and the event communication plan will be established earlier.

Proposed 2026 Event

The annual PGA Tour will bring thousands of people to the north side of Madison, including players, staff, and spectators, during the event from June 1 – 7, 2026. During the weekend events, Friday to Sunday, between ten and twenty thousand public spectators are expected to attend each day. With this influx of people, ensuring a safe event for residents, event attendees, and park users is top priority. There will undoubtedly be a significant impact on the neighborhood, in both positive and negative ways.

Like last year, in order ensure the safety of event goers and residents, North Sherman Avenue, north of Wheeler, will be closed to vehicles except for resident, event, and City vehicles, effectively closing all vehicular access to the park. Events are typically not granted permits in conservation parks. Due to the unique nature of the vehicular access being closed, the Parks Division is proposing allowing the event organizers to utilize the parking lots off North Sherman Road, requiring that pedestrian and bicycle access be maintained throughout the event in a coordinated fashion, and that the organizer pay a fee that will bring revenue to the park system to support the conservation park. The Parks Division does not support the idea of regularly allowing the use of conservation parks for special events.

Addressing Accessibility Concerns

The question of access to the parking lot by park users with ADA placards was raised at the Board of Park Commissioners meeting on March 11, 2026. On March 17, 2026, the event organizers met with the City's Street Use staff team to review transportation impacts, emergency and safety plans, impacts to the bus system, and other logistical impacts. The Street Use Staff Team also explored the idea of allowing vehicles with ADA placards to access the North Lot. Due to the high volume of people expected to attend Friday through Sunday and the risks of vehicles near crowds, the Street Use Staff Team would not allow any non-event or non-City vehicles during that time. However, this could be allowed on Monday through Thursday as the crowd volumes are lower. The event organizers will coordinate with Madison Police Department to create a system that allows vehicles with ADA placards to access the North Lot and will reserve parking spaces for these users to access the park.

Proposed Future 2027 Event

The PGA Tour typically hosts golf events at the same course three years in a row. Since the American Family Insurance Championship will be hosted at the TPC Golf Course in 2026 and 2027, the Parks Division is suggesting a two-year agreement. The proposed agreement includes a requirement that renewal of the agreement from 2026 to 2027 must be approved by the Park Commission for it to be effective for the 2027 event. Consistent with 2025, event organizers have committed to holding a debrief meeting with the Board of Park Commissioners after the 2026 event prior to a discussion of the contract renewal. This will allow for public input and comment to occur before any renewal is issued while reducing some administrative burden for contract renewals.

Terms & Conditions of Agreement

The agreement terms are summarized as follows:

- The Foundation will be granted access to the two parking lots and driveway in Cherokee Marsh North Park. The first lot is located at 5850 N. Sherman Avenue which is directly adjacent to the northern boundary of TPC Wisconsin, and the second lot is located at 6006 N. Sherman Avenue. Vehicles will not be allowed in the park from June 1 through June 7, unless permitted by the event organizers or by the Madison Police Department. Emergency personnel and Park Rangers will still have vehicular access to the park. The event organizers are working with MPD to create a safe plan for vehicles with ADA placards to access the park June 1 – 4.

- The park will be open at its normal hours, and pedestrians and cyclists will be allowed to enter the park via Sherman Avenue. The pedestrian entry on Burning Wood Way will remain open, allowing park access from the west to the park.
- Sherman Avenue will be reopened by 7:00pm each day to vehicles for access to the park until it closes one hour after sunset.
- Due to the sensitive nature of the park, no parking or equipment will be allowed off the gravel areas of the parking lots or driveway, with the exception of signage only if it does not damage the vegetation.
- Parking will not be allowed on the driveway without prior permission from Madison Fire Department to ensure emergency vehicle access clearance while not parking on the vegetation.
- The Foundation is responsible for any damages to the park, and for cleaning up and removing all visible debris associated with the Event.
- The Foundation is responsible to pay the City \$14,000 for the seven days of use. The revenue from the event will be allocated to the Park Division Operating Budget in the Conservation section, which is responsible for the management of Cherokee Marsh Conservation Park, North Unit. This fee was determined to commensurate with other event fees that partially restrict access to parks, such as boat launch closures.

Communication Plan

The Parks Division, in coordination with other City Agencies, will ensure that the event organizers communicate what the impacts to the public will be as the event date nears. The City will release a news release from Traffic Engineering regarding traffic issues. This includes sharing that the Foundation has agreed to allow park users to park in the event parking at Madison College and take a shuttle bus to and from the shuttle stop, located near the corner of N. Sherman and Wheeler Roads.

Madison Parks will post information about how to access the park during the event. The information will be shared on our website, via the Madison Parks E-News with 43,000 subscribers, and forwarded to the media and neighborhood organizations. The information will be amplified with social media posts as the event nears. The Parks Division will be adding additional bike racks to the Cherokee Marsh Conservation Park to accommodate additional bike traffic during this time.

Park Access

We recognize that with the number of people expected in the neighborhood during this week and with the road closures and checkpoints, it will be more difficult than normal to visit Cherokee Marsh North. The first week in June will be a good opportunity for park users to visit one of the other 18 conservation parks in the system. Cherokee Marsh Conservation Park – South is located at 5002 School Road and provides over 240 acres of ecology similar to the North Unit. Warner Park, though not designated as a conservation park, is another nearby park that offers areas of passive recreation for residents looking to connect with nature.

Parks Division Recommendation

Overall, the Parks Division recommends approval of the proposed agreement because it provides a mechanism to keep the park open to users and would only prohibit vehicle access temporarily, while simultaneously bringing revenue back to the park. The 2025 event certainly had an impact on the neighborhood with heavy traffic and crowds; however, overall it ran smoothly. The American Family Insurance Championship is an event that has many benefits to the community. We look forward to working with the Steve Stricker American Family Insurance Foundation collaboratively to minimize the impacts to neighboring residents, park users, and the park itself.