

**SUPERINTENDENT'S APRIL 2022 REPORT
COMMUNICATIONS TO BOARD OF PARK COMMISSIONERS
Park Superintendent's Monthly Report Summary**

The declaration made last month that winter was over seems more premature than is preferable for this time of year. We have mostly put the equipment away, but the snow and cold temps keep coming. As with most things weather related, there are both good and from this prolonged wet and cool winter/spring.

One of the not desirable outcomes is a much slower than average opening date for golf, which will certainly impair the financial outlook for the year. We are hopeful that the weather turns soon and we are not too far behind the curve by Memorial Day and that we retain the relationships we have built over the past two years. Another not great part of the weather recently has been the delay in getting out and working on the courses, especially Glenway. We anticipate opening the Glen Golf Park by July, which is exciting and will help the bottom line as well.

On the positive side of things, the slow start means the grass is not growing yet. This is more important this year than in most, as we are facing a serious staffing shortage. We have already announced that Ride the Drive is cancelled for this year. This was done out of a need to prioritize staffing resources to get the best possible outcome for the park system. Though it was a hard choice, by cancelling the one day event, we can utilize hours on a vast array of other services, including working towards a more robust and "normal" aquatics season. This situation has also led us to work towards a partnership with MSCR as it relates to swim lessons at the Pool this summer. We continue to evaluate staffing levels, and are hopeful we can avoid significant additional impacts. At this moment, we have 29 seasonal staff returning or hired for the coming season in general park operations. That is nearing 60% of our desired level. This equates to approximately 12,000 hours of work missing from the team. Our hope is we can close that gap down to something closer to 4,000 or less. At that level, there would still be impacts, but we are hopeful to have those impacts isolated to trim mowing, string trimming, and overall median work.

As we work towards the most "normal" summer season in a few years, we are continuing to recruit permanent staff to fill a number of vacancies. It will certainly be a challenging year as more than 28% of our permanent staff positions have experienced turnover since the 2019 summer. We miss those who have left, appreciate the new duties and roles taken on by others, and recognize the challenges everyone has encountered over the past 3 years. It is particularly notable that this level of change offers lots of opportunities for growth, but also puts a lot of pressure on the system as institutional knowledge is a significant part of how we function. I am confident in the team's ability to meet the challenges this presents and create a better, more equitable park system moving forward!

Future Commission Items

- Flood Mitigation Plans – The Engineering Stormwater Utility section will be engaging with the BPC over the coming months on more specific area plans as follow up to their presentation at the January meeting.
- Golf Enterprise Update – In addition to the ongoing work around the Glen Golf Park, including updating the clubhouse, the Golf Team is working to continue

engagement around the potential for changes at Yahara and the subsequent needs for the entire Golf program.

- Update on WPCRC expansion plans – Funding for design and development work is included in the Parks Division's 2022 Capital Budget request, with construction funding in 2023. Staff anticipates briefing the Commission on this important project and engagement strategies later this spring.
- Donor Recognition and Partnership Policies – The Long Range Planning Subcommittee is commencing work around donor recognition and partnership policies over the first few meetings of 2022. The hope is to have a draft policy for feedback in the first half of 2022.
- Operating Budget Service Level Briefing – The team is working to prepare a presentation to the Board on service level changes based on final outcomes of the budget process. As currently resourced, there will be reductions in services from historic norms in aquatics and operations that will have an impact. Given the reductions are mostly in hourly staffing the impacts are a challenge to plan for with specificity, but will create challenges for hours of coverage for lifeguards at beaches, mowing and trimming operations, restroom and shelter date availability, as well as impacts on general maintenance support for the park system. The goal is to present information on this in May or June 2022.
- Land Management Plan Update – The Parks Division team will be working over the coming months to conceptualize opportunities to improve land management standards and the corresponding plan moving forward. The Plan has done a lot of good to move the system forward, but the team feels it is reasonable and appropriate to focus resources on continuous improvement efforts in this area by working with Habitat Stewardship Subcommittee over the coming six to nine months. An anticipated timeframe for the Commission to review a draft update to the Plan is late summer 2022.
- Based on the situation related to the boat left illegally moored at Marshall and other corresponding regulatory issues related to boat launches and mooring, staff are working to consider potential ordinance and policy changes that would improve the outcomes for the public in our management of these amenities. I expect some level of ordinance revision to be needed on this front, with an arrival date to the BPC of potentially the 3rd Quarter of 2022.

Personnel Updates

New Hires & Promotions:

- Shane Martin was hired as Aquatics & Park Program Coordinator. He started on April 4, 2022.
- Adam Kaniewski was hired as Landscape Architect 2. He started on April 4, 2022.
- Molly Berkholtz was promoted from Park Maintenance Worker to Landscape Maintenance Worker. She started in her new position on April 4, 2022.

Departures:

- Jonathan Sutherland will be leaving his position as Facilities Maintenance Worker at Olbrich Botanical Gardens. His last day with Parks will be April 7, 2022.

Section reports

Park Operations

Conservation:

- Staff transitioned from winter operations to preparation for prescribed burn season. Winter equipment was moved to storage, fire suppression equipment was mobilized, and firebreaks were cleared to prepare burn units. Postcard notifications were sent to announce prescribed burns.
- The Operation Fresh Start crew removed honeysuckle and buckthorn along Wheeler Road and along the gravel road to the boat launch at Cherokee Marsh South Unit.

Construction:

- Transitioned from transporting topsoil to helping the Streets Division transport waste collected by their street sweeping efforts.
- Resumed comprehensive playground inspections focused on hazards, graffiti, and worn parts.

Facilities:

- Supported seasonal ice rink closures.
- Began seasonal startup work at park facilities including Breese Stevens Field.
- Built new signature signs for Waunona and Hill Creek parks, and a replacement Suzy Favor mile marker at Wingra Park.

General Parks:

- Invested considerable time into filling vacant permanent positions and recruiting seasonal support.
- Worked on contingency service plans in preparation for the anticipated labor shortage that will impact our ability to support our traditional service level.
- Finalized winter amenity close-out and began preparations for spring. Work included removal, repair and painting of hockey boards, repair to damaged turf, picking trash and litter that accumulated over the winter in parks and medians, painting garbage cans, and repairing and painting picnic tables. Winter pruning was completed on oaks and elms, and equipment was transitioned from winter to summer operations.
- The Land Stewardship Technicians continued to work on the general park land management plans for managed meadows.

Mall Concourse:

- Started spring clean-up with power washing winter debris, washing bus shelter windows, and replacing damaged or rusty bike racks, benches, and trash cans.
- Removed winter décor, evergreen boughs, and planter lighting displays, and installed spring seasonal banners.

Planning and Development

New Staff Member Adam Kaniewski, Landscape Architect 2:

Adam Kaniewski is a Landscape Architect joining the Parks team. He has a Bachelor's of Science in Landscape Architecture and Environmental Studies from UW-Madison and is a Registered Landscape Architect in the State of Wisconsin. For the past seven years, he has worked at multidisciplinary consulting firms in the Madison area serving clients primarily in Dane County. He is extremely excited to join the parks team and looking forward to meeting and working with all of you.

A little more about him. He grew up in the Milwaukee suburbs, but has lived in Madison ever since attending UW-Madison for college. He and his wife, Ellen, (and their two cats) recently purchased a home on the near east side of Madison and are in the process of doing some major (mostly) DIY renovations. In his free time he enjoys following local sports teams, playing recreational sports, hiking, biking, kayaking, camping, exploring local restaurants, and quenching his thirst with a beer on a summer patio.