

SUPERINTENDENT'S OCTOBER 2024 REPORT

COMMUNICATIONS TO BOARD OF PARK COMMISSIONERS

Park Superintendent's Monthly Report Summary

Though the last month has shown some signs of Fall, and some leaves are starting to change (and fall even), the weather overall has mostly felt summer like. This has allowed for a continued busy system of athletic events and with limited rain, very few cancellations. Across the year the weather was overall cooperative, and many of the larger events and large numbers of smaller events were able to happen with limited delays or cancellations. Golf had a successful September and has now reached the \$5M in revenue level with over 142K rounds played. Work on improving Yahara Hills Golf Course is also continuing and the staff team responsible for that work is making great progress.

The weather has also helped to allow project work at Door Creek and Country Grove to continue on schedule. These two projects, along with many others, have regular updates posted on our Parks projects page at: <https://www.cityofmadison.com/parks/projects>. I highly recommend checking out the livestream cameras that are installed at the Door Creek project. There is also a Flickr page with photos of the Country Grove shelter and park improvements as well.

Staff continues to work to provide support to the City's Finance Department and Mayor's Office as they work to produce the Executive Capital and Operating Budgets. This year's process is challenging given the City's fiscal realities, and I remain hopeful that we will be able to establish budgets for 2025 that sustain as much of our operations as possible, while also ensuring sustained reinvestments in our system's ageing assets. The Finance Committee recently recommended the Parks Division's Capital Budget to the full Council with only one amendment from the Mayor's Executive Budget. The amendment was to change the project name of what is now the LakeWay from the Lake Monona Waterfront.

Future Commission Items

- 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.
- 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. We anticipate buying more of these and it would be good to begin developing the plan for holding strategy. We are hopeful to have a plan in place by the Fall.
- Toys in Parks – Staff have been continuing to work through ways to balance a variety of interests as it relates to children's toys left in parks across the system. At the request of a Commissioner, we will be working to provide an update to the Commission on how we are currently managing this issue in the coming months.
- Budget Update – Staff will prepare an update on the budget process and provide an overview of the current outlook in November.

Personnel Updates

Promotions/Hires:

- Steven Dray has been appointed Interim Ranger Supervisor effective as of September 9, 2024. He has been with the Ranger team since 2018 and has served as the Ranger Leadworker since 2021.

- John Ringwood been appointed Interim Ranger Leadworker effective as of September 9, 2024. He has been with the Ranger Team since 2019 and has served as a permanent Ranger for the last three years.
- Ken Allen was promoted from Golf Programming Assistant to Golf Clubhouse Supervisor 1. He began his new role on September 29, 2024.

Departures:

- Richard Westbury resigned from his shared T/E and Parks position effective June 7, 2024. Richard previously worked with Central Parks and the Conservation Section during the winter months and was responsible for snow removal from many bus stops.
- Jason Vroman resigned from his position as Ranger Supervisor effective September 6, 2024. The Parks Division wishes to express gratitude to Jason for the many advancements he has brought to the Ranger team during his two years with Parks, including enhanced training/onboarding, updated parking ordinances and reconfiguration of the Manager-On-Duty and afterhours call program.
- James Kaufman was promoted from Parks Equipment Mechanic 1 in East Parks to Maintenance Coordinator within the Streets Division. The Parks Division appreciates Jim's leadership and dedication over the last 11 years in East Parks. He began his new position on September 15, 2024.
- Peter Castro resigned from his position as Parks Maintenance Worker on the Mall Concourse Maintenance Crew effective September 12, 2024. Peter worked to provide outstanding services to visitors and residents visiting the downtown area over weekends.
- Ann Freiwald will be retiring from her position as the Parks Division's Planning & Development Manager effective Friday, October 11, 2024 after six years of service. The Parks Division appreciates and recognizes Ann for the work that she has accomplished here as a member of the Parks Leadership Team. Especially notable are Ann's contributions to streamline park planning efforts to get "plans on the shelf" and her role in the introduction of the recreational biking facilities, both of which will benefit the community for generations.

Section Updates

Parks Operations

Central Parks

- Prepared athletics fields for transition into football field play.
- Finalized tree planting placements for fall planting.
- Conducted prescribed burns to Junction Ridge and Richmond Hills.
- Prepare for planted bed planting at Lakeside Offices.

Conservation

- Continued with invasive species control, including herbicide applications to Canada thistle, reed canary grass, Japanese knotweed, porcelain-berry, and tree of heaven.
- Staff cleared a new hiking trail at Moraine Woods.
- Our Operation Fresh Start crew collected seeds of native woodland species for sowing this fall, and worked on controlling Phragmites at Cherokee Marsh and burdock at Acewood.

- Volunteers collected seed at Owen and Prairie Ridge, controlled Phragmites at Cherokee Marsh, controlled porcelain-berry at Owen, and continued daily welfare checks on goats at Cherokee Marsh, Edna Taylor and Turville Point.

Construction

- Dug in 5 new baskets for the 3 new holes on the Elver disc golf course.
- Began construction of Kestral Park including establishing a playable turf for the soccer field, excavated for a path and playground, installed border timbers for the playground, added surfacing to the playground, and poured five concrete bench pads.
- Hauled in the materials needed for the upcoming ball-diamond renovation at Goodman.

East Parks

- Developing a plan for maintenance of a new mound area with volunteers and Ho-Chunk Nation at Hartmeyer
- Install of Natura at McCormick Dog Park – an artificial turf material for use at our dog park entrances.
- Worked with Park Rangers on park activity and clean up.

Facilities

- Warner Park softball shelter's doors were painted, flaking walls on the inside of the shelter and various exterior surfaces to increase the aesthetics of the building.
- A new pH and Chlorine pool water testing kit was purchased to use at the Goodman Pool.
- A wooden border for the new Olbrich nature play playground was installed.
- Two memorial dog tags at Quann Dog Park and an Aldo Leopold memorial bench at Prairie Ridge Conservation Park were placed.
- New decorative shutters were built, painted, and installed at the Brittingham Camp Randall Rowing Club historic boathouse.

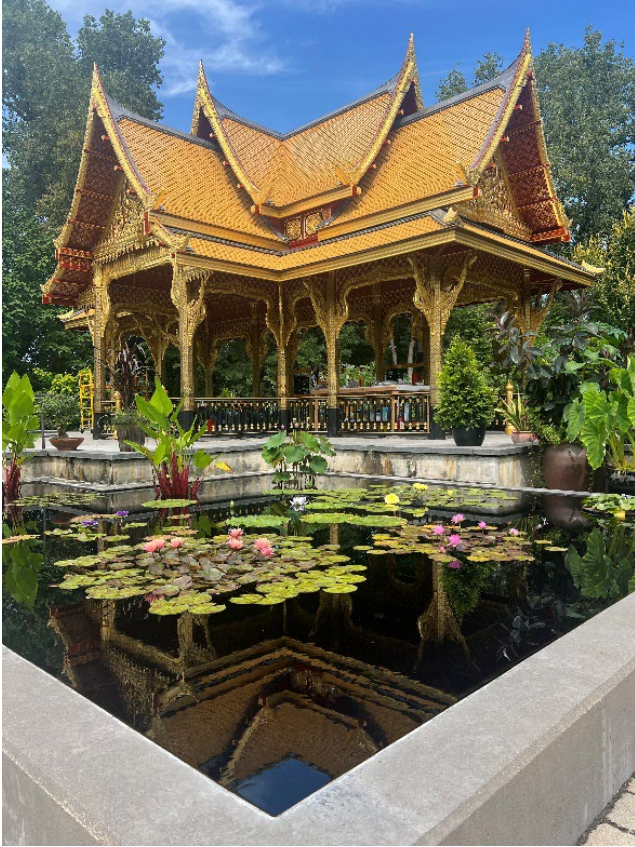
Mall Concourse

- Performed fall turf maintenance including aerating, overseeding, and fertilizing
- Downtown event support for Taste of Madison, Ironman, and Madison Night Market.
- Continued BRT preparations, including watering new landscape beds.
- Fall leaf cleanup began with honey locust leaves starting to come down.

West Parks

- Finished tree damage clean up from the May storm.
- Tiger mowed weedy edges of parks and bike paths.
- Pruned and trimmed trees during dry weather due to a lack of mowing.
- Supported the final Parks Alive events.

Olbrich Botanical Gardens



Royal Thai Pavilion – The restoration work is complete! As of October 1, 2024 the public can once again enter the Royal Thai Pavilion.



- **GLEAM!** – It's that time of year again when Olbrich Botanical Gardens is aglow with lights and art shining bright throughout the gardens. This year's exhibit features 9 installations along with "Glimmer Pop" features dispersed strategically along the route. Also featured this year was the return of Crackle and new pop-up events that feature performers on designated nights. Gleam runs through October 26, 2024. Purchase tickets here: <https://www.olbrichgleam.org/>



- **Harry Whitehorse International Wood Sculpture Exhibit** – The Harry Whitehorse International Wood Sculpting Competition was held in Monona in June 2025. Olbrich Botanical Gardens is now featuring 5 of the 11 sculptures until June 2025. Garver Feed Mill is exhibiting the other 6 sculptures. Olbrich Gardens and Garver Feed Mill worked together to coordinate signage and a [website](#) so that all the sculptures have the same information presented in the same style.



- **Lakeside Landscape** – Before Director of Horticulture Jeff Epping retired in 2023, he presented a concept for the landscape in front of the Parks Lakeside building. His concept was to create a variety of landscapes (woodland, prairie, gardens) that represent Parks. Director of Horticulture Samantha Peckham designed the front garden beds which feature gravel gardens, a gravel path, and a prairie dropseed garden. The Operations team prepped the gravel beds and staff from across Parks helped plant them this month.