



Madison Parks Division

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**MADISON
PARKS**

Date: June 5, 2026

To: Mayor Rhodes-Conway and All Alders

From: Lisa Laschinger, Assistant Parks Superintendent

CC: Finance Committee and Board of Park Commissioners

Re: Land Acquisition- Madison Crushing Property, Town of Burke

Greetings Mayor and All Alders,

The proposed resolution, Legislative File ID #93444, authorizes the acquisition of certain properties owned by Madison Crushing and Excavating, Inc. ("Seller"), including four unaddressed tax parcels, one tax parcel addressed as 3328 Nelson Road, and a portion of two tax parcels both addressed as 5185 Reiner Road, all of which are located in the Town of Burke and the City of Sun Prairie ("Subject Property"). The proposed acquisition will result in the preservation of approximately 200 acres of naturalized reclaimed pit and quarry land, including quality ponds. The Subject Property has long been identified as potential parks and public open space to be preserved. The Seller has indicated they will be ceasing quarry and pit operations within the next five years, and they are interested in selling this land in a manner consistent with various adopted plans.

Collaboration with Dane County

The owners of the Subject Property first approached Dane County Land and Water Resources Department (the "County") about acquiring the land for park and open space purposes. The County is interested in the land being preserved but is not interested in having long-term ownership and responsibility for the Subject Property. The County approached the Parks Division about potential for collaboration in the acquisition of the Subject Property. The Parks Division recommends that it is in the best interest of the City to pursue this acquisition to conserve significant acreages of quality natural areas. Upon closing, the Parks Division will pursue cost sharing through the Dane County Conservation Fund grant.

Town of Burke Implications

Parts of the Subject Property are currently located in the Town of Burke, which will be attached to the City of Madison by 2036 under the Burke Cooperative Plan. As the Seller ceases operations in the near future, the remainder of the Seller's property not contemplated in this transaction is anticipated to be developed consistent with the Reiner Neighborhood Development Plan, which includes a significant amount of mixed residential development. All of this development will be within the Madison municipal services area and residents will need access to public park spaces.

Relevant Plans

Multiple plans support the City's acquisition of this land for park and open space purposes. The 2018 adopted Comprehensive Plan for the City of Madison recommends that the City "*Acquire parkland and upgrade park facilities to accommodate more diverse activities and gatherings and Improve and preserve urban biodiversity through an interconnected greenway and habitat system.*" The 2023 adopted Reiner Neighborhood Development Plan recognizes a portion of the Subject Property as a future recommended park that will help connect to the larger natural resource and recognizes that "*approximately 200-acre area located north of Nelson Road is recommended as a Regional Natural and Recreation Area.*" The Northeast Area Plan adopted in 2024 includes a recommendation that the Parks Division "*[i]mprove access to publicly-owned natural areas to provide passive recreation opportunities.*" The 2024 Sustainability Plan includes recommendations that the City prioritize preservation and restoration of urban natural areas and jointly plan preservation of open spaces and woodlands with neighboring communities and Dane County. The 2025-2030 Park and Open Space Plan recommends that the Parks Division, "*[i]mprove public access to lakes and waterways; [p]rotect and enhance natural resources; and [p]ursue regional solutions to regional issues.*" In addition, the Dane County 2025-2030 and previous Park and Open Space Plan identify the Subject Property as being within the Glacial Drumlin Natural Resource Area and identifies the potential for collaboration with the City in terms of planning with the Madison Parks Division for a new future recreation park in the Northeast quadrant of county. The proposed acquisition will conserve natural resource areas, provide recreational opportunities and provide expanded park access to future Madison residents once the surrounding area develops.

Results of Appraisals

Appraisals were obtained by Dane County and the Seller to value the Subject Property, which includes a mix of developable land, wetlands, and open water. Due to differing appraisal mythologies and opinions, the appraised values ranged widely from \$25,000 per acre in the Dane County appraisal to \$45,000 per acre in the Seller's appraisal. In March 2025, the Seller officially offered to accept a negotiated price of \$30,000 per acre for the Subject Property, totaling \$6,000,000.

The County approached the Parks Division about the City's interest in pursuing acquisition and ownership of Subject Property. Staff from the City's Office of Real Estate Services reviewed the appraisal reports provided by Dane County and the Seller, and concurred that the blended purchase price of \$30,000 per acre was reasonable, as the Seller's appraised unit value was not supported by the comparable sales. Both reports used standard accepted appraisal procedures, with the value variances being attributed to differences in selected comparable sales and differences in opinion about the highest and best use of the Subject Property.

Environmental Considerations of Site

The Subject Property is land reclaimed from a gravel pit, stone quarry and related operations. The City is including a 90-day due diligence period in which it will investigate site environmental considerations. The City has included a due diligence period within the proposed Purchase and Sale Agreement which will include standard environmental testing and further review of any existing remediation records. The outcomes of this investigation will determine if any further action or adjustments are needed.

Public Access Easement

The Subject Property is currently entirely land-locked, meaning there is not direct access from a street or road. As such, as a condition of the acquisition, in order to allow the property to be used by the City and the public alike, it will be necessary for the Seller to grant a Public Access Easement ("Easement") to the City to provide access from Nelson Road across the Seller's remaining property to the Subject Property. Of note, the Seller will continue to have quarrying operations in this area for the next couple of years. To meet this need, the Easement will allow for the Seller to retain rights to the easement area for the use of the access as an operational driveway. As a condition of this access, and to protect ongoing operations, the Sellers shall construct a woven wire fence along both sides of the gravel drive and gates will be installed for the Seller's operations to allow their access across their remaining property. The Seller has agreed to install the fence within 30 days of closing, and the City will pay \$50,000 at closing, which is the estimated cost the City would incur to install the fence. As the Seller's quarry operations wind down, it is anticipated that the remaining property will eventually be developed with residential uses, at which time public access will likely be taken off of a future dedicated street, the fence may be removed by the relevant developer, and the City will release the Easement. The proposed Purchase and Sale Agreement defines roles and responsibilities pertaining to the Easement.

Funding for the Acquisition & Ongoing Maintenance

The proposed acquisition will be entirely funded through Park Land Acquisition funds, which can only be used for acquiring parkland. In addition, the costs for the owner to complete a site survey (\$8,275) and install fencing and gate for the access easement (\$50,000) will be paid at time of closing. The Park Land Acquisition funds are

generated from the collection of Park Land Impact Fees paid by new residential development to support park access needs as the City grows. These funds can only be used for park land acquisition purposes. Sufficient authority exists within the Land Acquisition Major (MUNIS Major #17128) of the Parks Division's Adopted Capital Budget. No additional appropriations are required at this time for the acquisition. Future improvements to the park would be addressed through the Parks Division's Capital Budget request. Operational resources to maintain the Subject Property would be addressed through future requests within the Parks Division's Operating Budget and will be dependent upon park amenities that are developed on site.

Future Development of Subject Property

The Parks Division has no immediate plans to redevelop the land and anticipates that the Subject Property will remain largely in its current natural state. Any redevelopment of the land will require significant financial resources. Significant public engagement would be required to plan for any future improvements. The primary goal of this acquisition is to ensure that this large area of natural land is preserved for parks and recreation purposes to meet current and future recreation needs of the community for generations to come.