

## **SUPERINTENDENT'S JANUARY 2021 REPORT COMMUNICATIONS TO BOARD OF PARK COMMISSIONERS**

### **Park Superintendent's Monthly Report Summary**

As the saying goes, 2020 went out like a lion and 2021 is coming in like a lion. Parks staff have begun winter operations, working hard to clear paths, sidewalks, and bus stops, as well as providing groomed cross country ski trails and cleared ice for skating. Events, shelter reservations, and athletic reservations are being made for 2021, with consideration for the ever-changing landscape of COVID-19 compliance. Increased workload, uncertainty of winter weather events, changes to furlough and workshare programs, and general COVID-19 uncertainty all serve to increase employee stress and anxiety. I will continue to work to support and assist our staff and to provide as much clarity and transparency with them as we continue to move through this challenging time.

1. Operations staff are working to keep winter recreation for all as readily available as possible. Ski trails are being groomed and ice is being cleared. Early season ice clearing is particularly challenging. Ice is easily damaged by members of the public that skate on it before it is ready and ice is not generally thick enough for our large equipment. At some locations, this means clearing entire lagoons with a fleet of blowers. It is particularly challenging to communicate the need for patience from the public, but we find that most have been very appreciative of the work we do. Ski, skate, and snowshoe rentals are already happening in full force under the plan carefully put together by our staff in the lead-up to winter. COVID-19 safety is of utmost importance. Rentals occur at an outdoor window, warming shelters are closed, and constant disinfecting and cleaning are occurring. Lines at rental locations have already been long, but staff are able to move them quickly. As with lake access permits, we have seen a significant increase in annual ski permits, especially after the heavy December 29<sup>th</sup> snowfall.
2. Staff continue to prepare WPCRC for a return to function as a park facility. The work is going well and the staff team is considering options to safely reopen to the public.
3. The workshare program has been introduced to staff with an eye on being able to continue to provide our essential services. We anticipate needing flexibility with winter weather events. The speed at which this program was introduced and implemented means lots of questions from staff, which I am working hard to answer as concisely as possible. We are hopeful that our commitment and a citywide commitment to the program will remove the need for future mandatory furloughs of staff.
4. The Facilities, Programs, and Fees Subcommittee continues to meet, with a focus on developing their own work-plan as well as a commitment to learning about current fee structures and programs in the Parks Division. Staff will be working with the subcommittee to move forward with more clear and equitable fee structures and opportunities for all in the parks.
5. Long Range Planning Subcommittee continued to work on the public art in parks process and has nearly completed bird and bat house policy.

## Future Commission Items

- Parks Event Ordinance – Parks staff have been working with other city agencies, primarily the City Attorney's, to develop a draft Park Events Ordinance that would provide a substantially more clear process and requirements for the existing park events process. The existing process has organically grown into a complex web of regulations and permits, which can create a lack of clarity regarding conditions and approval processes. It is staff's opinion that questions and concerns related to City agency events (e.g. Democracy in Parks) and priority access for returning events (Goodman Pool Dog Paddle) should be addressed as a part of this comprehensive effort. Staff will include information from the City Attorney's Office related to legal considerations as this Ordinance is prepared and presented.
- Potential modifications to the fee modification agreements for MadNorski and CXC at Elver related to winter operations. Both entities have been critical partners in making and managing snow based recreation at Elver. The collaboration has many challenges, both financial and operational, but staff believes operations at Elver can be, at minimum, begun for this winter prior to any adjustments to agreements.
- IPM Taskforce – The IPM taskforce work has been disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Staff is hopeful that work will continue this fall with a target of reporting out over the winter.
- The Law Park Master Plan process is also continuing and an update to the Commission will occur soon, likely in February.
- Allied Alcohol Ban – Was referred back to the Parks Commission. Anticipated discussion at BPC in February.

## Section reports

### **Planning and Development**

#### Vilas Park Master Plan

- Community Input Meeting #4 is set for Feb 4, 2021, this is the last community meeting on this master plan. We hope to present the master plan to the BPC at the March or April meeting.

#### Playground Replacements 2021

- Playground replacements planning is underway for the 2021 playground replacements. The parks getting new playgrounds include Paunack, Eken, Norman Clayton, Orchard Ridge Park, Swallowtail and Elvehjem Parks.

## **Operations**

### Conservation:

- Staff conducted two more prescribed burns at Owen and Edna Taylor, bringing the total acres burned this year to 60 acres.
- Made snow for Elver Park sledding hill and supported MadNorSki with snowmaking for the machine-made ski loop.
- Contractors completed woody invasive species removal projects at Acewood, Edna Taylor, Moraine Woods and Turville Point.

### Construction:

- Staff supported several non-capital projects, including removal of 360 cubic yards of fill from the Forest Hill Cemetery, delivery of playground mulch to Carpenter-Ridgeway Park and Brigham Park, and transfer of topsoil from a donor site to Parks property.
- Supported the Streets Department with snow removal.

### Facilities:

- Staff completed start-up work for the winter recreation season. This included preparations to shelters, which required significant extra work in support of efforts to promote physical distancing and safe operations.
- Staff completed capital projects including the Elvehjem shelter remodel, Elver Park shelter and Monona Golf Course clubhouse furnace replacements, and Hoover's Boat House window replacement.

### General Parks:

- Focused on winter preparation and responded to this season's first snow event.
- Prepared ice rinks, including the new NiceRink system for Elver Park hockey and general skating rinks, and supported preparation of volunteer-maintained ice rinks.
- Maintained park areas by removing invasives, cutting back perennials, and supporting Monona Golf Course EAB stump grubbing.

### Mall Concourse:

- Staff supported snow removal, and accomplished more efficient clearing of snow and ice with newly purchased equipment, including a Bobcat snow pusher and salt wagon.
- Coordination with the new "Streatery" program went well, and the restaurants did a very good job with snow removal.
- Staff decorated the service area for the holiday season, placing winter bough designs in the landscape beds and planters, and holiday wreaths on the Capitol Square bus shelters.