

Miller, Nicole

From: Alex Saloutos <asaloutos@tds.net>
Sent: Monday, September 9, 2024 3:21 PM
To: Parks Facilities, Programs and Fees
Cc: Knepp, Eric; Park Commission
Subject: 2025 Parks Division permits and fees, city policies, and fiscal responsibility
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Good afternoon! Please see the attached letter regarding agenda items 7 to 15, Legistar ID Nos. 85061, 85062, 85064, 85066, 85067, 85068, 85069, 85070, and 85071, on the agenda of the September 9, 2024, meeting of the Facilities, Fees, and Programs Subcommittee. It appears that the lack of fiscal notes for these agenda items, and their placement on the consent agenda, are contrary to city policy. –Alex

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September 9, 2024

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Facilities, Fees, and Programs Subcommittee
City of Madison

Re: **2025 Parks Division permits and fees, city policies, and fiscal responsibility
Agenda items no. 7 to 15, Legistar ID Nos. 85066, 85062, 85064, 85066, 85067,
85068, 85069, 85070, and 85071**

85061 per email

Dear Committee Members,

I am a resident of District 5 writing to express my concerns regarding agenda item numbers 7 through 15 on your agenda today related to approval of the Parks Division permits and fees for 2025. All of these items are on the consent agenda, and staff recommends their approval. However, there are not any fiscal notes, contrary to city policy, or information in the record that would provide a basis for staff's recommendations. In addition, it appears including these items on the consent agenda is contrary to city policy. Given the large structural deficits the city faces and the purpose of this committee,¹ these are legitimate and significant issues.

Most permits and fees will remain unchanged in 2025.

I prepared the attached Table 1— Summary of Changes to Parks Division Permits and Fees, to provide an overview of how many permits and fees will stay the same in 2025. My best effort was made to accurately count the number of permits and fees. In summary, if these agenda items are approved, four out five permits and fees will remain the same next year, some will be the same since at least 2020, and there is no historical information prior to this year for a significant number that would provide a historical perspective on how long it has been since the last increase and the amount of the increase. Given the city's financial situation, I have concerns about the ability of this approach to best serve the public interest.

Agenda items 7 to 15 do not include a fiscal note approved by the comptroller, contrary to APM 1-7.

None of these agenda items have fiscal notes, contrary to city policy. All resolutions must include a fiscal note approved by the comptroller. The drafter of the proposed ordinance or resolution may prepare a fiscal note, but comptroller's approval is always required.² Agenda items 7 through 15 represent a significant revenue source for the Parks Division. Given the plain meaning of the requirements in APM 1-7 that all resolutions include a fiscal note approved by the comptroller, how is it that these items do not include one?

¹ The Facilities, Fees, and Programs Subcommittee reviews policies, rules and regulations, operation standards, special event permit applications and makes program recommendations and recommendations on new and updated user fees and charges for all parks, Parks Division operated facilities, the City's golf courses and Forest Hill Cemetery. MGO 33.03(5)(a).

² City of Madison, Office of the Mayor, APM 1-3, *Fiscal Notes on Ordinances and Resolutions*, April 13, 2005, <https://www.cityofmadison.com/mayor/apm/1-3.pdf>, downloaded September 9, 2025.

The lack of a fiscal note or staff report for these items leaves a void of information for the public and this committee to make an informed and fiscally responsible decision on these permits and fees. At minimum, to make an informed decision on these agenda items it would be helpful to know the following:

- How long it has been since the permits and fees were last increased?
- What are other municipalities doing with the permits and fees for their parks in this fiscal environment?
- For permits and fees that generate a significant amount of revenue, such as the use of the Olbrich Gardens for weddings, which is currently \$4,600 a day in high season, what are competitive venues charging?
- If staff do not recommend a change to a permit or fee, why? And what facts support this position?
- What effect will the recommended permits and fees have on the net revenue for the various Park Division enterprises in 2025, and the ability of the Parks Division to maintain the current service levels?

Unless staffing has changed, the city's Finance Department will have an analyst or analysts assigned to the Parks Division that can assist with this work.

Agenda items 7 to 15 to set 2025 fees on consent agenda.

Agenda item numbers 7 through 15 are on your consent agenda, which also appears to be contrary to city policy. A consent agenda is a process that allows a large number of agenda items to be bundled together and passed with one motion without discussion. Typical consent agenda items are routine, procedural decisions, and decisions that are likely to be noncontroversial. Items are placed on the consent agenda to save meeting time, and to help ensure meetings can focus discussion on substantive topics.³

In my opinion, I think an ordinary taxpayer would consider Parks Division permits and fees a substantive topic for this committee. Given the nature of these agenda items, the purpose of this committee, and the large structural deficits the city faces, I don't understand why setting the permits and fees for 2025 has been placed on your consent agenda. I encourage you to reconsider this and the message it sends to taxpayers.

Oral arguments for approval and due process.

In addition, I want to emphasize that the practice of committees and commissions relying on oral presentations by staff at their meetings to make the case for the approval of an agenda item does not provide sufficient transparency or due process. The public must have an opportunity to review and respond to the fiscal notes or a staff report with their comments explaining their recommendations to ensure that all perspectives and relevant facts are considered by the committee.

³ City of Madison, *Consent Agenda & Consent Agenda Document New Alder Onboarding 2023* PowerPoint presentation, <https://www.cityofmadison.com/council/documents/onboarding/council-office--consent-agenda.pdf>, downloaded September 9, 2024

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For the above reasons, I ask that the Facilities, Fees, and Programs Subcommittee proceed thoughtfully and in a fiscally responsible manner with your consideration of these agenda items so you are compliant with city policy, fulfill your mission, and best serve the public interest.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. I appreciate your consideration of these concerns.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Alex Saloutos', written over a printed name.

Alex Saloutos

Pc: All alders
Board of Parks Commissioners
Eric Knepp

Table 1—Summary of Changes to Parks Division Permits and Fees

ITEM NO.	LEGISTAR ID NO.	DESCRIPTION	SUMMARY OF CHANGES
7	<u>85061</u>	2025-2026 Proposed Olbrich Botanical Garden Fees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 81 permits and fees on this schedule • No changes recommended, except for two special events fees. • No changes to 79 since at least 2023.
8	<u>85062</u>	2025 Proposed Shelter Fees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 138 park shelter fees and 30 misc. fees, a total of 168 are on this schedule. • Fees for three new shelters added in 2025. • Changes recommended to four misc. fees. • No changes to 135 shelter fees since at least 2023.
9	<u>85064</u>	2025 Proposed Park Division Fees—Mooring; Watercraft Storage; Violation Ranges; Disc Golf, Dog Park, Lake Access, and Cross Country Ski Permits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 35 permits and fees on this schedule. • One is new in 2025. • Seven are the same as 2024. • 27 are unchanged since at least 2023.
10	<u>85066</u>	2025 Proposed Aquatics Fees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 26 permits and fees on this schedule. • No changes to recommended. • No changes made since at least 2020.
11	<u>85067</u>	2025 Proposed Forest Hill Cemetery Fees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 106 permits and fees on this schedule. • 3% across-the-board increase on all line items recommended, plus the addition of \$30 burial administration fee.
12	<u>85068</u>	2025 Proposed Golf Fees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 51 permits and fees on this schedule. • Recommendation to increase ten in 2025. • Five are new in 2025. • No changes to 36. • Ten are the same as 2023. • Four are the same as 2022. • 13 are the same since at least 2021.
13	<u>85069</u>	2025 Proposed WPCRC Fees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 64 permits and fees on this schedule • No changes recommended. • No history prior to 2024.
14	<u>85070</u>	2025 Proposed Special Event Fees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 45 permits and fees on this schedule. • One recommended change in 2025. • No history prior to 2024.
15	<u>85071</u>	2025 Proposed Recreation Services Fees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 37 permits and fees on this schedule. • No changes recommended. • Four are the same as 2024. • Two are the same as 2023. • 31 are the same as 2022. • No history prior to 2022.