

SUPERINTENDENT'S JANUARY 2024 REPORT

COMMUNICATIONS TO BOARD OF PARK COMMISSIONERS

Park Superintendent's Monthly Report Summary

Winter has officially arrived from a calendar perspective, if not yet in the weather department. It was expected that this would be a relatively milder winter than normal, which does seem to be the case. [Snow fall totals](#) since July 1 are at 7.6 inches, or 9.5 inches below normal for early January and right about 13 inches below last year's totals to date. Though we have seen some small sheets form on the edges of the lakes, we are not yet close to full freezing. [Historical data on lake ice](#) from the UW shows that the median freeze date over time has been December 15th for Monona and December 20th for Mendota with median days of ice cover at right about 103 for both of the larger lakes. Given the fact that there is almost no cover on either in early January, it looks almost certain that we will be a significantly below average winter for ice. Both with ice and snow this year, though expected to be less than normal, it is a challenge for Parks and the community as it relates to recreation. We are hopeful this next couple of weeks will allow a little more snow and ice based recreation to occur, but as we continue to move forward, it is important that we all note the changes that are clearly occurring related to our climate and the impacts it has on our parks system and community.

Superintendent Knepp discussed numerous options and ideas to get active in January and stay active all year by engaging with Madison Parks at the Downtown Rotary on January 3rd. The [presentation](#) covered a number of things including winter events in January, as well as volunteering, partnerships and donations.

This past month also saw the release of the [NRPA Economic Impact Study of Parks](#). This is an interesting study and demonstrates that parks are a key part of local and regional economies in addition to all the other important benefits provided. Notably, Wisconsin ranks 16th in total economic activity related to parks, while being the 20th most populated state.

Also at the beginning of January, the Mallards announced their goal of bringing a women's collegiate summer softball team to Madison. This would be part of the newly created Northwoods league expanding into softball. Madison would be one of four inaugural teams and we believe there is significant value and likelihood of interest from our community in supporting a highly skilled and competitive softball team featuring very talented women from across the country.

Future Commission Items

- Update and Amendment to the Agreement for the Use of Warner Park Stadium with the Madison Mallards. This agreement update is being negotiated expeditiously to meet the opportunity mentioned above to bring women's collegiate summer softball to Madison. This will be a priority for staff to work on to get before the BPC and CC as soon as possible to make the project possible.
- Golf Enterprise Update – The Golf Team is working to prepare a report to the Facilities Programs and Fees Subcommittee and the Board of Park Commissioners on the past 2 years of operations as well as an outlook on future opportunities to continue to implement the Task Force on Municipal Golf in Madison Parks' recommendations.

- Olin Houses – We will be working on a management plan for the Olin Houses as we buy them. The one we have owned for a bit is under a leaseback, but the new acquisition will not be by the spring. 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 in the first half of 2024.
- Parks Division Work Plan / Roadmap – Staff will present the Division’s roadmap to the Board between March and May of 2024. The roadmap provides an overview of significant change initiatives that the Division is undertaking and/or working on in 2024. The roadmap elements each have an assigned manager who are leading the work associated with that element.

Personnel Updates

Promotions/Hires:

Ashley Moseberry has been promoted to Parks and Streets Use Assistant effective 12.24.23. Ashley has served in this position provisionally since May 2023.

Section reports

Parks Operations

Conservation:

- With support from the Public Works Laborer crew this month, the team was able to complete significant invasive species and woody debris removal projects at Cherokee Marsh, Edna Taylor, Prairie Ridge and Turville Point.
- The Operation Fresh Start crew accomplished forest stand improvement work on 4 acres at Acewood Conservation Park this month. They removed buckthorn and honeysuckle, as well as understory white mulberry and box elder that created dense shade that was preventing establishment of new saplings. This work is an important component of ensuring the long-term sustainability of the forest.

Construction:

- Razed the old farm house at Whitetail Ridge Park and filled the foundation hole.
- Rehabilitated a parking lot drain at the Glen Golf Park.
- Installed the swing set at McClellan Park.

Facilities:

- Performed seasonal startups for winter recreation season at multiple locations.
- Built an improved water tank holder for the ecology team, turned off water and winterized the Bedford Street building, and constructed new ice rink ramps for Goodman ice rink.
- Completed HVAC repairs at the Downtown Visitor Center, Breese Stevens, and Elver Park.

General Parks:

- Performed pruning of trees for structure, clearance, and dead wood.
- Installed the liners for the Nice Rinks at Goodman Park, Olbrich and Elver and filled them with water.
- Performed invasive buckthorn and honeysuckle removal in the forested areas of numerous parks and along shorelines.
- Ecology Team
 - With assistance from the Public Workers, have begun brush clearing, starting in our tier 1 and tier 2 prairies, and working towards the woodlands adjacent to them.
 - In conjunction with Parks Planning, have completed the contracted work list and are in the final stages of determining the next round of three year contracts.

Mall Concourse:

- Snow removal equipment was calibrated and prepared for the eventual winter season change.
- Refurbished furniture in the service area (Capitol Square wood benches), powered amenities, pruned trees and completed leaf cleanup without the interruption of snow removal.
- The BID's "Shine On Madison" was supported by Mall staff decorating bus shelters, planters, and landscape beds to accompany the BID's decorations.

Community Services – Terrence Thompson

Community Events & Customer Service

Events (Kelly Post)

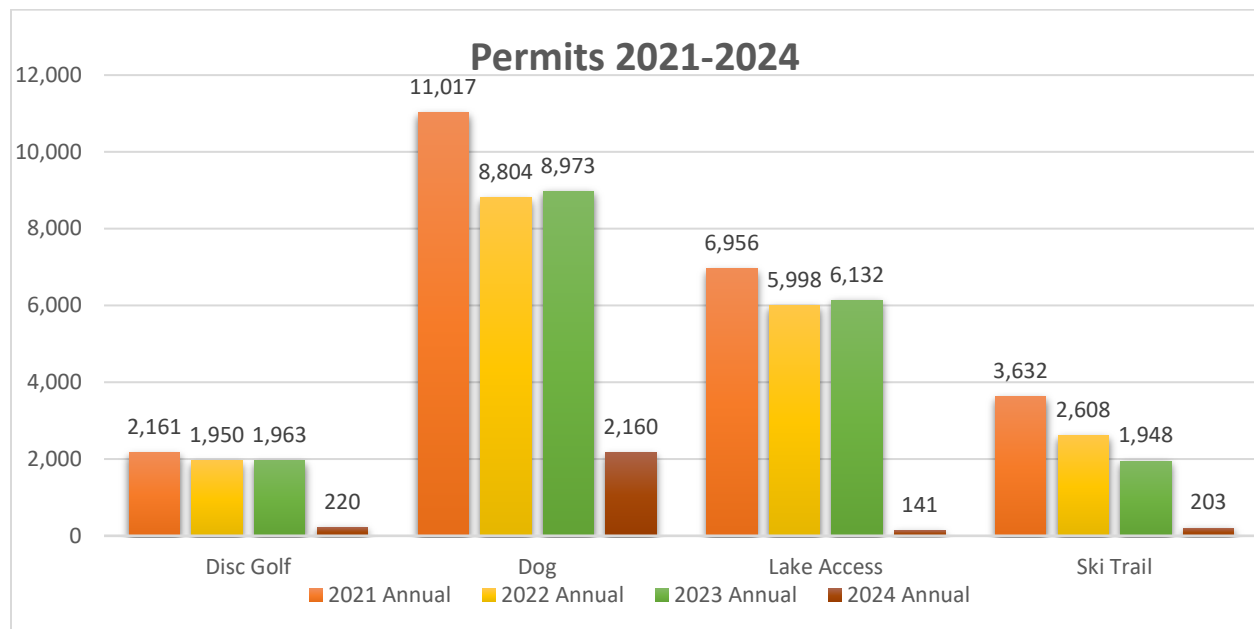
- We are very excited to announce the Park's Community Event section is fully staffed going into 2024 with the permanent hiring of Ashley Moseberry to the Park and Street Use Assistant position¹
- We are finalizing updates to our Special Event websites and applications for 2024. We have two new permanent permit options with their own web pages (Classes in Park & Kids Camps in Parks).
- 2024 will bring some changes to downtown Madison that will require extra communication and coordination with our annual downtown events, including new BRT stations, BRT routes, WI Historical Museum construction, and a pilot of a pedestrian mall on the 400-600 blocks of State Street.
- We look forward to building and maintaining relationships and working collaboratively with our amazing Madison event organizers to find innovative solutions to any impacts these new City initiatives have on downtown events in 2024 and the future.

Parks Alive (Debra Alleyne)

- **Partner workshops:** In the coming weeks, we will prepare workshops for Parks Alive partners, volunteers, and contractors. The workshops will communicate our expectations and answer any questions they may have for the coming season.
- **Public and Performing Art:** Public art has been one of the fields identified in our survey that the community would like to see more of. As such, we are working with the city's placemaking and public art staff to discuss methods of incorporating these aspects in Parks Alive 2024.

Customer Service (Joanne Austin)

- **Permit Update (Disc Golf, Dog, Lake Access, and Ski):** Permit sales for 2024 are picking up tempo. Most purchases are made online; however, customers can call or stop in at the Parks Lakeside Office for assistance. Parks began selling 2024 permits on November 1, 2023. We send email reminders to previous year's customers that permits are available for purchase.



- **Athletic Reservations:** We have been working with Vermont Systems support staff to create the 500+ fields and courts in our software system to exclusively use RecTrac for all athletic reservations starting in 2024. Parks use this software for shelter/park reservations, activity registrations, and point-of-sale transactions. Exclusively using RecTrac for all types of transactions will help streamline our process for staff and customers.

Recreation Services & Aquatics

Winter Recreation (Tracey Hartley)

- Winter Recreation locations are ready. We currently have 32 staff members and a schedule prepared when we are ready to open for the season. We only have a few minor winter details to attend to, and the Vilas POS has some issues, but IT is aware and making efforts to have our POS working by the first week of January.

Aquatics (Shane Martin)

- We are posting positions for Lifeguards, Aquatic Supervisor, Head Guards, and Head Attendant in January 2024. Based on the potential 76 returning staff from the 2023 season, we have had 35 responses, with 21 staff interested in returning.

Rangers & Volunteers

Rangers (Jason Vroman)

- Madison Park Rangers completed the 4th session of quarterly self-defense training. Local minority-owned small business Badger Krav Maga, led by Fred Harris, took staff through a series of self-defense techniques to help Rangers be better prepared for possible threats they may face during their work.



- Rangers are going electric! Fleet received two F150 Lightning electric trucks that are currently being set up to meet the needs of Ranger patrols. The new trucks will have updated striping, lighting, communication with dispatch, and better storage. In addition, Rangers purchased a new Trek E-Bike to better connect with the community and patrol our parks in a new way. Lastly, disc golf maintenance equipment was transitioned from gas to electric systems to provide a more sustainable way to care for our disc golf courses.



Volunteers (John Weichelt)

- We formed a partnership with Urban League Young Professionals to adopt Penn Park to support special events, clean-up activities, and more. We had a great sunset clean-up event on December 5, 2023, removing lots of rubbish.



- We met with the City of Madison IT and representatives from Olbrich Gardens, Library, and Senior Center to discuss options for a city-wide volunteer management software. Get Connected is the program that was discussed and ultimately picked as the front-runner for city-wide usage.
- We are recruiting volunteers for Candlelight Walks, Winter Prom, and Ride the Drive.

Warner Park Community Recreation Center (Zach Watson)

Expansion Update

- The 2024 expansion schedule has been updated, DD will be due January 31, 2024, and we will begin meeting regularly with Emberg Anderson on January 10, 2024.
- The geothermal test bores process has begun and is taking longer than anticipated. The drilling team reached 500 feet on January 5, 2024. The difficulty has come from not finding bedrock. The testing will be completed by Monday, January 8, 2024.

KNOW Program

- We purchased the KNOW Program van in December 2023 and are awaiting Fleet to let us know when it's available for pickup.