

SUPERINTENDENT'S SEPTEMBER 2020 REPORT

COMMUNICATIONS TO BOARD OF PARK COMMISSIONERS

Park Superintendent's Monthly Report Summary

As summer winds down, we can certainly look back and celebrate the success of our work over the past six months. We have persevered through unprecedented times in order to be able to provide vital services to those we serve. We continue to witness first-hand in so many forms and fashions just how truly impactful our work is on the mental and physical health of our community. Through this time we have further developed our own ability adapt and adjust to a good deal of uncertainty. While the COVID-19 pandemic continues to impact our daily operations, we have learned a good deal about how to safely move forward and will be better prepared for the coming months.

The Goodman Pool has officially closed for the season after having been open for only 37 days. This was no small feat given the efforts required to safely provide these services. While attendance at 15,553, or approximately 63% less than 2019, was significantly lower than normal, we recognize that this is a valuable asset to the community and not having it available for use would have disproportionate impacts to some residents. What we learned this year will be very beneficial in preparing for the 2021 season.

Staffing levels have been consistent since mid-June, but as our student workers have begun returning to school, we're evaluating staffing resources and needs as we enter the fall months. Services have largely remained consistent as well since June, but we will be adjusting services as needed due to resources available. While nearly all special events have been cancelled, we're evaluating a couple pilot programs that will allow small gatherings that can be safely held in compliance with the orders. Athletic groups that have been able to provide plans to show how they will comply with orders have been permitted, and we expect the number of organized groups will increase as people of all ages are desperately seeking outlets for active recreation.

While peaceful protests have been ongoing at the Mall Concourse on a constant basis since late May, the most recent officer-involved violence has escalated the intensity and frequency of the protests and has led to additional damages and criminal activity. The Visitor Center at Peace Park was recently opened and nearly all businesses had removed the boards from their store fronts, actions which have been reversed since August 23. For staff, normal work has continued to be severely disrupted in recent days due to the need to address broken glass, graffiti and fire damage as well as take additional preventative measures. These events further amplify the need for our community to pull together to address issues around systemic racism. One way to do so is by participating in elections and we are working with the Clerk's Office to ensure equity in voting by providing spaces where residents of historically underrepresented and disenfranchised groups can register and vote easily within their community.

Golf continues to produce favorable results year-to-date, though we are still uncertain of what the comprehensive net income will be. Rounds are up 18.3% and revenue from rounds is up 28%, with overall program revenue increasing by about 15% over this time last year. We are hopeful for a successful fall season as many traditional fall recreational and entertainment outlets will not be available due to the pandemic and we may continue to fill that need.

Future Commission Items

- 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.
- Task Force on Municipal Golf in Madison Parks – The Task Force has completed its work and issued its final report in late July. While it is on the Commission's September agenda, we anticipate that it will be referred to additional committees and that there will be much discussion around the recommendations.
- Staff is working with many of our contractual partners regarding their agreements with the City. Most of the partners have expressed concerns about the terms of the agreements given the inability to operate normally, or in some cases, at all. Staff expects a significant number of modifications to come to the Commission this fall.
- Parks Equity Team Update – Our internal Equity team has been formed for over a year and, as shared in last month's meeting, has developed the Parks Division Equity Action Plan. Our society continues to experience tragedies and suffer setbacks due to historic injustices, and it is imperative that we engage directly with Commission on our equity and inclusion work to reduce and eliminate disparities in the community. We will continue to brief the Commission on the work of this team as the plan is implemented.
- Special Events at Goodman Pool- As requested by the Commission in August, staff will be analyzing the feasibility and requirements of hosting events at the pool, including for events involving animals.

Staffing Updates

- Chad Hughes has transferred permanently to the position of West Parks Supervisor. He has served as the Interim West Parks Supervisor throughout the summer, overseeing the day-to-day operations of the West Parks and Forest Hill Cemetery.

Section reports

Community Services

Customer Services:

- Discussions are underway to determine shelter reservation status for the remainder of 2020, as well as how reservations will be handled in 2021 during the Covid-19 pandemic. Staff are looking to pilot alternatives that will allow reservations that will be in compliance with the orders.

Warner Park Community Recreation Center:

- On 8/20/20, members of the Tools & Training Change Team facilitated the first department-wide racial equity training. The monthly training series called the Morning Café had 34 staff in attendance and provided a safe space for staff to engage in a facilitated discussion around important issues within the department and the community. The subject covered this month was Whiteness and White Privilege.

Rangers:

- Park Rangers have had a very busy summer. As more Madisonians are choosing to recreate closer to home, and more visitors to Madison are enjoying our public spaces we saw higher than normal numbers of people using our facilities. Many people find this observation surprising at a time when many of our long standing events held in parks have been canceled or moved to an online format. This is proof that there is plenty to do in our parks and plenty of room to social distance.

Aquatics:

- The Goodman Pool is wrapping up the 2020 season and officially closed at 7pm on Sunday August 23. We would like to thank all of those that visited us this season as we adapted our protocols to keep the community safe. There were 15,553 visitors to the pool this summer. The City of Madison beaches will remain open through Labor Day.

Recreation Services:

- Coordinating with Traffic Engineering staff to coordinate individual, physically distanced volunteer projects that will take place as part of Bike to Work Week.

Community Events:

- Essentially, all events for the 2020 season have been cancelled. There are a couple runs scheduled in November and December that are waiting to cancel officially.
- We have started preparing for 2021. Kelly Post is working on the draft event calendar and soon we will be corresponding with long running annual events.

Olbrich Botanical Gardens

- Garden Attendance for August: Olbrich is open from noon to 6 pm daily – allowing up to 100 individuals per each 30 minute segment. Following are statistics from the first 18 days in August.

- Total Attendance = 12,207; Daily average = 678
- Weekday Attendance (12 weekdays) = 6550; Weekday average = 546
- Weekend Attendance (3 weekends) = 5657; Weekend day average = 943

Feedback from visitors continues to be positive with occasional complaints about Garden areas and the Bolz Conservatory closures. A couple of examples follow:

From Bill D on August 1. -- Pretty, easy to walk, lots of plants, flowers, water, but a lot of it was closed to the public. You couldn't go in the big glass cube.

From Wynter F. on August 6 -- I. Freaking. Loved. This. Garden. Friendly for all ages, a lot of different plants and areas to see. There is also an activity (right now at least) for kids to learn about pollinators, and how to be helpful with the environment, and I think that is wonderful! There are honey bees, bumble bees and butterflies constantly roaming around, and in this time of COVID, I really appreciated seeing this beauty.

From Felipe M on August 7. -- Beautiful gardens

- Staff continue to provide virtual programming. Sarah Ellis participated in the Wisconsin Wild Things camp through the Wisconsin Historical Museum. Her presentation over ZOOM featured the different parts of the plants with live examples of leaves, stems and flowers. Intern Ellen Schuebel prepared a video of the Lakeside Kids program streamed through Monona Terrace. Ellen focused on pollinators and efforts at Olbrich Botanical Gardens to support local pollinator populations.
- Poinsettia rooted cuttings arrived. This year will be the first year producing this somewhat finicky crop in the new Production Greenhouse. Mums and asters are budding and will be go out into the Gardens in a few weeks.
- Thanks to a grant from the Stanley Smith Horticultural Trust, we had a full complement of interns working in the outdoor gardens this year. Sadly four of them have already headed back to school with one local who will remain into the fall.

Planning and Development

Cherokee Marsh- North Unit Kiosks

- Parks has hired Glenville Timberwrights to install (2) timber-frame style kiosks at the parking lots in Cherokee Marsh- North Unit. These kiosks will have enclosed displays to house updated property maps and event advertisements that both staff and volunteers have been working on. Should these kiosks be satisfactory, staff plan to hire Glenville to build and install (2) additional kiosks for Cherokee Marsh- South (School Rd) Unit.

District Wide Administrative Master Planning Efforts

- Staff recently completed draft park maps for all parks in Alder District 9. Software changes have provided the opportunity for the Division to reevaluate our park data, graphics and mapping, and begin switching to Geographic Information System (GIS) based mapping and system wide data management.

East Side Off-Leash Dog Exercise Area

- Parks staff posted an online presentation and survey to continue the community engagement process for the two potential east side dog park options. The survey is available until September 26. Parks will review the survey results and project correspondence record with the District Alder and determine if there is sufficient support for one of the two options to continue in the approval process.

Olin Park Building

- A consultant RFP is currently posted for architectural and engineering services for renovation improvements to the existing building. RFP submissions are due August 25 and interviews will be held in early September. Parks anticipates a consultant team will be under contract for the building improvements in November 2020.