

SUPERINTENDENT'S NOVEMBER 2023 REPORT

COMMUNICATIONS TO BOARD OF PARK COMMISSIONERS

October definitely brought with it Fall weather this year, which was noticeable early in the month as trees were changing color. Peak color occurred for us in the latter half of the month, but has extended nicely through the first frost. October is also a month of transition for Parks as we move towards winter operations. Much of the planning work for the winter occurs in the summer, but now is when we are putting the plans into action. Getting snow plows and brooms ready; making sure we have skating rink supplies; reviewing snow plowing routes; and making sure heat is ready in those buildings we need it are just some of the tasks in preparation for helping our community stay active year round. As we have discussed over the last year, staff remains interested in exploring and planning for the future of winter recreation in the face of a changing climate, as there continues to be multiple signs that point towards a need to evolve. This will certainly be a part of our roadmap and work plans moving forward. We are working on the preparation of our work plans and roadmap for 2024 and the future and look forward to continuing to engage with the Commission on this work.

The Lake Monona Waterfront project continues to progress and the Ad Hoc Committee is nearly finished with its work and Sasaki is preparing the final report that will start the approval process in early 2024. We are working on a budget amendment to appropriately resource the initial design development phase as well as prepare for phase 1 construction. Many other projects are still moving as well, with many construction projects finishing up before the snow flies. Updates can be found on our [project webpage](#).

One really good piece of news from October is that the Park Operations section is fully staffed for the first time in at least 4 years. Additionally, the remainder of the Parks Division is very close to fully staffed, with the lone exception of Golf. We are currently hiring for the new Golf Manager position, which is great, but staffing in this area is certainly the highest concern. Lisa Laschinger has done a great job with a talented team to keep the wheels moving in a record breaking year with insufficient staff resources. On that note, Golf has eclipsed 148K rounds played, which is a record (at least for the last 30 years) and an increase of 14% over last year. Additionally, revenue generation is now approaching \$5.2M, which means we are at least 18% above last year's record setting year.

Future Commission Items

- 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.
- West Parks Area Plan – We are continuing the outreach and planning around the West Area planning region. We anticipate having final park development plans for neighborhood and mini parks in the area to share with the Commission in the coming months.
- 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 2024.

Personnel Updates

Promotions/Hires:

- Jennifer Stoiber was hired as the Parks Finance and Administrative Manager. She started her new position on October 16. Jen has worked with the City of Madison for over 20 years in both the Community Development and Finance Divisions.
- Aaron Mockler was promoted to Arborist 2 East Parks from Arborist 1 in the City's Forestry section. He started his new position on October 30.
- Brian Ramos started with East Parks on October 30, 2023, as a Shared Traffic Engineering position to assist with winter operations.
- Erin McCune was hired as to the Conservation Tech Trainee Position. She started with the Conservation section on October 30, 2023.
- Jennifer Delaney has accepted the Director of Guest Experience position at Olbrich Botanical Gardens. She will start on November 13, 2023.
- Samantha Peckham has accepted Director of Horticulture Position at Olbrich Botanical Gardens. She will start on November 13, 2023.

Section reports

Olbrich Botanical Gardens





- **Royal Thai Pavilion & Bridge** –The renovation project on the Royal Thai Pavilion started on September 19th, 2023. Estimated completion of this phase of the project is February 2024.

A tree fell on the bridge to the Royal Thai Pavilion. It caused damaged to the railings. The wood boards on the bridge need replacement and this project was already in progress. Until the railing and bridge boards can be replaced the bridge is closed.

This Royal Thai Pavilion restoration and the bridge repairs were featured on a front page article in the Wisconsin State Journal in September: [Olbrich's Thai Garden off limits for the moment, as the bridge and pavilion need repairs](#)



- **New Bike Racks** – New bike parking was installed this month. The bike racks are permanent and feature cargo bike parking areas as well. The bike racks are located near the B-Cycle station. People used them the day they were installed.
- **GLEAM** – “Best one yet” is a comment often overheard at this year’s exhibit.

A GREAT BIG THANK YOU to all responsible for this year's GLEAM Show, especially with Friday night's Crycopia performance! At 83 and battling cancer, it was a leap of faith to order tickets, but was better "medicine" than all the pills I take each day! It was enchanting! But choosing a favorite was like choosing between children! I couldn't!

GLEAM is one of my favorite Madison events - there's something incredibly special about experiencing the gardens at night surrounded by beautiful lighted art. I look forward to it every year. And I really love the timed tickets approach - I prefer a quiet, introspective experience and the timed tickets help me plan around the busy times.

I enjoy the interplay between the installations, the gardens landscape and nature's sounds.

The gardens are beautiful at night

From the Isthmus Online Newsletter this comment was shared:

What we're experiencing

Last Friday, my partner, future sister-in-law, and two of our closest friends found ourselves at Olbrich's GLEAM exhibit. GLEAM transforms Olbrich's outdoor gardens and tropical conservatory into a dynamic contemporary art gallery of light-based installations. Our party of five arrived around 6:30 p.m., which gave us plenty of time to interact with a dozen installations. Our favorites were The Doors, Mazing Shadows, and the Enchanted Tree Chronicles, opening doorways to another universe, exploring animal shadows, and singing with the guardians of the forest. GLEAM runs from 6:30-10:30 p.m. (last entry at 9:30 p.m.) Wednesday through Saturday through October 28. I promise you, you need to be there to fully experience this nighttime beauty of the gardens.

– Charles Payne, Isthmus contributor

<https://isthmus.com/newsletters/word-of-mouth>

Parks Operations

Conservation:

- Worked on controlling garden escapes such as *Lamium*, *Pachysandra*, and *Vinca* at several parks (Elvehjem, Heritage Sanctuary, Knollwood, Owen, and Prairie Ridge) and biennial weeds such as garlic mustard and dame's rocket in units that have been grazed this season.
- Concluded the prescribed grazing for the year.
- Supported a number volunteer efforts including Clean Lakes Alliance work at Cherokee Marsh North Unit to remove honeysuckle and buckthorn, Friends of Owen Conservation Park work on woody species control in the prairie, and the Friends of Edna Taylor workday focused on litter collection.

Construction:

- Completed work at Glenwood Children's Park to repair the drainage area. The new design provides a wider waterway that includes features to slow the flow of water and filter sediment.
- Finalized the field preparation work for the new NiceRink at Goodman Park.
- Continued the essential commercial driver's license training support for all Operations new hires.
- Worked on playground fall clean-up and added wood mulch to improve safety and appearance.

Facilities:

- Performed seasonal closing and winterizing of facilities, irrigation systems, fountains, and shelters.
- Completed painting at the Brittingham Boats facility and began the seasonal pier removals.
- Built and installed donor signs for the Brittingham Park playground and The Glenn Golf Park.

General Parks:

- Began seasonal fall work including aerating athletic fields, mowing to prepare for Holiday Fantasy in Lights at Olin Park, preparing amenities and equipment for winter, and leaf collection at Forest Hill.
- Supported two volunteer events at Hudson Park to clean up the shoreline, and supported another “buckthorn blitz” at Warner Park to clear invasive buckthorn from the north side of the lagoon.
- Completed maintenance on the brick paver labyrinth at Carpenter-Ridgeway Park to widen the path back to its original size.
- **Ecology Team:**
 - Began planting the 200 native trees and shrubs that will be planted this fall.
 - Worked with the Parks Volunteer Coordinator to support volunteer efforts across the Parks system with various groups such as AmeriCorps, Clean Lakes Alliance, Wild Warner, and Madison Fire Department recruits.
 - Planted beautification beds at Arbor Hills, Aldo Leopold, Sunridge, Owl Creek, Dominion, Sunset, Hoyt, Penn and Rennebohm parks.

Mall Concourse:

- Continued fall bulb planting with 2,000 daffodil and tulip bulbs added to landscape areas.
- Worked with the City Planning Division to review benches, lighting, and vending areas that could support the possible Pedestrian Mall next year.
- Supported preparation and clean-up of a number of events including the Fire Chief's parade, the Madison Night Market, and the Public Power Parade on the Square. The crew also prepared for the possibility of a non-planned Halloween State Street event by removing planters, benches, and bike racks.
- Started leaf cleanup and prepared some of the snow removal equipment for the upcoming winter.

Community Services Report November 2023 – Terrence Thompson**Community Events & Customer Service****Events (Kelly Post)**

- 2024 Annual Park Event reservations have been entered into our reservation system. We had 75 annual returning events put in requests for 2024.
- Community Event staff are also busy updating websites and permit applications for 2024.
- The Community Event and Customer Service team is working with the Planning, Facilities, and Operations to create a full database of all our parks. The database will include shelters, seating capacities, amenities, athletic spaces, # of picnic tables, playgrounds, parking lots, and more. We are hoping having all this information in one place will help to streamline our reservation and permitting processes and provide higher-quality customer service.

Parks Alive (Debra Alleyne)

- Park's leadership demonstrated a desire for Parks Alive to expand past summer-only programming into other seasons. As such, Parks Alive staff, along with the support of selected backbone crewmembers, mobilized to create a series of pilot events for the fall. We created these events in partnership with the Sequoya Library and features their artist in residence, a naturalist, Qwantese Winters, who has been featured on *PBS's Let's Grow Stuff*. Along with growing seasonally appropriate food, we are collaborating with local food cart REAP to provide seasonally appropriate food and treats. Additionally, our grant from the WCA Wisconsin Climbing Association will allow us to fund a local climbing and bouldering gym to help expand the sport to diverse youth and expand the scope of sports for local youth. Parks Alive will maintain its core of fun food and festivities in the fall season scheduled for November 6-8, 2023, from 4pm-7pm.
- Programmed Parks Alive events will take on a different dimension as we focus on instituting neighborhood partnerships with community sites that are adjacent to the Parks Alive parks. This allows the program to create seasonal-appropriate programming and beta test what participation and engagement would look like if these locations were slated as alternate/rain sites for the Summer 2024 programming. At this time, we have established partnerships with the Madison Ho-Chunk Community Center near Owl Creek Park, The Boys and Girls Club near Penn Park and Allied Park, and the Salvation Army near Darbo/Worthington Park. Additionally, we will use the Warner Park Community Recreation Center for the Brentwood event held at the intersection of Trailways and Monterey. The goal is to identify nine community partners willing to host events and become a second home to Parks Alive events.

Customer Service (Joanne Austin)

- The 2023 permit season is wrapping up with sales exceeding last year's for Lake Access, Disc Golf, Cross Country Ski, and Dog Park permits. 2024 annual permits were available for purchase starting November 1, in conjunction with Dane County Parks.
- 2024 shelter reservations open up on November 14, 2023. Staff are busy updating shelter fees and website information for 2024.
- Staff are working on process improvements and new Parks signage for watercraft storage. Additionally, staff are replacing broken racks and checking inventory to propose additional storage racks.
- Staff are updating the athletic field inventory, entering all reservable spaces, and updating fees in RecTrac.

Recreation Services & Aquatics

- Hikes and Hayrides had approximately 150 participants. Downtown Halloween Night saw 1,300 people pass by our table and had 340 hayride riders. Additionally, we supported the WPCRC Halloween Family Fun Night on Friday, October 27, providing s'mores, hayrides, and a movie (Hocus Pocus).
- We are working on winter events such as Groove n Glide, Learn To Series, and Winter Prom and hiring staff for winter and special event attendants.
- Elver, Vilas, and Odana will start preparing for winter operations soon, with Tenney being prepared for the winter season after Thanksgiving.

Rangers & Volunteers

Rangers (Jason Vroman)

- Elver Park has seen a significant change, as vegetation has been cleared to redesign the disc golf course holes 2 – 4. Work is expected to be completed during the first week of November after initial grading and seeding work is completed.



- Rangers completed interviews for our vacant West District Ranger position. There was a large applicant pool, and we are excited to welcome a new Ranger in November. This position will focus on the west district parks and lead up community outreach efforts. Additionally, they will be the liaison to Conservation Parks.

Volunteers (John Weichelt)

- Recent volunteer workday events included AmeriCorps, Diventures, and Catalent. The work completed included trash pickup, invasive removal, shoreline cleanup, and seed collection.



- Volunteer Friends groups from Edna Taylor, Hoyt, Owen, The Glen, and Cherokee all held recent volunteer workdays and special events in partnership with Madison Parks. Work included native plantings, trash removal, invasive removal, and Hayrides in the park. Both Parks staff and volunteers well attended all events.



- In the coming weeks, the volunteer program hopes to recruit volunteers for trail clearing, disc golf course clean up, and recruitment for ice adoption. A large volunteer event is planned with Trek for 140 volunteers on November 17, 2023.

Warner Park Community Recreation Center (Zach Watson)

WPCRC Expansion Update

- The 2024 bid schedule is tight due to all of the projects in the queue, and factoring in priority for City services, the WPCRC is on the bid schedule to bid in May 2024.
- The geothermal test bore will not be completed until January 2024. Due to the bid schedule, the need to get the new lead engineer group JDR up and running on the project and the geo test bore scheduled, the WPCRC expansion project is on hold until January 2024.

North Star Awards 2023

- The WPCRC hosted the Northside Planning Council's 2023 North Star Awards. WPCRC staff Nim Hilliard, Sterlyn Woods, and Zach Watson received awards for their dedication and service to Madison's Northside. The ceremony reached capacity and was well attended by community members who serve the Northside in varying capacities.