

SUPERINTENDENT'S DECEMBER 2020 REPORT

COMMUNICATIONS TO BOARD OF PARK COMMISSIONERS

Park Superintendent's Monthly Report Summary

The end of 2020 is within site, and Parks staff are very busy focusing on preparing for a modified winter recreation season, while having an eye towards and uncertain 2021 spring/summer. Staff is already beginning to think about and preparing for a summer reservation, events, and programming season that will likely be impacted from the pandemic, but to without extent and timelines it is a major challenge. Another major challenge has been engaging with staff and keeping a strong common mission during the pandemic. It has been a difficult year for everyone, including staff, and the year is getting old. It is clear to me that the events of 2020 are causing significant stress for our team and I will continue to work to support and assist our staff as we move forward.

1. Staff are allocating a significant amount of time and effort to developing the winter recreational schedule, especially in light of the newest PHMDC orders. This involves more changes and modifications to the normal. As a part of winter preparation we are working on defining essential workers and how we manage positive cases and/or close contacts within our work units. This requires a significant amount of discussion and review with staff, many of whom are more fearful than they had been regarding COVID infection rates. We have identified essential workers. We will work to communicate the plans for the winter as we finalize them, but please know the changing environment of regulations regarding public health orders makes this a challenge.
2. Staff are getting the WPCRC back as a park facility. There is not a solid re-opening date yet, but staff are preparing for the necessary conversion work. This will take a very significant amount of time and effort before being open to the public and we want to ensure we have both the facility and policies/use procedures in place prior to doing so. We are working on all of those aspects now.
3. Parks Planning staff is working with the Friends of Starkweather Creek and City Engineering to find a way to honor the work and life of Carl Landsness.
4. Parks staff are actively involved in City planning projects for East Towne, West Towne, and South Madison. All three areas are critical for Parks being actively involved to make the best decisions now to ensure all Madisonians have access to high quality parks for generations to come.
5. The City Council did adopt the Mallards extension to their use agreement for Warner Park. There were concerns raised regarding our processes and at least one alder has requested additional evaluation of how we manage our partnership relationships. One item of note here is the focus on RFP's as a tool to manage these relationships prior to extensions. I would say that this would create a very significant need for increased resources to manage these ongoing contractual partnerships going forward.
6. The Finance Committee did accept the Golf Task Force report, but with more questions and concerns about implementation plans.
7. The City and Parks Foundation have been approached by a potential donor who would update and improve the Glenway Golf Course. More details will be available soon, but the initial concept appears to be very consistent with the Task Force's recommendations.
8. Also on golf, staff are working to develop a caddie program that would be focused as a youth employment/development opportunity.

9. Staff are working to develop improved work planning and priority lists for the coming year. As the pandemic continues, we are seeing an increase in cases and contacts by staff, which puts a significant premium on staff resources.
10. Very importantly, the City adopted its budget last month. Parks did ok all things considered, with limited reductions in resources available. One of those is a reduction in lifeguard services, which we look forward to working with the Commission on prior to the aquatics season for 2021. The most important part of the budget is the furlough program, which has led to lots of conversations with staff to date and will be a challenge to implement for the Parks Division without impacting services. Currently, the City is working on a voluntary time away program to see if mandatory furloughs can be reduced or eliminated. The uncertainty around this is creating more challenges as we work to establish project workplans for 2021 and beyond. At this point, it seems likely that we will need to reduce our commitment to the community on capital projects in 2021 a little to address staffing resource limitations.

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.
- Staff are working with Big Top regarding the Breese contract and the current lack of ability for Forward Madison to play or train at the Facility. This issue has caused significant concerns for Big Top as it relates to the future of the relationship between the City and Big Top. The primary focus from a staff perspective at Breese is to maintain stability at Breese through this pandemic to allow for future success.
- The Vilas Park Master Plan continues to be developed with significant public engagement on final draft plans ongoing this Fall. The next public meeting on the draft plan is scheduled for 11/16/2020. Staff is preparing a briefing and update to the Commission in January.
- 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 January.
- Allied Alcohol Ban – Was referred back to the Parks Commission.

Section reports

Community Services

Customer Services

- Although 2020 was not a great year for shelter reservations, we began accepting new reservations for next year already. We did not hold our former “Lottery Day” event in November, but allowed customers to call or reserve online instead. With all hands on board, all went well and we plan to continue this process in the future. Customers love spending time in our parks and that showed with the number of permits that were purchased this year. 2021 Lake Access, Disc Golf, Dog Park and Cross Country Ski permits are already available for purchase and many requests are coming in. We look forward to a bright 2021!

Warner Park Community Recreation Center

- We have received the wonderful news that we will be transitioning back into the WPCRC in December 2020. We are excited to resume services and reconnect with the community. We are anticipating a restoration period of at least 1-month before reopening to the public. We are in the early stages of working with Parks and community partners to develop plans for a safe return and hope to have the facility available for limited use in January 2021.

Rangers

- As the colorful leaves of fall give way to the bare trees of winter, Rangers are busy changing with the season as well. Parks are still pretty busy and Rangers are out actively patrolling. We are looking forward to the winter season and supporting people as they get out into the parks to stay active during the winter season. With the temperatures getting colder, Park Rangers have been working with homeless outreach to connect unsheltered people with resources to keep them safe during the winter months. At a time when the CDC recommends not to move unsheltered people out of encampments, this partnership has been important to streamline the available resources to people who need them.

Recreation Services

- With assistance from Josh Schmitt, detailed operation plans are underway to accommodate a safe and enjoyable experience for visitors this winter. The primary goals for the winter is to increase access to a variety of outdoor winter recreation activities and minimize contacts between users. While our operations are likely to look very different, we’re looking forward to another season of winter recreation.

Community Events

- We held our first virtual Street Use Staff Commission meeting on November 18. We are reaching out to Street Use event organizers to thank them for their cooperation and update them on what we know for the 2021 event process. Work continues on the Park event ordinance and on the on-line Park event application.

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Wishing you all Safe and Happy Holidays!

Olbrich Botanical Gardens

Attendance

November 1 – 22, 2020 = 4,970 Weather continues to be a factor in attendance, though some regular visitors are planning to continue no matter the weather; average of 226 per day; 776 visited on November 8, an unseasonably warm day. Lowest attendance of 39 was Monday, November 16, a chilly, cloudy day.

Bolz Conservatory attendance on the most recent weekend:

Saturday, 11/21: 167 individuals

Sunday, 11/22: 65 individuals

The addition of a few poinsettias and some well-place twinkle lights has enhanced the ambience of the Bolz Conservatory during these gloomy days of November and into December

‘Breaking the Bias Habit’ a training by Dr. William Cox, UW-Madison, was conducted via ZOOM for all of Olbrich Botanical Garden’s staff. It was held in the evening to allow for part-time staff who hold day jobs to attend. 42 staff were able to participate in the 3-hour training that included tools to help reduce unconscious bias. OBG’s *Community Engagement and Inclusion Work Group* organized and planned the training, which was funded by Olbrich Botanical Society.



Staff have pivoted to planning and producing a variety of virtual programming from lectures to ‘garden gabs’ to virtual story-times. Some of these are available at these online sites: <https://www.facebook.com/OlbrichBotanicalGardens>
<https://www.instagram.com/olbrichgardens/>
<https://twitter.com/olbrichgardens>
<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCivtI7tZ1J3bLo-QDpivyfQ>

Virtual education programs for adults, beginning in 2021 will be available advertised in Olbrich’s online Education Catalog in December.

The first snow accumulation of the season – November 24. Taken from the Frautschi Family Learning Center rooftop plaza.



Planning and Development

Vilas Park Master Plan

- Community Input Meeting #3 to present and discuss the Draft Final Master Plan was held on November 16, 2020 with approximately 116 attendees in the Zoom meeting. A public comment period opened shortly after the meeting and will continue through December 4, 2020 prior to the development of the Final Master Plan Report.

Madison Adventure Bike Trail

- The public engagement portion of our city wide Madison Bicycle Adventure Trail is now complete. A series of 3 public informational meetings were held in October and approximately 100 people attended. We also have received over 100 emails to our project email address. Both forms of public engagement and comment returned overwhelming support for the project. Many people asked how they could become more involved in bringing these planned trails to fruition. Planning staff will now work with our consultant to make final edits to the network map, compile feedback, and bring it to BPC for final review and adoption

Playground Replacements 2020- Group 3

- Playground replacements are complete at Galaxy, Morrison, and Orlando Bell Parks. Please note that Morrison has the “bamboo forest”, a new type of play equipment for Madison Parks.

Olin Park Building Renovation - Former Wisconsin Medical Society Building

- Parks staff will brief the Commission on the work that has been completed to date for the building renovation and site improvements. Parks staff have been working with City Facilities Management and an architectural consultant team to adaptively reuse the building. The renovation improvements are currently in the programming and pre-design phase of design development.