

SUPERINTENDENT'S APRIL 2019 REPORT COMMUNICATIONS TO BOARD OF PARK COMMISSIONERS

Park Superintendent's Monthly Report Summary

Spring has sprung, at least mostly, and staff are busy working to prepare for the busiest time of the year for Parks. With the recent elections, there is significant change on the Council and Mayor-elect Rhodes-Conway will take office on April 16th. Staff will be meeting with new Alders and the Mayor to share the POSP and current projects with these new policymakers. Staff will also gather input and insights on their priorities for the Parks system moving forward.

Permanent Staffing Changes:

There were no permanent staffing changes in the past month, but staff have been busy beginning the reinstatement and hiring process for seasonal staffing that supports the Division. In 2018, the total number of hourly/seasonal staff employed by Parks was 361, which is slightly more than double the 179.1 permanent authorized positions in Parks.

Future Commission Items

- Urban Forestry Taskforce – The Urban Forestry Taskforce is likely to have a completed report with recommendations in the next few months. The task force was created by resolution and its recommendations will be reviewed by the BPC.
- IPM Taskforce – The IPM taskforce has begun meeting and will have recommendations for consideration in 2019.
- Golf – The 2018 Golf season was a very difficult one with the wettest year on record since the City has operated golf courses. Staff is working to prepare a report to update the Commission, Golf Subcommittee, the Council, and the public on the status of the Enterprise and anticipate completing this report by April 2019. The courses opened on 4/1/19, which is an earlier than average opening date.
- Dog Policy – The Long Range Planning Subcommittee has started work on reviewing the policy related to dogs in parks. Staff is hopeful that any policy changes will be brought to the Commission in the first half of the year.
- Off-Leash Dog Parks – Staff is working to determine potential off-leash improvements in the priority areas of the West side, Atwood/East Isthmus, and Far East/Grandview. The Approved Master Plan for North Star Park will address the deficiency in Grandview. Staff are working on concepts for the other two priority areas and anticipate moving forward with engagement processes in 2019.
- Capital and Operating Budgets – Parks staff will be working with President Leopold to discuss how to best present and take input from the Commission on the Division's budgets. Direction for submitting the Capital Budget will be provided to staff on April 17th.
- Vilas Park Master Plan – The planning work for this iconic and historic Park will begin in 2019. The project is being led by Landscape Architect Kate Kane and is the process of selecting a consultant team to lead the effort. This is not anticipated to come to the Commission for approximately a year, but if Commissioners would like to know more about the project, they can contact Kate to discuss.
- Performance Excellence Initiative – Staff is working on an informational presentation to share with the Commission on the City's Performance Excellence Initiative. This is anticipated to be ready for the Commission in May or June.

- Alliant Energy Center Master Plan / Destination District Plan – Parks staff is working with City Planning staff to prepare a presentation to the Commission on the County's work and plans for the Alliant area. Staff anticipates presenting this information in May or June.

Section Updates

Olbrich Botanical Gardens, April 2019

- Construction: The foundations for the learning center and production greenhouse are beginning to take shape. Staff look forward to the pouring of the subfloor of the learning center, which will show the foot print very clearly. Work also continues on routing utilities through the existing building and retrofitting all areas of the existing building for the fire suppression sprinkler system.
- Bolz Conservatory: Closed for its annual maintenance shutdown March 25 - April 5. During this time, tall trees will be pruned and paddle fans replaced using an aerial lift. Curator Colten Blackburn will also do some bed redesign and replanting of the orchid aerie as well as wash some of the upper windows.
- Outdoor Gardens/Volunteers: The first ever 'Vol-A-Pa-Loo-Za' was held on April 1. This special 90-minute program was presented by the outdoor gardens' staff led by Jeff Epping. Each staff member had an opportunity to present their plans, ideas, and aspirations for their garden areas during the 2019 season. 140 individual volunteers and staff attended the presentation, which was also filmed by City Channel.
- Education: Preparations are underway for *Botany Explorer School Program* (April 16 - May 30) which has reached full enrollment. For students K-3rd grade, 26 schools and 42 sessions. Waitlist requests are being accepted from schools still hoping to participate in Olbrich's *Botany Explorer School Program*.

Community Services

- Recreation Services: Earth Day Challenge currently has 228 volunteers registered for the event on Sat. April 27 at numerous parks throughout the city. Bird & Nature Festival is scheduled for Sunday, April 28 at Warner Park featuring ongoing live raptor presentations; learn to nature photography, hayrides, pond dipping, partner displays and other fun activities from 1-4pm.
- Front Desk: Parks currently offers 56 racks at 16 sites, providing 354 canoe and kayak storage spaces. Current customers have all been contacted to see if they wish to renew their lease agreements for 2019. At this time, 312 spaces have already been filled. The Cherokee South and Olbrich Creekside locations are particularly important because they focus on connecting children to the water through programs Goodman Community Center and Friends of Starkweather Creek.
- WPCRC : On March 23, 2019, WPCRC hosted Free Bikes 4 Kidz bike giveaway. 500 bikes were given away to Northside families.
- Rangers & Aquatics: Park Rangers have begun our hiring for the summer. We will be adding 4 recruit hourly rangers for the summer season to our current staff of 5 permanent and 3 seasonal Rangers. This will bring our total Park Ranger staff to 12 for the summer.

Operations

Conservation:

- Ski grooming ended the first week of March. The winter equipment was prepared and transported for storage.
- Sent notifications of upcoming prescribed burns and began conservation land burning.
- Developed a plan to engage volunteers using existing citizen science programs to monitor birds, amphibians, insects and plants in conservation parks. Initial conservation land involved includes: Cherokee Marsh North and South units, Owen and Edna Taylor.

Construction:

- Began preparing woodchips and topsoil for construction season.
- Replaced collapsed culvert at Vilas, which closed the road for a day.

Facilities:

- Remediated mold at Tenney boathouse and repaired piers damaged by 2018 flood.
- The team finished rebuilding one pier and will soon complete a second. Pier installation is scheduled to start April 9.
- Held a pool opening planning meeting with the Community Services group to review actions, timelines, and roles and responsibilities. Worked on securing back-up motor for pool per capital project plan.
- Started the process of turning on water fountains and shelter water.
- Progressed on Focus on Energy lighting capital improvement projects by retrofitting all fluorescent fixtures at Hoovers Boathouse with energy-efficient LED's.
- Inspected, repaired and replaced HVAC equipment in preparation for season change.

Forestry:

- Assisted City Engineering Division for upcoming reconstruction projects and determine necessary steps to preserve existing street trees within the project limits.
- Finalized and distributed to Digger's Hotline the spring 2019 planting routes.
- Prepared and submitted a list of assessable street trees to be planted in spring 2019. Total number of assessable trees: 563 at a cost of \$130,953.80.
- Assessed trees for no root cutting for the for 2019 Resurfacing Curb and Gutter projects.
- Preemptively removed ash trees.

General Parks (Central, East & West):

- Transitioned from winter snow removal and activities to spring/summer preparation.
- Seasonal hiring process continues with some challenge in securing workers.
- Submitted tree orders for spring planting and mapping tree locations.
- Forest Hills cemetery repaving to start around 4/15. The front entrance will be closed for about 2 weeks. The work is planned to be completed by Memorial Day.