

SUPERINTENDENT'S JANUARY 2026 REPORT

COMMUNICATIONS TO BOARD OF PARK COMMISSIONERS

January 2026

Park Superintendent's Monthly Report Summary

December's wintery weather provided ample opportunity for outdoor fun! It is rare that ski trails and ice rinks are open before the holiday break, and 2025 was an exception. Ski trails were open in early December, ice rink conditions were favorable (though they continue to be sporadic), and our concession operation opened on December 20. The Parks team continues to ride the wave of Mother Nature, while diligently working to ensure that the community is able to enjoy classical outdoor recreation when conditions allow. It is also important to recognize the role that the Parks Operations Team plays in ensuring public safety and reliable multimodal transportation options, as they have been incredibly busy with providing high quality snow removal operations.

The Parks Division is committed to responsibly stewarding the various cultural resources within the system. As such, when we know better, we truly strive to do better and make remediations where needed. In early December, staff worked with the Wisconsin State Historical Society and representatives of the Ho-Chunk Nation to remove a monument marker that had been placed on top of an ancient burial mound along Edgewood's Park & Pleasure Drive in the early 1900's. This work was complicated and required significant consultation, and I'm proud of how our team handled it in a respectable and professional manner.

The Golf Team is working hard to prepare for the start of the 2026 season. The most critical focus for the team is implementing the new Point of Sale system, which will offer a significantly improved customer interface. The team is also preparing to ensure the smoothest possible transition to a 54-hole operation, as improvements at Yahara continue and seasonal recruitments are underway to have a talented team and prepared team in place for the start of the season. I also look forward to unveiling new branding for the Madison Parks Golf Program in the coming months.

Efforts are well underway for Olbrich's Comprehensive Master Plan. Olbrich and City Staff, along with Olbrich Botanical Society and the consultant team are planning community outreach activities to inform the process. The first public Meeting will be on January 22 for anyone wishing to attend.

The Madison LakeWay project is moving forward nicely. Staff have been working with the consultant team to develop construction documents and refine the final design for the park improvements to the causeway, which are anticipated to be bid on in the Fall of 2026. A final public meeting for this work is scheduled for February 2, 2026.

The Parks Management Team is putting finishing touches on the 2026 Work Plan. The Plan is ambitious, but critical to advancing the strategies set forth to continue to provide an ideal park system in the 2025-2030 Park and Open Space Plan. Staff will continue brief the Commission on the Work Plan throughout the year. I anticipate we will be spending time developing performance metrics by the end of the year, particularly as it relates to the work we will be doing with the Results Madison performance-based budgeting.

Please be sure to join us for the grand opening of Door Creek Park Shelter on Saturday January 24 at 10AM.

Future Commission Items

- Alcohol in Parks Policy
- Parking Assets in Parks Analysis
- Olin Houses
- Marshall Houses

Personnel Updates

- No updates to report.

Section Updates

Community Services Section (Terrence Thompson)

Community Events (Kelly Post)

- Managed and issued permits for a full season of community events in parks and public spaces, supporting organizers and ensuring the safe and well-coordinated use of these areas.
- Successfully navigated our first year of issuing Street Use permits without a designated commission.
- Completed post-season coordination meetings with the Parks and Street Use teams and are implementing minor process updates.

- These updates include enhancements to our website, online application, and forms to improve clarity, efficiency, and the overall customer experience.

Parks Alive (Debra Alleyne)

- The Parks Equity Team concluded 2025, reflecting on our learnings and achievements.
 - We discussed progress on the Equity Action Plan and prepared to implement our projects.
 - The Training and Learning Team finished the equity onboarding video and presented it to the Parks Leadership Team.
- We worked with community partners and saved costs to maximize our budget. This allowed us to offer quality services and improve community experiences.
 - Community feedback indicated that serving food in shelters lacked proper seating and relaxation areas. Additionally, DJs had no dry space, risking events in the rain.
 - To address this, we used budget savings to buy more tents, waterproofing supplies, and games for 2026.

Customer Service (Joanne Austin)

- In 2025, the Customer Services team supported;
 - Board of Park Commissioners (BPC): 12 meeting agendas and accompanying minutes
 - Facilities Programs and Fees (FPF): 3 of 7 scheduled meetings
 - Habitat Stewardship Subcommittee: 4 meetings
 - Parks Long Range Planning Subcommittee: 11 meetings, with one being canceled
- In 2025, 29 of the 30 mooring spaces were filled, and 429 of the 441 watercraft (including canoes, kayaks, and paddleboards) were occupied.
- Waitlists for all watercraft storage locations have declined to more manageable numbers, averaging about 20 at each location.
- In early February 2026, we will contact all current mooring and watercraft agreement holders with instructions on how to renew their spaces, as new leases will begin on April 1.
- Met with the Public Works Field Lead worker to discuss which of the 500+ fields and courts will be unavailable in 2026 due to field conditions after an entire season of use.
- Full agreement users will begin entering their athletic field reservations in January, while public users without agreements will be able to make their reservations starting in mid to late February.

Recreation Services & Aquatics (Tracey Hartley)

Winter Recreation

- Door Creek will have its grand opening on Saturday, January 24.
 - In partnership with MadNorSki, Parks will be offering free snowshoe and ski lessons in the morning, along with free rentals for attendees.
- Tenney has been the most popular location and was open on Christmas Eve, New Year's Eve, and New Year's Day.
- The last day for winter recreation at Odana Hill Golf Course, Door Creek, Elver, Tenney, and Vilas will be Sunday, February 15.

Recreation Services

- We have a variety of winter events, including Candlelight Snowshoe Hikes, Groove and Glides, Skate Cinema, Winter Prom, and Learn to Ice Fish, scheduled for the remainder of the winter season.

Aquatics (Shane Martin)

- Planning for the summer 2026 season is underway, and pre-season training dates have been scheduled for this spring.
- The Goodman Pool will open on Thursday, June 11, and will celebrate its 20th anniversary this year.

Rangers & Volunteers

Rangers (Steve Dray)

- In December, Rangers had 18 enforcement contacts, resulting in 5 warnings, 9 citations, and 4 behavioral bans.
- Madison stands out from many other municipalities by offering a disc golf course that remains open during the winter months, specifically the Hiestand Disc Golf Course.
 - Although the course cannot always remain open due to significant weather changes, it was accessible approximately 75% of the time in December.
- Rangers have been busy clearing snow and ice from the dog parks to ensure that the entrances and pathways are safe and accessible for all park users.

Volunteers (John Weichelt)

- A celebration was held to recognize accomplishments and express gratitude to our volunteers. We had over 90 attendees at the Warner Park Community Recreation Center on December 11.

- Key volunteer events in December included weekly Conservation Volunteer Workdays at Owen Conservation Park and Cherokee Marsh Conservation Park.
- Volunteers assisted with ice preparation for rinks at Rennebohm, Heritage Heights, Westmorland, Sunset, Wexford, Olbrich, Nakoma, and Hillington parks.

Warner Park Community Recreation Center (Zach Watson)

- WPCRC is expanding its Fitness Center membership options with a new fitness and pickleball pass for affordable access.
 - The updated fitness center overlooks Warner Park and features new flooring and equipment.
 - We officially opened it on January 2, 2026.
- The Webtrac platform will soon be available, allowing access to memberships and programs online.
- Upgrades to the old gymnasium will begin on January 9, 2026, and we expect it to be ready for use by March 1, 2026.

Park Operations (Chad Hughes)

Central Parks (Jay Walters)

- Performed snow removal on Central Park responsibilities.
- Prepared Ice at Vilas and Goodman, we were able to open Goodman, Vilas General and Vilas Lagoon for skating!
- Large Trees were removed at Orton, Fraust, and Wingra parks.
- Ecology Team
 - Brush mowed in managed meadows (until snow fall put a end to that temporarily) and cleared brush at Warner, Hudson, Wexford and Olin Lakeside.
 - Burned brush piles from contract work at Elver park.

Conservation (Hannah Quinlan)

- Groomed ski trails in December!
- Processed seed collected by staff and volunteers
- Removed hazard and damaged trees around parking lot at Cherokee Marsh South Unit
- Cleared brush and thinned trees in oak woodland habitat at Cherokee Marsh South Unit, Owen, and Prairie Ridge.

Construction (Rich Bergmann)

- Performed 2 General plows for the Streets Division.
- Hauled snow from Mall Concourse, Goodman Maintenance and Dutch Mill Park and Ride.
- Continued moving donated topsoil material onto park land.
- Perform playground end of season route maintenance data logging.

East Parks (Spencer Werner)

- Installed NiceRink liners and filled with water at Olbrich, Door Creek, and Heritage Heights.
- Building as much of a base on the Olbrich hockey land rink as much as possible while it was cold.
- Tenney and Warner lagoons were cleared of snow in the skating areas and surface prep started to get them open as soon as possible.
- Tree removal project at Yahara Golf Course started due to a future driving range expansion.

Facilities Maintenance (Joel Ringgenberg)

- Built a barrier wall in the warming room at Rennebohm shelter to hide the exposed plumbing.
- Built cabinetry and shelving at Door Creek for Community Services staff.
- Turned on the water for ice at Vilas and Tenney floating hockey rinks.

Mall Maintenance (Mark Kiesow)

- Consistent snow maintenance for the first half of December including plowing, brooming, piling and hauling snow
- Installed holiday decor, such as holiday lighting on BRT stations, winter boughs, and planter decor
- Performed shop and vehicle maintenance, including snow machine maintenance.

West Parks (Charlotte Blotz)

- Set up general and hockey rinks, and shelter at Elver and Westmorland Parks. Supported 6 adopt ice rinks by delivering materials and supplies. Also removed snow and sent out the water wagon to help establish ice bases. Prep snow removal equipment and removed snow from routes

Planning & Development (Adam Kaniewski)

- Preparing capital improvement projects for 2026 construction and other park planning efforts scheduled for work in 2026.
- Kicked off internal Capital Improvement Program efforts, which includes identifying costs and prioritizing new construction and maintenance needs.
- Held neighborhood playground planning workshop on January 6 for 2026 playground replacements, including James Madison, Heifetz, Orton, Marshall, Eastmorland, and Newbery.
- Preparing RFP to solicit consultants for the Needs Assessment update.
- A Purchase of Services contract was awarded to Parkitecture + Planning for the design of the Cypress Park splash pad and playground replacement. Staff has begun engagement work with area residents.
- Worked with neighborhood residents, Alders, City Forestry, and consultant, Stand Associates, to design replacement retaining wall while saving a mature oak tree at Lincoln School Retaining Wall at James Madison Park.
- Final review of the Recreational Biking Maintenance and Operations Plan and Trail Maintenance Agreement is underway. Planning and Development staff have worked over the past year to develop the documents with input from various staff and community partners.
- Yahara Hill Golf Course: Permitting and approval work is underway for planned cart paths and a new well transfer pipe. Bidding is anticipated to occur in early 2026.
- 2026 Park Impact Fee rates have been calculated and are now in effect. The annual process involves updating the fees per MGO 20.08(2) and updating a multitude of public facing and internal documents for use in the new year.
- Common Council approved (Legistar: [90935](#)) a Purchase of Services contract with Sasaki Associates to prepare construction documents and oversight services for the Madison LakeWay project. Construction is anticipated to begin in mid-2027.
- The Board of Public Works and Common Council authorized the Plans and Specifications of numerous projects for bidding, including Hoyt Parking Lot Reconstruction, Warner Park Pickleball Courts, and Worthington Park Futsal Court. The projects are expected to be posted for bidding in early 2026.
- Impact Fees: In 2025, P&D staff coordinated and administered 248 separate Park Impact Fee payments. That is about 1 payment per business day.
- Development Reviews: Staff have been coordinating with developers on numerous neighborhood developments which have or are planned to include parkland dedication. Those developments include Hill Valley, Reiland Grove, LEO Living, and Starkweather.