

SUPERINTENDENT'S NOVEMBER 2025 REPORT
COMMUNICATIONS TO BOARD OF PARK COMMISSIONERS
Park Superintendent's Monthly Report Summary

As November begins, the weather has fully changed to autumn, with the full array of colors and leaves falling from the trees. The Parks Division is conducting all the transition work that needs to be done to be ready for winter, such as the closure of restrooms and seasonal facilities, pulling piers, and wrapping up our final mowing routes. Fall tree planting is underway, and seed collection is happening where possible. During a cross-training session, staff collected seeds from the demonstration garden at the Lakeside Offices that will benefit managed meadows throughout the system. The Conservation team has burned more acres throughout the 2025 season than ever before, due in large part to a growing number of staff and volunteers that have been trained in safe prescribed burns. This work will lay the foundation for the rotation of prescribed burns to keep natural areas healthy and promote environmental sustainability. The team has also started meeting with other City agencies to plan for the upcoming snow season – which could start any day now—or perhaps it will wait.

Every fall the Community Services team gets ready for the following year's reservations by reaching out to annual event permit holders and starting to sell 2026 lake access, disc golf, ski, and dog permits. With much anticipation, staff are preparing for 2026 shelter reservations, which officially open on November 3. This year, the room formerly known as the Boardroom at the Parks Lakeside Offices will be available to the public to reserve as the Lakeside Community Room. As always, the team's goal is to have winter recreation ready for the December winter break, as such, the team is preparing by recruiting winter attendants and prepping the winter shelters. This will be the first winter that Door Creek shelter is open for winter recreation. The construction team has finalized the grading and preparation needed for a Nice Rink to be installed for skaters to enjoy as soon as the weather allows.

Olbrich Botanical Gardens just wrapped up GLEAM's 10th anniversary exhibit, with record attendance of 38,800 guests. In partnership with the Olbrich Botanical Society, this event brings innovation, art, and community together in an incredibly special way. This year's exhibit focused on the concept of reflection with installations from local, regional, and international artists.

The Golf season is still going strong, but starting to wind down. The 9-hole facilities – The Glen Golf Park and Monona Golf Course will close the first weekend of November. The other courses will remain open as weather and staffing allow, which is generally around Thanksgiving. By the end of October, rounds of golf played in 2025 surpassed the 2024 season record of over 160,000 rounds. The Yahara course improvement project is moving along well, with course reconfiguration and the project to install a new irrigation pump system and improvements wrapping up.

The Madison Mallards have begun construction on the previously approved Fan Dugout seating area, and plan to have significant concrete work done before the ground freezes. This will put the project on track to have new seating available at the Warner Park Ballpark by next spring. The Madison Mallards are fully funding the new seating construction, which will benefit baseball and softball fans alike. The Planning and Development team and the Facilities Maintenance team have been closely involved in this project.

On October 28, the Park and Open Space Plan passed its final vote for adoption at the Common Council. The development of the 2025 – 2030 POSP was the culmination of hours of hard work by the Long Range Planning Subcommittee, the Parks Planning and Development

staff, the Board of Park Commissioners, and members of the public who contributed their feedback and perspectives to this document. This is not the end of the story, but rather the beginning of the next five years as the strategies outlined in the POSP will be put into place to ensure a better park system and quality of life for Madison residents and visitors. Thank you to everyone who contributed and made this plan possible.

Future Commission Items

- The following items will be brought to the Commission over the next year:
 - Alcohol in Parks Policy
 - Parking Assets in Parks Analysis
 - Olin Houses
 - Marshall Houses
 - 2026 Work Plan

PERSONNEL UPDATES

Promotions/Hires:

James Van Sickle returned as Parks Athletic Fields Leadworker in East Parks on October 13, 2025. James previously worked for the Parks Division for eight years and held the position until 2023.

Connor Warren was promoted from Hourly Greenskeeper Assistant to a Golf Course Maintenance Worker LTE position effective September 28, 2025.

Departures:

Keira Miller resigned from her position as Parks Maintenance Worker position in West Parks. Her last day was October 10, 2025.

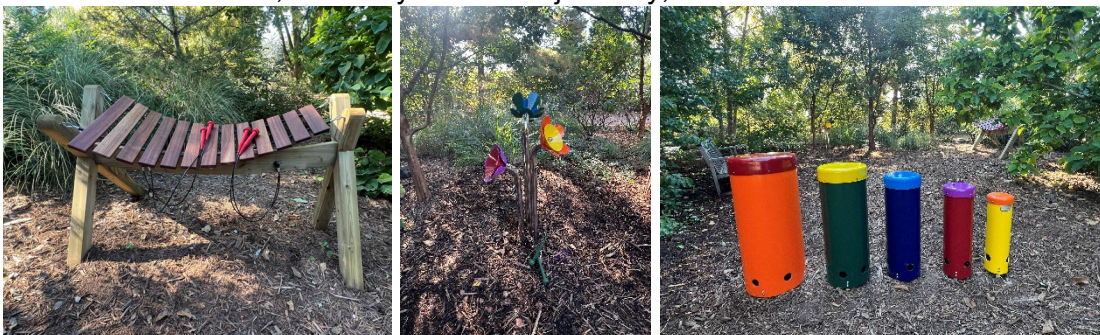
William Røgeberg resigned from his position as Parks Maintenance Worker position in West Parks. His last day was October 10, 2025.

Brendan Svaglic resigned from his position as Parks Worker on the Mall Maintenance Team. His last day was October 31, 2025.

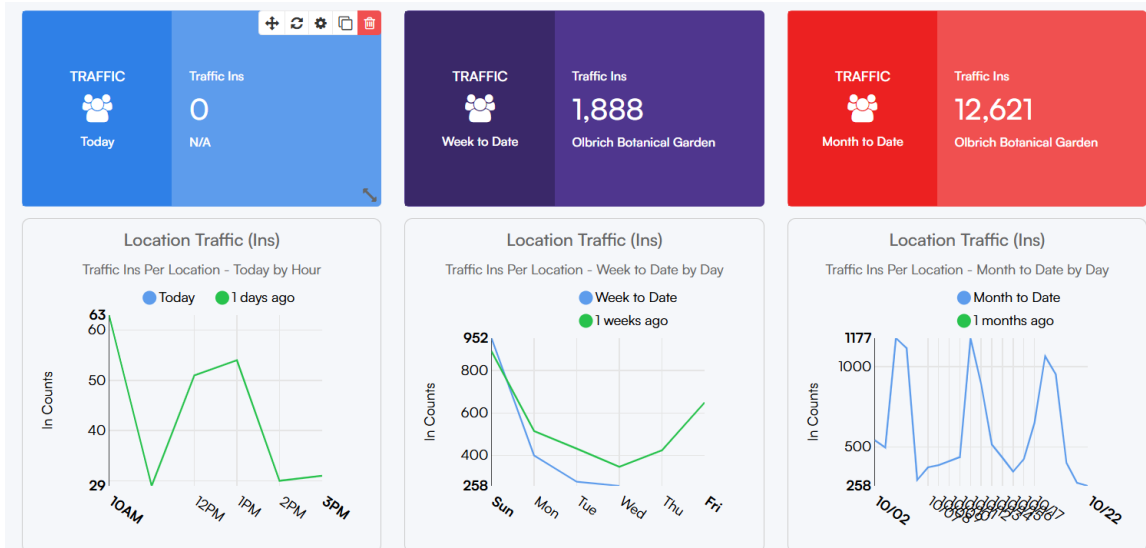
SECTION UPDATES

Olbrich Botanical Gardens (Tanya Zastrow)

- Tunes of WOW: The Woods of Wonder now features three groupings of musical instruments for all ages to enjoy. The three installations are from Percussion Play and include the Akadinda, Harmony Flower Major Posy, and Rainbow Sambas.



- **Bulbs!** Horticulture staff and volunteers are busy this fall preparing for next spring. Together they've planted over 4,000 bulbs in various gardens. We also hosted a bulb sale which offered 4 different bulb mixes and 3 different individual bulbs totaling over 3,800 bulbs. This sale sold out! Staff are looking at expanding the bulb sale next year due to the popularity.
- **New York Times:** Recently the New York Times featured Olbrich Botanical Gardens as one of the items to do when spending ["36 Hours in Madison"](#). Destination Madison worked on featuring Madison with the New York Times for a long time. It was great to not only see Madison featured, but to see Olbrich Botanical Gardens as the cover photo for the article along with a photo of the Royal Thai Pavilion.
- **SenSource People Counter:** Historically Olbrich has tracked attendance manually through a clicker that our volunteers used to count everyone that entered the building. We now have a sensor in the ceiling in our main entrance that counts people that enter and leave the building. Thanks to this new system we can track attendance not only by day but by hour. We can also run reports and see in live time how many people are entering and leaving. Below is an example of one of the reports we can now run:



Parks Operations (Chad Hughes)

Central Parks

- Fall tree planting operations started.
- Welcomed a new Parks Worker to the team through Park Worker Trainee Program.
- Performed year end natural area mowing to control woody invasives.

Conservation

- Conducted a prescribed burn at Owen Park.
- Controlled reed canary grass, porcelain berry, and brush re-sprouts with cutting and herbicide treatments.
- Removed an obsolete pier from Cherokee Marsh North Unit.
- Supported volunteers in several native seed collection events.

Construction

- Made repairs to the access drive washouts and runoff at Heistand Park.
- Installed a game table at Bernie's Beach, through collaboration with the neighborhood association and Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funding.
- Removed the old playground pea gravel pits and restored the turf at Sherwood Forest Park.

East Parks

- Dropped mulch and removed brush for a volunteer native planting at Sandburg Park near the existing playground.
- Volunteers helped with a grant funded tree and native plug planting project near the new Tenney Beach shelter.
- Installed temporary fencing at the end of hole 2 at the Hiestand Park frisbee golf course to alleviate potential safety concerns.

Facilities Maintenance

- Winterization of irrigation, community gardens, fountains, water bubblers, and splash pads began.
- Preparations for finalizing Door Creek shelter for Winter Recreation with cabinetry, storage boxes for winter equipment, and ice maintenance plumbing.
- Updated locks at McPike Park to mitigate vandalism.

Mall Maintenance

- Continued leaf cleanup from the service area.
- Removed the portable visitor center booth for the year.
- Performed fall turf maintenance including aerating, fertilizing, and overseeding.

West Parks

- Fertilized low use athletic fields with organic fertilizer.
- Pruned trees and cleared brush on Elver disc golf course.
- Invasive species removal/viewshed project clearing at Marshall Park.
- Remove decorations and plantings around graves at Forest Hill Cemetery.

Planning and Development (Adam Kaniewski)

- The 2025-2030 Park and Open Space Plan was approved by the Common Council on October 28. We are now working with Parks PIO to update relevant pages on the Parks website with the adopted plan.
- The Parks Sun Shelters contract is complete. New shelters are now available at North Star Park, Kestrel Park, and Sycamore Park.
- The full build-out of Kestrel Park per the adopted 2023 Park Development Plan is nearly complete with the installation of the sun shelter and paving of the access path. Operations staff installed trees in the park and the park signature sign in October. Establishment of managed meadow areas will follow in spring of 2026 to fully complete the park build-out.
- The single bid received for the Country Grove Park Singletrack project was rejected due to being over budget. Staff are evaluating different design options and determining next steps to move the project forward.
- Staff are working closely with contractors to complete maintenance projects while weather permits. Projects include Brittingham tennis courts fencing replacement, fencing repairs at North Star Park, Marlborough Park, Forest Hill Cemetery, and Reindahl Park, Wagner Park retaining wall replacement, and Warner Park soccer field scoreboard replacement.
- The Rennebohm Park East Tennis Courts Reconstruction project is now complete. The courts are open and available for use.
- Contractors have completed the pavement crack sealing and sport court resurfacing maintenance contracts for 2025.
- Construction has continued on the irrigation improvements at Yahara Hills Golf Course related to the course redesign. Construction is anticipated to be complete in November. P&D staff is also working with Golf staff on the design of new cart paths through historically wet areas of the course.
- Staff held numerous public meetings in the month of October for the Midtown Commons Master Plan, Woods Farm and Canter Park Development Plans, Warner Park Pickleball, James Madison Park Retaining Wall Repair, and Vilas Park Improvements.
- Staff attended public meetings hosted by City Planning staff for the Southwest and Southeast Area Plans. Staff also attended the annual Hiestand Neighborhood Association meeting in relation to the Southeast Area Plan and the District 17 town hall event hosted by Alder Madison.
- A new contract for playground replacements is currently advertised for bidding. Playground replacement locations are Kennedy Park, Ontario Park, Skyview Park, and Sandburg Park. Staff completed engagement for the replacements during the winter of 2024-2025, but the projects were put on hold due to staffing shortages. Construction is expected to begin in the spring of 2026.
- Development Reviews: In the month of October staff completed 9 reviews of development projects.
- Impact Fees: In the month of October, staff coordinated and administered approximately \$150,000 of Park Impact Fee payments through 10 separate payments.

Community Services Section (Terrence Thompson)

Community Events (Kelly Post)

- Community Event staff are currently busy updating applications, online software, forms, communications, and websites as we wrap up the 2025 event season and prepare for 2026.
- Community Event staff are meeting regularly with Madison Fire and Madison Police to discuss safety at large public gatherings, including vehicles driving into a crowd. We are assessing risks based on event locations and types. We hope to propose additional safety measures, whether permanent or per-event, to better ensure public safety in the current times we live in.
- Community Event staff are scheduling meetings to meet with key stakeholders in the event permitting process to discuss any process or communication improvements our team can make before the next event season.

Parks Alive (Debra Alleyne)

- Fall Parks Alive Planning: The Parks Alive Fall events will be held at the Revival Ridge Community Room on Allied Drive on November 3 and the Warner Community Recreation Center (WPCRC) on November 4. We will continue our partnership with the Rangers and launch the Jr. Ranger pilot program, which focuses on core values such as park stewardship and conservation. Flyers have been distributed in the respective Neighborhood Resource Teams (NRTs) and neighborhoods.
- Art in Parks: Parks Alive has partnered with the Madison Arts Commission in 2024 and 2025 to bring performing arts to Parks Alive through public art, live music, and acrobatic circus arts. Our partnership has created an opportunity to serve the department through art integration on several projects, including the Imagination Center at Reindahl Park and the WPCRC expansion, and by serving on the Madison Lakeway Public Art Committee.

Customer Service (Joanne Austin)

- Staff are preparing for a smooth transition into next year's shelter reservation season, which begins Monday, November 3, 2025. Customers may call or place their reservations online. The Olin Pavilion will be closed in 2026 for essential repairs by City Engineering, but we look forward to having the Imagination Center rooms available for reservations starting next fall.
- Parks launched a pilot project in 2025 using volunteers to monitor and report issues observed at watercraft storage racks. Volunteers reported on questionable watercraft using rack spaces. This was very successful, allowing Parks to maintain order on the racks without constantly involving Rangers.
- The Athletics Qualifying Discounts Program (QDP) was fully piloted in 2025 with all athletic users. Now that athletic reservations are finished for the season, we will evaluate the impact on revenue collected and the benefits provided to customers who might not otherwise have received discounts, based on qualifying criteria. Because we were still piloting the program, all youth reservations continued to receive a 60% discount off standard rates.

- Although current permits (Lake Access, Disc Golf, Cross-Country Ski, and Dog) remain valid through this year, 2026 annual permits will be available for purchase starting November 1. As of 9/30/25, the following are the Annual and Daily Permit numbers issued over the past three years.

SUMMARY OF ANNUAL PERMITS BY YEAR

Sum of Annual Permits	Column Labels		
Row Labels	2023	2024	2025
Disc Golf	2,143	2,056	1,942
Dog	8,172	8,052	7,793
Lake Access	3,038	3,288	3,343
Ski Trail	1,634	1,407	658

SUMMARY OF DAILY PERMITS BY YEAR

Sum of Daily Permits	Column Labels		
Row Labels	2023	2024	2025
Disc Golf	2,771	2,905	2,064
Dog	218	263	204
Lake Access	3,195	3,456	2,984
Ski Trail	473	189	303

Recreation Services & Aquatics (Tracey Hartley)

Winter Recreation

- The job posting for the winter attendant position was published three weeks earlier than last year and has been 2.5 times more popular than in 2025. This year, the winter attendant position will be fully staffed.
- Door Creek will have its first winter season starting on December 20, weather permitting. The facility will offer concessions and rentals for ice skates, skis, and snowshoes. Door Creek, along with Elver, Odana Hills Golf Course, Tenney, and Vilas, will be open from December 20 to February 15, weather permitting.

Recreation Services

- Hayride season is in full swing, with multiple public and private offerings throughout November. The cost for public hayrides is \$3 per person, and children under 3 are free.
- This year's Halloween events included two activities. The first took place on October 29 in the BID downtown, featuring participation from several local businesses for trick-or-treating, hayrides around the square, and a movie at the end of the night. On Friday, October 31, WPCRC will host its Halloween Family Fun Night, featuring indoor activities, s'mores, and outdoor hayrides.
- This winter, we will host several Groove and Glide events, candlelight hikes and walks, and a movie.

Rangers & Volunteers

Rangers (Steve Dray)

- Enforcement Contacts: Rangers have had 66 enforcement contacts, resulting in 22 warnings, 34 citations, and 10 bans. Thirty-three parking tickets have been issued to date through October.
- Community Outreach: Rangers have been very active throughout the city by responding to complaints, patrolling park sites, and ensuring that our parks remain safe and welcoming for everyone. During our duties, we often interact with many unhoused individuals in our community. We strive to connect these individuals to available resources with the ultimate goal of helping them secure housing.

Volunteers (John Weichelt)

- Community and School Engagement: A large two-day community planting event was completed at Tenney Park on October 17 and 18, with nearly 2,000 native plants and over 25 volunteers. Additionally, a school outreach and litter cleanup took place at Elver Park, where 125 students participated in various learning and stewardship activities.
- Special Events: Volunteers supported Hayrides and Hikes at Cherokee Marsh Conservation Park on October 18. They also assisted with the Warner Park Community Recreation Center Halloween Family Fun Night on October 31.
- Looking Ahead: We are excited to begin planning for the Adopt Ice program in November and to schedule dates for buckthorn clearing. The annual volunteer appreciation dinner is scheduled for December 11 at the WPCRC.

Warner Park Community Recreation Center (Zach Watson)

- The Know Program partnership with the Madison Parks Foundation hosted an 8-week hair-braiding class on Tuesday evenings, which wrapped up on November 1. This program provided participants with valuable skills in hair braiding techniques, fostering creativity and cultural expression.
- The KNOW Program currently offers a variety of lunchtime programming at Shabazz High School and East High School, providing students with enriching activities during their lunch break.
- The WPCRC hosted its annual Halloween Family Fun Night on October 31, attracting families from the community for a night of festive fun, complete with indoor and outdoor games, arts and crafts, a bonfire with s'mores, hayrides, food carts, and a movie. Additionally, the WPCRC will host a Fall Parks Alive event on November 4, featuring family-friendly activities, entertainment, community engagement, and the Jr Ranger program.
- Unfortunately, the Holiday Fest Arts and Craft Show has been canceled this year due to construction, as gym spaces will not be available for the event.