

SUPERINTENDENT'S APRIL 2024 REPORT

COMMUNICATIONS TO BOARD OF PARK COMMISSIONERS

Park Superintendent's Monthly Report Summary

March has been warmer than usual, but with some regression to the mean on temperatures, we have not yet seen the grass pop in the way we were concerned about a few weeks ago. This is critically important to our opening plan, as if the grass starts to grow too early, our staffing model gets significantly off. We rely on our permanent staff team to do many things to open the parks and if we needed to start keeping up with rapidly growing turf in the early spring, we would struggle with all the other things (e.g. putting out tables, refuse/recycling cans, opening restrooms). The negative side of the up and down weather is that some of the tasks like opening restrooms stays in the "wait and see" mode for a bit longer. We are not able to simply open up restrooms and turn on the water in many locations due to the facilities being unconditioned. A hard freeze could quickly be a significant negative outcome for the budget with water line breaks!

Golf usage did slow down in the second half of March, but we have eclipsed 7,400 rounds for the year and revenue of over 500K. Most of the revenue is from pass/membership sales and those values are up this year notably. As it relates to comparison year over year, we are nearly 300K ahead, as last year we did not have any rounds played in March.

Staff are also working together on plans and concepts to respond to the budget challenges the City is facing. We do not yet have plans in place, but we are evaluating many options given the potential need to reduce spending due to levy limits. It is anticipated that we will need to prepare some budget options that would include a significant reduction in levy support for Parks. Given we are over 65% in total operating funding from the levy (this includes golf), any reduction in levy support has a material impact on the overall budgeted expenditure levels.

Future Commission Items

- Budget briefing – We are working on how to best engage the BPC as a policy making body related to budget considerations. There are a number of potential areas of important consideration, including service reductions and revenue generation opportunities to explore. There is also consideration of special charges and a tax levy referendum being contemplated by the Common Council at this time. Our hope is to be able to provide a reasonably informed presentation to the Board in May or June.
- 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. This will heavily involve our new Golf Operations Director.
- Marshall Houses – Parks staff continues to work with Real Estate and the City Attorney's Office to engage with the property owners of the historic homes in Marshall Park. The goal is to bring an update and potential options for moving forward to the Commission in the next few months.

- Olin Houses – We will be working on a management plan for the Olin Houses as we acquire them. We own three of the houses at this point and would like to have a management strategy in place moving forward. 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 the first half of 2024.
- Parks Division Work Plan / Roadmap – Staff will present the Division’s roadmap to the Board, likely in May or June. The work plan provides an overview of significant change initiatives that the Division is undertaking and/or working on in 2024. The roadmap elements each have an assigned manager who are leading the work associated with that element.
- POSP Update – the Long Range Planning Subcommittee is working on the POSP and staff is looking into options for a good time over the next few months to provide an update to the Commission.

Olbrich Botanical Gardens



- **Conservatory Pruning** – Every year in late winter, Olbrich Botanical Garden staff conduct significant pruning of the trees and other plants in the Bolz Conservatory. The purpose of the pruning is to prevent the trees from touching the glass. It also is done to shape the plants, promote longevity, pest control, structural integrity, and to encourage future growth. Pending Common Council approval, we are scheduled to conduct a further assessment and repairs on the windows, structure, and cupola. This work was

featured in a photo in the Wisconsin State Journal on March 22, 2024:

https://www.canva.com/design/DAF89uPt6W0/Xp9wJmcmMC36RdQXqn3avg/edit?utm_content=DAF89uPt6W0&utm_campaign=designshare&utm_medium=link2&utm_source=sharebutton

- **Veevart** – In late April, Olbrich Botanical Gardens is switching to a new software system for ticketing, membership, donations, admission, and registration. This all-in-one system will move online payments for membership and donations from the City of Madison payment portal to Veevart's payment portal. Included in this change is the switch from physical membership cards to digital membership cards.

Community Services Report April 2024 – Terrence Thompson

Community Events & Customer Service

Events (Kelly Post)

- The Community Events team is working with the Madison Fire Department to update the Emergency Action Plan requirements for events, with an anticipated attendance of over 1,000. This update is essential to ensure public safety at events. This updated form and requirement will apply to both Street Use permits and Park Event permits.
- We plan to host two Emergency Action Plan training sessions for event organizers next month as the form and requirements will be much more extensive. We plan to support event organizers as they transition to this new form over the next year or so.
- The Community Events team is collaborating with Ranger staff to develop Madison Park's vending policy, which addresses the wide range of commercial use in our Parks.
- The Carts in Parks program is ready and on this agenda for final approval as a permanent program. This has been a pilot program for 3 years. We have learned a lot and have adjusted annually to develop the program. This program benefits City of Madison residents and local small business owners.

Parks Alive (Debra Alleyne)

- **NRT Engagement:** We have reached out to NRT leadership to ensure that all necessary languages are provided for the translation of Parks Alive materials. We noticed last year that residents spoke languages other than English, and we don't want to overlook their needs this year. Our aim is to address this issue and provide information to everyone in their preferred language.
- **Marketing Materials:** This year, we are taking a different approach with our marketing materials. We are reviewing each park to determine if it can host a Parks Alive banner. Our hope is to post a festive banner for the duration of the season that would draw more attention and be less likely to be vandalized or removed.
- **Partner Workshops:** As we move forward into the season with a focus on improving the resident experience, we are organizing workshops for our partners. These workshops will involve food vendors, organizations, service providers, and alternative site hosts. Our goal is to be able to address any questions that our partners may have and communicate our expectations in advance.

Customer Service (Joanne Austin)

- **Athletics:** We have fully transitioned to using Vermont Systems' WebTrac software for our athletic reservations. We've added more than 600 athletic fields and courts to the system across approximately 280 parks. We have established a priority scheduling order where organizations with full agreements get the first opportunity to reserve all they need. By April, all public users will also be able to reserve spaces. Although we are still working out a few kinks with the system, overall, we are very pleased with how user-friendly this software is for staff and customers.

Recreation Services & Aquatics

Winter Recreation (Tracey Hartley)

- The winter season started on January 10, 2024, and ended on February 4, 2024. Elver's ski trails stayed open the longest, for 22 days. However, the lack of winter due to global warming and a strong El Nino year meant that the ice-skating rinks and lagoons at Elver, Tenney, and Vilas were open for a maximum of 6 days only. We are brainstorming ideas to diversify our winter recreation options for the coming years. On a positive note, we had sufficient staff this winter and were able to provide all services without any disruption caused by a lack of staffing.

Aquatics (Shane Martin)

- The planning season for the summer is in full swing, and multiple projects are underway to deliver a safer and more enjoyable experience for our patrons. Furthermore, we want to ensure that our staff has every resource they need to perform their jobs to the best of their abilities. We have already finalized almost half of our aquatic management team, and we will be interviewing the remaining candidates in the upcoming weeks. Attendants will be fully staffed again, but we anticipate a shortage of lifeguards as of mid-March. We have several opportunities planned to promote our jobs at Parks, including table events during school lunches, attending job fairs at high schools, a marketing video, and hosting a hiring fair on April 17 in partnership with MSCR.

Rangers & Volunteers

Rangers (Jason Vroman)

- As the winter was warmer than usual, the Rangers collaborated with park staff and volunteers to open the Elver Disc Golf Course much earlier than usual. On a windy and cold morning, around 40 volunteers from the disc golf community turned up to prepare the course for an early start. Their efforts helped to get the course into great shape for the upcoming season.



- Rangers are increasing the methods by which we patrol the parks. Over the winter, we purchased an e-bike to better patrol parks and connect with visitors. To help with the new mode of transportation, the Ranger team attended a bike workshop at Trek on the east side to learn how to take care of common issues that may pop up while on patrol. Additionally, we plan to attend a joint training with the Madison Police Department on safely using the bike while on patrol.



- With the arrival of warmer weather, Parks have experienced an increase in visitors along with a rise in park violations. Rangers have made 164 enforcement contacts for various incidents, including permit violations, dogs off-leash, alcohol, and more, this year. This is more than twice the number of enforcement contacts made during the same period last year. In 2023, Rangers made 70 enforcement contacts for these violations.

Volunteers (John Weichelt)

- We attended and tabled at the UW-Madison Public Service Fair, UW-Madison Ecology Department Job Fair, Bike-O-Rama, and Parks Division Hiring Fair. Our goal was to promote volunteerism, job openings, and special events.

- We have opened volunteer registration for Ride the Drive and currently recruiting volunteers from area businesses, community groups, and more. So far, we have recruited 57 volunteers.
- Registration for Earth Day Challenge is still open, and in March alone, we have registered over 400 volunteers.

Warner Park Community Recreation Center (Zach Watson)

- On March 8th, over 70 families were welcomed at WPCRC's Family Fun Night. Additionally, the design development for the WPCRC expansion project has been completed and submitted.

Planning and Development

The Park and Open Space Plan Open House events will be starting in April and continuing through May – the open houses are drop-in events to introduce the project and gather input from attendees. All events will be held 5:30-7:30pm at the following dates and locations:

- Thursday, April 4, Vel Phillips Memorial High School, 201 S Gammon Rd; Wisconsin Community Room
- Thursday, April 25, Warner Park Community Recreation Center, 1625 Northport Dr; Meeting Room
- Thursday, May 2, Olbrich Botanical Gardens, 3330 Atwood Ave; Atrium
- Thursday, May 9, Madison Parks Lakeside Offices, 330 E Lakeside St; Board Room

The UW Survey Center led Park and Open Space Plan survey results are in and Parks staff will meet with the survey center team to review and discuss the findings. A response rate of just over 18% was received from the 5,000 randomly selected invitations to complete the questionnaire.

The West Area Park Development Plans went before BPC as an informational item on 3/13/24. They'll go back for hopeful approval on April 3rd.

2024 playground replacements (Garner, Manchester, Meadowood, and Sherwood Forest) will go to BPW on 4/17. With approval, we'll move forward with an anticipated first bid advertisement date of 5/19/24.

The 2024-2027 restoration contract was awarded to Quercus Land Stewardship Services, LLC. This latest version of the contract (scope and specifications) was put together with a large amount of coordination with Parks Ecology Team, to ensure the work being done aligns with their goals and standards.

The 2024 fencing repairs/replacement RFB will go out to bid soon. This contract includes a relocating a large portion of the Sycamore Park dog park fence, to accommodate the new singletrack going in.