

SUPERINTENDENT'S JULY 2019 REPORT

COMMUNICATIONS TO BOARD OF PARK COMMISSIONERS

Park Superintendent's Monthly Report Summary

July will be proclaimed as Parks and Recreation Month in the City at the July 2nd Common Council meeting. July 10th also marks the 125th anniversary of the establishment of the Madison Park and Pleasure Drive Association. The MPPDA was a driving force that provided the pathway to the praiseworthy park system the City operates today. Madison Parks and the Parks Foundation are both celebrating the Anniversary this month by focusing attention on all that is done by Parks for the betterment of our City. This includes a ribbon cutting at the Elver playground, public art dedications at both Elver and Marshall, a series of bird and nature walks, movie nights in the parks, teen nights at WPCRC, and more. More information on what is happening in the parks can be found at <https://www.cityofmadison.com/parks/calendar>.

Permanent Staffing Changes

- Michael Ring was promoted to the East Parks Land Stewardship Technician (Equipment Operator 2) effective June 16, 2019. He formerly served as a Parks Maintenance Worker with West Parks.
- In addition to this permanent staff change, Parks has brought 255 Hourly staff on to the payroll between March 1st and June 30th. Of these staff additions, 164, or 64%, are returning staff, while 91 are new hires. This brings the total active payroll for the Division to 517. Staff anticipates hiring additional seasonal and hourly staff due to turnover during the year, but the overall Division payroll is effectively at its annual peak to start July.

Future Commission Items

- Urban Forestry Taskforce – The Urban Forestry Taskforce's recommendations are being entered into the legislative process at the July 2nd meeting (File #55206). At this point, it is likely the report and recommendations will come to the BPC in September.
- IPM Taskforce – The IPM taskforce is working to extend its work throughout 2019 to better inform recommendations. Staff will present on the current status as a part of a land management update in October or November.
- Golf – The Common Council adopted a resolution (File #56004) to establish a Task Force on Municipal Golf in Madison Parks at its June 18, 2019 meeting. The membership appointments will be made in July with initial meetings anticipated in August. This Task Force will focus on making recommendations on the multiple systematic issues related to golf.
- Dog Policy – The Long Range Planning Subcommittee has started work on reviewing the policy related to dogs in parks. LRP and staff are working on hosting a series of public meetings in the next few weeks on this project.
- Off-Leash Dog Parks – Staff is continuing to work on potential off-leash improvements in the main remaining priority area (after West/Odana School and East/North Star projects) of Atwood/East Isthmus. This is a particularly challenging location and staff hopes to have additional concepts for discussion in the coming months.

- 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 at either the August park tour or the September meeting.
- Alliant Energy Center Master Plan / Destination District Plan – Parks staff is working with 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 after additional consultation with the Planning Division given the departure of Director Erdman this spring who was leading the City’s coordination on this issue.

Section reports

Operations

Conservation:

- Performed invasive species control work on garlic mustard, dame’s rocket, Japanese hedge parsley, and reed canary grass on approximately 52 acres at South Cherokee Marsh, Heritage Sanctuary, Knollwood, Owen and Prairie Ridge.
- Mowed reed canary grass, wild parsnip, sweet clover, Canada thistle, crown vetch and bird’s-foot trefoil on approximately 20 acres at Cherokee Marsh, Owen, Heritage Prairie and Prairie Ridge.

Construction:

- Completed a number of construction projects including pouring four concrete pads for memorial park benches at various parks, regrading Odana Hills drainage ditch, reclaimed an old playground pit to be used as a pollinator garden, removed the farm house and garage and backfilled at Apple Ridge and built a gravel service entrance into the Mallards ball diamond.

Facilities:

- Completed maintenance and repair projects, including painting the outside of Elver Park shelter; replaced the Elver Park bounding board and repaired and replaced Parks water bubblers/fountain.
- Larger projects included the McPike Park Electric upgrade with four new pedestal outlets to improve our service support for events and completed the roof repairs to Biergarten to improve service for our Parks partner.

Forestry:

- Began the process of preemptively removing 800 ash street trees at the central (Isthmus) and western part of the city. These are the final preemptive ash removal areas that will complete the process outlined in the approved Emerald Ash Borer Plan.
- Replanting trees in these sites will be completed over the next year and a half (starting in fall 2019).

General Parks:

- Major focus on mowing and trimming to maintain quality appearance during this period of rapid growth.
- Considerable focus was placed on preparing for special events and active reservations.
- Prepared the area and planted East Parks' first pollinator garden at Washington Manor.

Mall Concourse:

- Preparation and cleanup effort were made to support special events including the summer's first Live on King, Madison Night Market and Concert on the Square.
- Removed spring plantings and Olbrich planted summer annuals to the round planters, while Mall workers planted summer annuals behind benches on the Capitol Square

Community Services

Front Desk/Customer Services:

- Canoe/Kayak Storage Agreements – Two additional storage racks (12 spaces) have recently been added in the parking lot SE of the beach at Warner Park. This brings the current number of storage spaces to 366, an increase of 65 spaces in just two years. When these new racks were added, waitlist customers were immediately contacted and 9 spaces were filled, leaving just 3 remaining. Each of these customers used our new online option to secure their space for 2019. Additional racks at Burrows, Cherokee South, Olin and Vilas will soon be available, increasing our total storage spaces to 396. The online renewal option will be used next year for all current watercraft storage customers, making lease agreement renewals convenient for both customers and front staff.

WPCRC:

- WPCRC received a \$5,900 grant from the Northside Safe and Thriving Communities to support summer and fall teen programming.

Recreation Services:

- We are scheduled to host 21 outdoor community movies in different parks throughout the summer. Our new LED video wall will significantly enhance the quality of the shows.
- The Summer Meals "kick off" event had over 115 people in attendance on Monday, June 24 at Aldo Leopold Park. Many partners were involved to include REAP food group, Madison Metropolitan School District, Madison Parks, Madison Public Library with the Dream Bus, Fitchburg Public Library, City of Madison Clerk's Office, City of Madison Water Utility with the water wagon, and the City of Madison Food Council.

Rangers

- Summer reservations, concerts and festivals are underway and Park Rangers have been supporting park users/event organizers, patrolling areas of high use and monitoring sound at large events to ensure compliance with permit conditions, as well as assisting Olbrich Gardens with traffic management for their large events.

Aquatics:

- The Goodman Community Pool season kicked off on June 13 with the first 500 kids receiving free admission thanks to the generous sponsorship of Goodman's Jewelers. Our lessons instructors have completed an extra step of being certified as Water Safety Instructors and we have received considerable feedback on how this has improved the quality of our instruction.

Park and Street Use Events:

- Events started in earnest in June. Multiple run/walks every weekend. Concerts pretty much every day of the week in various parks and City streets. June 21 was Make Music Madison and performances were scheduled in over 100 locations! The first Concerts on the Square was Wednesday, June 26 – it's summer in Madison! We continue to receive applications for new events.

Olbrich Botanical Gardens

- Construction: The exterior walls continue on the Learning Center. The roof connections for both the Greenhouse and Learning Center are in progress. The greenhouse aluminum structure is nearly completed. Furniture, fixtures & equipment needs are being reviewed by staff and the design team.
- Outdoor Gardens: The extent of winter damage (due to the extreme cold) and the flood damage is becoming apparent. Japanese maples, Paperbark maples and some boxwood are huge losses due to the cold. Paper birch along Starkweather Creek as well as a specimen tuliptree have also been lost due to flooding, as well as many of the perennials from the Starkweather Creek Shade Garden. The *Cornus mas* hedge along the Sunken Garden is being replaced with a more pyramidal form of *Cornus mas*. This replacement isn't due to flooding or cold, but because the matched shrubs were partially succumbing to fungal diseases – due to age and close planting. The replacements should perform better. This is part of a multi-year effort to rejuvenate the hedge around 3 sides of the Sunken Garden.
- Programs: The inaugural 'Summer Breeze' took place Saturday, June 22. 285 adults and 37 kids enjoyed food, lawn games, bubbles, entertainment, a cool magician and more – despite some brief showers. A 2nd 'Summer Breeze' will be held Friday, June 28.
- Education: The first of the Young Writers and High School Writers writing camps are underway. The teacher's workshop was cancelled due to Olbrich's construction and limited space.