

# SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

## AUGUST 2026

### COMMUNICATIONS TO BOARD OF PARK COMMISSIONERS

#### Park Superintendent's Monthly Report Summary

July and early August have presented serious challenges for the Madison community and for the Madison Parks team. Over the last four weeks, we experienced extreme heat, extreme drought, dangerous air quality concerns due to wildfire smoke, and response to the police officer involved death of Corey Ruiz. All of which caused disruption to our normal daily work and led to the cancellation of a number of major events and reservations that are so important in bringing the community together at the peak of summer. Our team rose to the many challenges presented by responding and making adjustments as needed, all while still continuing to provide outstanding services central to our core operations. I am incredibly proud of the Parks Team's efforts and dedication to serve the community through these trying times.

After careful consideration, we have made the difficult decision to cancel this year's Ride the Drive that was scheduled for Sunday, August 9. We know many community members were looking forward to the event and we share this disappointment. Canceling Ride the Drive was not a decision we made lightly. Decisions like this are never easy, especially an event that brings people together. While the intersection of Williamson and Baldwin streets is now open, we believe holding Ride the Drive would continue to disrupt the neighborhood and businesses. We are grateful for the many vendors, community partners and volunteers who committed to supporting the event. We are hopeful for a 2027 return.

As we head into the end of summer, there is much to look forward to. There is still time to go for a swim at Goodman Pool, which closes for the season on August 23. I encourage you to check out one of the remaining Parks Alive events for the summer, as August's theme is Arts & Culture. Blooming Butterflies is in full swing and GLEAM will kick off on August 29 at Olbrich Botanical Gardens. The Golf Program continues to have a very positive season and plans for the Odana project starting this fall are still on track. The Planning team is also making great progress on the significant list of capital projects, including the anticipated bidding of the Madison LakeWay early this fall. I also encourage you to participate in the ride-along opportunities scheduled for Commissioners to get to know more about our work. Please see the link provided by President Miller-Fienen.

# Personnel Updates

## Promotions/Hires:

- Ryan O’Leary was hired as a Facility Maintenance Worker at Olbrich Botanical Gardens and started on July 7, 2026.

## Departures:

- Dan Pottinger retired from his position as Parks Maintenance Worker on the Central Parks team. After twenty years of service, his last day working with the Parks Division was June 5, 2026.

# Section Updates

## Community Services Section (Terrence Thompson)

### Community Events (Kelly Post)

Our community has been navigating a difficult stretch following the police shooting of Corey Ruiz, and several major annual events — AtwoodFest, Concerts on the Square (two weeks running), and the Saturday Dane County Farmers' Market — decided to cancel out of respect, solidarity, and safety for the community.

2026 has also been a tough year for outdoor events in general, with organizers navigating poor air quality from Canadian wildfires, extreme heat, and severe weather.

We will continue to collaborate with our event partners and community stakeholders on both the social climate and environmental conditions, so we can keep supporting the annual events that are so important for building community and bringing people together.

### Parks Alive (Debra Alleyne)

Parks Alive hosted our second sports- and games-themed events this July, and it was a hit — kids completed an activity passport of 6 games and activities to earn stamps and prizes, and there was so much running, jumping rope, and frisbee playing that even parents were pleasantly surprised.

That level of engagement meant we needed more hands-on-deck than usual — instead of our typical 6 on-site staff, July called for extra support to run stations, referee and play games with kids, hand out prizes, and serve pizza and ice cream.

We also leaned on our partnership with Mentoring Positives, a fellow Darbo-Worthington NRT member, who provided pizza and cookies at all 11 parks for July — supporting a great community partner while saving on our food budget, and any leftovers were donated to the Men's Emergency Drop-in Shelter.

### Goodman Pool & Southside Youth Engagement (Lauren Travis)

We hosted four Summer Nights at Wright events this summer (one was canceled on July 17 for poor air quality), with attendance growing each time. We've been intentional about getting youth input to shape the programming, and partnerships with MSCR, MMSD, Focused Interruption, and MPD have brought in volunteers who are actively engaging with kids — outreach at Goodman Pool has also helped with recruitment and building relationships.

### Customer Service (Kevin Goke)

The Specialized Football Field at Warner Park will transition from summer adult soccer to a fall youth football setup in the first two weeks of August.

Ahead of the Imagination Center's grand opening, administrative staff will continue to coordinate with Library staff, and all will be able to visit the site to review the layout, document reservation-relevant details, and update the reservation software.

Staff will continue monitoring National Weather Service alerts, including air quality and heat advisories, so customers can cancel or reschedule reservations under our severe weather policy whenever an alert is in effect.

## Recreation Services & Aquatics (Tracey Hartley)

### *Recreation Services*

#### Events

There are 8 movies left for the year.

We have 3 Learning Series events remaining this summer, with more offerings planned for the fall.

Trucks & Treasures will take place at Goodman Park on September 19. Two new hay wagons have arrived (we lost our previous two in a major storm). These wagons will be ready for the fall events, and one of them is ADA accessible.

## Aquatics (Shane Martin)

The Goodman Pool 20th Anniversary Celebration will be on Friday, August 14. The last day of the season for Goodman Pool will be Sunday, August 23. We may have bonus days depending on staff availability.

We had a successful season with the new Youth Engagement Coordinator position and the AASPIRE intern, which helped reduce and address youth issues at Goodman Pool. There have been no major problems since opening day.

## Rangers & Volunteers

### *Rangers (Steve Dray)*

### Enforcement Contacts

Rangers had 52 enforcement contacts in June, resulting in 26 warnings, 19 citations, and 5 behavioral bans. Rangers also issued 54 parking citations.

### Outreach

Rangers have been able to make connections with the community at many of the Parks Alive events throughout July. This is a great way to educate kids and adults on who Park Rangers are and what we do, as well as teach them about the park system, getting active, wildlife, and science.



### July 4 Weekend

July 4th weekend is the busiest time of the year for Park Rangers. This year, we are fortunate to have all Ranger positions

filled, allowing us to have more staff on duty than last year. Thanks to our thorough preparations and collaboration with other teams, we were able to address any issues that arose in a timely and efficient manner.

### *Volunteers (John Weichelt)*

- Ride the Drive Preparation: Prior to the event being cancelled, spent significant time moving from general recruitment into final event preparation by hosting volunteer training, sharing the recording and materials, filling remaining shifts, organizing shirts by hub, and assembling standardized event and supply kit.
- Beach Cleanup Coordination: Expanded recurring cleanup support by working with neighborhood leads on schedules, recruitment, equipment, and storage needs at Olbrich Park, Vilas Beach, Bernie's Beach, and other beach locations through Labor Day.
- Group Volunteer Projects: Coordinated upcoming service opportunities for corporate, community, and institutional groups, including fall projects at Cherokee Marsh, Forest Hill Cemetery, and other park locations, while confirming appropriate work, staffing, supplies, supervision, and liability requirements.
- Volunteer System Expansion: Began planning the next phase of Get Connected training and onboarding for additional City programs following IT approval, while continuing role updates and support for current Parks users.

### *Warner Park Community Recreation Center (Zach Watson)*

- Green Gym closed August 1–17 to store City of Madison voting machines; WPCRC is hosting early voting, with Election Day on August 11.
- The WPCRC expansion let us extend services to MSCR camps and nearby community centers during heat advisory and poor air quality days, serving 250–300 kids on several occasions.
- August 3–4 wraps up the final East High feeder coed middle school basketball camp series.
- WPCRC closes August 31–September 7 for annual down week cleaning and repairs, reopening September 8.

### *Olbrich Botanical Gardens (Tanya Zastrow)*

- Harry Whitehorse Wood Sculpture Festival Sculptures Return – In 2024, Olbrich Botanical Gardens hosted half of the sculptures that were created during the inaugural Harry Whitehorse Wood Sculpture Festival. This festival was held again in June 2026. Once again, Olbrich Botanical Gardens is hosting a selection of the sculptures created. They're on exhibit in the gardens from July 27, 2026 – May 31, 2027. Check out the [exhibit webpage](#) for details on each artwork, artist bios and website/social links, and a map of the sculpture locations.
- Collards Fest – On July 21, 2026, Olbrich Botanical Gardens hosted the 2<sup>nd</sup> Collards Fest in collaboration with REAP Food Group and Chef/Farmer Yusuf Bin-Rella. The evening's featured entertainment kicked off with the Black Star Drum Line followed

by the featured band Obi Original & The Black Atlantics. Collards were the signature food item on all the food truck menus. The collards adventure continued with [The Green Book](#) zine which gave information on where to find collards in the community.

- Atwood Ave. Median: We recently [posted](#) on Olbrich social media pages about the Atwood Ave. median that Olbrich manages. On Facebook the reach was over 52,000 and Instagram over 25,000 with a combined over 600 reactions on the posts. It was shared 150 times.

Bolz Conservatory Closure: The Bolz Conservatory will be closed from August 17-21 for a GLEAM installation.

- Blooming Butterflies Extended: Blooming Butterflies is extended this year until August 16<sup>th</sup>. This is a week longer than scheduled.

## Park Operations (Chad Hughes)

### Central Parks (Jay Walters)

- Removed brush from several fencelines and shorelines within Harvey Schmidt, Brittingham and Olin Parks.
- Cleaned up numerous hazardous trees that were damaged in the early summer storms.
- Prepared parks for large events including La Fete de Marquette.

### Ecology

- Watered trees and plantings during the extended dry period.
- Performed invasive control including purple loosestrife at Vilas Park.

### Conservation (Hannah Quinlan)

- Invasive control work focused on bird's-foot trefoil, crown vetch, Canada thistle, sweet clover, wild parsnip, teasel, and hedge parsley.
- Planted plugs of native wetland species along shore of Stricker's Pond where reed canary grass has been controlled.
- Sprayed goose repellent at Esther Beach.

### Construction (Rich Bergmann)

- Completed construction of a new playground at Portland Park.
- Assisted the Ecology team with soil conditioning the area at the Lakeside office.
- Removed the pump track and restored the area to turf at Brentwood Park.
- Finished up the boulder wall removal at Owen Park.
- Replenished playground mulch at Lucia Crest and Acewood.

## East Parks (Spencer Werner)

- Supported Parks Alive! events at various east side parks.
- The grass slowed down again so we have shifted to other park projects like string trimming and pressure washing.
- Arborists have almost completed their list of storm tree cleanup they've been working on for the last couple of months.

## Facilities Maintenance (Joel Ringgenberg)

- Completed 4 donor benches and started engravings for donor picnic tables.
- Performed pool maintenance deck repairs and chemical balances including at the splash pads.
- Started work at Owen Conservation restroom building including siding replacement and paint.

## Mall Maintenance (Mark Kiesow)

- Continued watering plants during the dry summer, the flowers are looking great!
- Increased power washing sidewalks and amenities due to the lack of rain.
- Event support continued, Art Fair on the Square, Concerts on the Square, and most recently, Maxwell Street Days.

## West Parks (Charlotte Blotz)

- Supported Opera in the Park at Garner Park with additional maintenance and an attendant.
- Fertilized athletic fields to increase turf durability for safer play.
- Hosted a robotic mower demonstration at Forest Hill cemetery.

## Planning & Development (Adam Kaniewski)

- During the month of July with minimal rain, significant progress was made on numerous construction projects. In addition, significant progress is being made on the design and permitting phase of a multitude of projects slated for the start of construction in 2027, which is shaping up to be a busy year of construction oversight for the team.
- Staff have been working in conjunction with the Madison Arts Commission and City Planning staff for the placement of temporary art installations in Tenney Park, Olbrich Park, and Merrill Springs Park as part of the [Teejop Community History Public Art Project](#). The temporary installations are rooted in Ho-Chunk place-based storytelling. The pieces were installed in early August and will remain in place until early November.

## Parks Capital Projects – Design

- Staff is working through a plethora of final design details for the [Madison LakeWay](#) project. The project is expected to be advertised for bidding in October.
- Construction documents are being developed for the [Cypress Spray Park](#) project. The project is expected to be advertised for bidding in August.
- A public input meeting was held for the [Warner Park Southeast Recreation Area](#) project on July 30 and design development plans were received in mid-July. The project will now move into the construction documents phase. Construction is anticipated to begin in 2027.
- After receiving proposals through an RFP, a consultant was awarded a contract for the design of the Olbrich Park – North Parcel park development. Staff have been also working to submit a land division and re-zoning application to set the table for the project. In addition, staff have been preparing application materials to submit for a brownfields grant through the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation and expect to submit very soon.
- Design and permitting work for the dredging and reconstruction of the Marshall Park Boat Launch is underway. Initial sediment sampling has been completed and staff are working with the WDNR to determine acceptable drying and placement location for the dredged material.
- P&D staff continue to support the [Odana Hills Golf Course and Park renovation project](#). A consultant contract was approved by the Common Council for the design of the clubhouse, parking lot, and park area.
- Design and coordination is also underway for the following projects: Haen Family Park Sun Shelter Replacement, Paunack Park Sun Shelter Replacement, Sandburg Park Sun Shelter, Garner Park Parking Lot Reconstruction, Garner Park Pickleball Courts, Rennebohm Park Accessible Parking, Owen Park Driveway Reconstruction, Manchester Park Path Connection, Carpenter-Ridgeway Singletrack, Edgewood Pleasure Drive Fencing, Dog Park Entrance Kiosks, Olin Park Pavillion Renovation, Brittingham Park Beach Shelter Replacement, Door Creek Park Nice Rink Lighting, Disc Golf Erosion Control Projects.

## Parks Capital Projects – Bidding and Construction

- The playground replacements at [Ontario](#) Park and [Skyview](#) Park are ongoing and expected to be completed in August.
- Parks Construction completed the installation of the playground replacement at Portland Park.

- The new well transfer pipe at Yahara Hills Golf Course is complete, just in time to provide irrigation water supply for the prolonged drought conditions.
- Construction of the [Hoyt Park Parking Lot](#) has begun and is expected to be complete by the end of August.
- Work continues on the [Warner Park Pickleball Courts](#) and [Worthington Park Futsal Courts](#). These are expected to be complete by September 4.
- Construction of the park improvement project at [Kenneth Newville Park](#) is expected to begin in this fall.
- Construction of the [James Madison Park – Lincoln School retaining wall replacement](#) project is expected to begin in September.
- A contract was awarded for the 2026 Sport Court Resurfacings. Resurfacing locations include Walnut Grove Park, Elver Park, Reindahl Park – North Courts, Richmond Hill Park, and Westhaven Trails Park.
- The next round of playground replacements for [Orton Park](#), [James Madison Park](#), [Marshall Park](#), and [Heifetz Park](#) is advertised for bids. Bids are due to be received by August 27.
- Staff have been engaging with contractors and coordinating the work for fencing repairs and pavement striping on an as-needed basis.

## Park Planning

- Proposals were received for a Geomorphological study of Vilas Park. The proposals are being evaluated for selection.
- P&D staff have completed draft park development plans for the neighborhood and mini parks in the [southeast](#) area.
- Park development plan drafts for the [southwest](#) area are in progress.
- Preliminary coordination has begun for the upcoming North and Near West Area Plans with City Planning. The planning process is expected to begin late this year.
- Coordination continues with the design team for the Madison Police Department South District Station project which will also include planning for Fraust Park.
- Staff have worked to coordinate a Developer Agreement for the grading of Starkweather Park. A planning process for the park is expected to begin this year.

## Development Review / Park Impact Fees

- Work for the Needs Assessment update is ongoing. Staff are coordinating with the consultant team and providing necessary data.

- In the month of July staff completed reviews of 17 development projects and coordinated and processed 34 separate Park Impact Fee payments totaling about \$280,000. Additionally, staff coordinated and received a bond for deferred impact fees.
- P&D Staff have been working with staff in the Parks Finance/Administration section on internal process improvements for park impact fee intake and processing.