

SUPERINTENDENT'S JANUARY 2023 REPORT

COMMUNICATIONS TO BOARD OF PARK COMMISSIONERS

Park Superintendent's Monthly Report Summary

Winter has started (and perhaps paused) and the team has been focusing on ensuring we provide a multitude of opportunities for people to connect with each other and nature during the colder months. The weather has not been optimal for most of our outdoor offerings. The good news on that front is what looked like a very tough storm to manage around Christmas ended up being less of a challenge than originally anticipated. It didn't provide as much snow as we might like for skiing, but it did make the snow/ice removal work we do less of an issue. This was particularly concerning going into the storm given the timing and staffing levels being very low right around the holidays. In addition to the outdoor recreational offerings, the teams at Warner and Olbrich are continuing to provide many opportunities for recreation, education, and connection at those facilities.

Parks staff is working with the Madison Parks Foundation to update our contractual partnership agreement with them. There are many active projects and programs active that rely on support from donors and it will be good to have an updated agreement that sets the stage for continued collaboration. Parks is also working closely with our partners at the Olbrich Botanical Society as we move forward with filling some key staff vacancies at the Gardens.

The Lake Monona Waterfront project continues to progress and the team continues working closely with multiple City agencies to keep coordination and communication moving with the John Nolen reconstruction project. All three participants in the Design Challenge will present their final conceptual designs on January 26th at a public meeting. The Ad Hoc Committee will then consider public input on those designs and work towards making a recommendation in March/April of 2023.

As mentioned last month, the Adopted Budget includes multiple new positions for the Parks Division. The addition of the Parks Alive! Coordinator, Volunteer Coordinator, facility maintenance staff, and in the golf team are all notable and important. These investments are in addition to the Public Works Laborer program the team continues to prepare for in collaboration with our partner Public Works agencies. These positions, along with our many existing talented staff, will move us forward into the future. Getting to that future does, however, take quite a lot of time and effort. Staff will continue to focus on filling vacant positions as expeditiously as we can by working with our partners in Human Resources.

Future Commission Items

- Golf Enterprise Update – The Golf Team is working to prepare a report to the Golf Subcommittee, 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. Given recent staff departures and budget actions, the goal is to present additional information to the BPC in the first quarter of 2023.

- Results Madison / Division Work Plan– The City has been working on Results Madison, which moves towards a more significant utilization of data in decision-making, including budgeting for the past few years. Staff will be preparing information on this and the Parks Division’s work plan to present to the Commission. The goal is in the March-April range.
- Land Management Plan Update – The Parks Division team will be working over the coming months to conceptualize opportunities to improve land management standards and the corresponding plan moving forward. The Plan has done a lot of good to move the system forward, but the team feels it is reasonable and appropriate to focus resources on continuous improvement efforts in this area by working with Habitat Stewardship Subcommittee over the coming three months. An anticipated timeframe for the Commission to review a draft update to the Plan is later this winter.

Personnel Updates

Promotions/Hires:

- Brett Deakin was hired December 12th as the new Traffic Control Maintenance Worker, which is a shared position with Traffic Engineering and Parks, working in East Parks.

Departures:

- Marty Petillo will be retiring as the Olbrich Botanical Gardens Volunteer Coordinator after over 21 years of service. Her last day will be January 19, 2023. Marty has built a model program during her time and is leaving the Gardens’ volunteer program well-positioned for the future.

Section reports

Operations (Greg Genin)

Conservation:

- Worked to remove buckthorn and honeysuckle at Cherokee Marsh, Edna Taylor, and Turville Point. Removed spruce encroaching from a mature shelterbelt into a fallow hayfield planned for prairie restoration at Bitzer Family Preserve.
- Completed final ski trail and winter snowshoe/hiking trail preparations, and ski trails opened and grooming began on December 16.
- Contractors completed canopy thinning projects in oak woodlands at Owen and Knollwood to increase sunlight reaching the ground and promote oak regeneration.

Construction:

- Received over 10,000 yards of donated topsoil at Door Creek Park, and completed the work required to control erosion and stabilize the pile for long-term storage.
- Installed gates on Vilas Drive to deter vehicle traffic west of the shelter. This segment has been designated for bike and pedestrian use only.
- Supported the Streets Division with three “general plow” snow removal events (teamwork!).

Facilities:

- Performed winter recreation start-up work including preparing shelters and hydrants and completing daily inspections of facility heating systems.
- Supported special projects including construction of warming shelters at ice rinks, and an indoor winter driving range for Golf.

General Parks:

- Trimmed trees and removed invasive plants in a number of parks thanks to warmer weather early in the month.
- Operation Fresh Start crews removed buckthorn and honeysuckle from Warner Park.
- Completed warming shelter set-up and performed ice rink maintenance to the degree possible given weather and ice thickness. Several ice rinks were opened prior to the holiday.
- Responded to snow events later in the month, with the added challenge of changing weather forecasts and the overall Public Works Divisions being at minimum staffing levels. Parks supported snow removal for two of the Streets Division's sidewalk routes.
- Provided support for the Olbrich Winter Solstice celebration and the holiday celebration at Elvehjem Park.

Mall Concourse:

- Prepared snow equipment early in the month, allowing staff to quickly and effectively respond to the month's snow events.
- Decorated the landscape beds, trees, and bus shelters with a winter theme and lights, in addition to the BID's "Shine-On Madison" decorations.
- Supported the Run Santa Run Marathon and Santa Cycle Rampage events.

Planning and Development (Ann Freiwald)

2023 Sport Court

- The 2023 Sport Court Resurfacings contract includes color coating, crack repair, striping and power washing of acrylic surface sport courts (basketball, pickleball and tennis) at Bordner, Brittingham, Door Creek, Heritage Heights, Nakoma, Norman Clayton, Olbrich and Warner Parks and offers the opportunity to enhance play at our court surfaces most in need of repair (such as Warner Park basketball – shown in the attached).

Lake Monona Waterfront Design Challenge

- The three design teams will present their master plan options at a public event on January 26th at the Madison Central Library. The event starts an eight-week master plan public review and comment phase, during which Parks will gather community comments and feedback on the three plans. This information will help guide the Lake Monona Ad-hoc Committee in selecting a preferred master plan to advance in the process. The committee's evaluation is scheduled to occur in late March, and once a preferred plan is selected, the respective team will make refinements based on committee recommendations. The refined plan will be introduced to the Madison Common Council and Board of Park Commissioners in late August for consideration. The goal is an adopted master plan for the Lake Monona Waterfront by the end of 2023.