

## Community Services Quarterly Report October 2020

### **Lisa Laschinger, Assistant Parks Superintendent**

As the entire world has experienced, 2020 has been an incredibly challenging and unique year. It challenged us on a daily basis to work together, try new things and take on different responsibilities than what we know from our normal routines. As the community is practicing physical distancing and changing up long-standing traditions and recreational activities, they have relied on parks and open spaces as a safe haven. The entire Community Services team played a vital role in keeping the community safe during these troubling times.

### **Rangers & Disc Golf—Josh Schmitt**

2020 was a very unique summer for Park Rangers and it certainly came with its share of challenges. As Madison wrestled with the COVID-19 Pandemic we saw more people working from home and, in general, staying close to home. This greatly increased the use of our local parks, and as use increases so does the amount of user conflict that Park Rangers exist to address. COVID-19 changed not only the amount of use in the parks, but also how people used them. The Park Rangers played a major role in providing an environment people can use for their own wellness during a time when many things are changing. Many of our procedures have needed to be adapted and some of our policies have changed to fit this crisis. This has required our communication to get faster and more frequent.

Additionally, as the nation wrestles with the issues surrounding race and policing, our city saw large protests in our parks and experienced a general challenge to authority. The conflict surrounding these issues have shaped many of a Park Ranger's interactions with the public. As people's lives have individually become more stressful, a small interaction can escalate quickly. Our Park Ranger staff receive training in de-escalation thanks to the work of their Lead Park Ranger Ashley Bowman. This summer, the Ranger team reported an increase in tension during interactions and that they started using their de-escalation skills as a default rather than a tactic. Working every day in a uniform has been a challenge as oftentimes the presence of a uniform presents a barrier to communication. The goal and the challenge is to present that there is an empathetic and ethical person behind that uniform who the public can trust and break down that barrier. As the City of Madison struggles with social change, our Park Rangers are committed to equity.



We're seeing a major increase in the number of people experiencing homelessness, and using parks as their safe haven. In accordance with CDC guidance, the Emergency Operation Center a staff team created the Temporary Permissible Encampment project, where locations on city-owned land that meet specific criteria are temporarily permitting camping, including Reindahl and Starkweather Parks. In addition, the Mayor Rhodes-Conway issued an Emergency Order that would temporarily relax enforcement of ordinances that prohibit camping on public land.

What this means for Park Rangers is that much of their interaction with the homeless community has been communication and connection to resources by working closely with multiple city agencies and outreach services.

### **Aquatics—Josh Schmitt**

The 2020 summer season at the Goodman Pool was a season like none other. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the summer season was started July 15<sup>th</sup> and ended August 23<sup>rd</sup>, with a total season window of 40 days compared to an average of 88 days. Knowing the challenges that would be ahead to pull off a successful Aquatics season during the pandemic, Josh partnered with Tracey Hartley to plan and implement the Goodman Pool’s COVID-19 plan thoughtfully and safely on very short order. Tracey focused on the guest experience and Josh focused on the overall operations and water safety, with universal emphasis on staff and visitor safety.

A number of precautions were taken to ensure the safety of Goodman Pool staff and patrons alike. The traditional maximum capacity of the pool is 1000 patrons, however in 2020, capacity was limited to 250 people or 25 percent. The entry and exit points were adjusted to allow for adequate physical distancing. This change allowed patrons the ability to practice physical distancing in and out of the water. Face masks were mandatory to enter the facility and when staff/guests were in common areas or buildings. All deck furniture was removed and physical distancing circles were painted on the deck and turf to allow a space for patrons to set up their personal chairs for their time at the pool. We offered three, two-hour sessions to allow more of the public to access the pool and 30-minutes between each session for staff to clean and sanitize restrooms and touch points. All programming and events were cancelled for the season, including swim lessons due to concern that physical distancing could not be maintained and private after hour parties due to mass gathering restrictions.



As the season progressed, we saw a need to adjust and allow more space for lap swim time to fill the demand created by other area pools being closed. In addition, we developed a new offering, “Tot Time,” which allowed families with young children a quiet time to use the pool in the morning. We also worked with Goodman Waves and McFarland Sharks to offer modified swim team practice sessions.

Goodman 2020 Pool Attendance					
	Lap swim and Tot Time	Session 1	Session 2	Session 3	Total
Total per session	788	4,361	6,261	4,931	16,341
Average Attendance	53	99	153	126	-

The Goodman Pool is an asset for the Madison community and staff takes great pride in successfully making it available during such a difficult time. We received many compliments from visitors throughout the summer, including visitors from Portland, Oregon, who remarked, “We’re happy with the social distancing circles and face mask policy. We’re very happy with the Goodman Pool and think that [their home town] should learn things from the Goodman Pool.”

### **Recreation Services—Tracey Hartley**

With nearly all Parks-sponsored programming cancelled for the majority of 2020, Tracey and the Rec. Services team stepped in to help wherever needed throughout the course of the summer, assuming many different roles than normal. Tracey teamed up with Josh Schmitt to work closely with the Aquatics staff to successfully open and operate the pool for an abbreviated season. Most recently, Tracey’s programming expertise and knowledge of the Goodman Pool’s COVID19 plan were instrumental and much appreciated in helping to develop the teen programming that will begin in Warner Park this fall.

The Parks Division worked with the City’s Emergency Operation Center starting in April to place approximately 50 employees redeployed from other City agencies into Parks positions for a portion or the entire summer. Tracey played the lead role in placing about 25 employees from multiple agencies within the Parks Division, through communicating with the employee and Parks’ section Supervisors to align the redeployed staff’s skills and abilities with the needs of the organization, and coordinating payroll with their home agencies.

Some of our usual offerings occurred, but just a bit differently. While volunteer projects looked significantly different than they have in years past, there was still a need for coordinating the efforts of those looking to give their time and talents to their community through individual or family-led projects. A good deal of time was spent organizing projects and communicating expectations to keep volunteers safe while they were in the parks. In addition, Parks partnered with Traffic Engineering to organize and support a volunteer clean-up event via bicycle for Cycle September. Movies in the Parks were not able to happen this year due to restrictions on mass gatherings, but we were able to gain valuable insight on conducting drive-in movies by working closely with Olbrich staff to offer two nights of movies. We learned a good deal from this process that we can use to benefit the community in 2021. Preliminary Winter Operations Plans are underway as well.

### **Warner Park Community Recreation Center—Terrence Thompson**

WPCRC continues to be used as a shelter for single men experiencing homelessness. All reservations from mid-March through November have been cancelled, with December’s soon to follow. Chad Norquist continues to provide daily on-going support to the facility and shelter. Nearly all other members of staff continue to contribute to the needs of the Division in a number of different roles, ranging from payroll support, annual calendar contest and assisting with various administrative duties to working with Operations in the field.

The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly affected teen programs on the Northside (and across the city) with limited opportunities for middle school youth and little-to-no opportunities for high school students. A stakeholder analysis revealed most resources are focused on supporting virtual learning for students K-8 with limited options for additional programming after 5pm or for teens. Additionally, a targeted group of Northside teens stated a strong desire to be active and engage in social opportunities with their friends.

Terrence and Tracey Hartley are leading efforts to work with community partners to develop a safe space for teens to gather in compliance with the PHMDC orders. The Teen Night program is free and will occur at the Warner Park Outdoor Shelter starting in early October. Teens will engage in an evening of competitive gaming, non-contact sports and lawn games, leadership development, prizes/giveaways, music, a movie, a meal, and more while hanging out with their friends. Community leaders of color will be invited weekly to lead a "leadership charge," sharing a powerful testimonial describing a piece of advice someone gave them when they were a teen that helped shape their life through adulthood. Leadership charges will be cataloged and used as a resource for teens.

The Parks Division Equity Team's Tools & Training Change Team facilitated the second department-wide racial equity training on September 15, 2020. The monthly training series, called the Morning Café, had 22 staff in attendance. The Morning Café provides a safe space for staff to engage in a facilitated discussion around important issues within the department and the community. Topics covered so far have been Whiteness & White Privilege and LGBTQ Terminology.

### **Park Event and Street Use Event Permitting-Kelli Lamberty**

Looking back at the last "quarterly report" for Community Events, in January, is like looking at another world?! We were anticipating and planning for the upcoming event season . . . then came COVID. Since then, much of our work has consisted of postponing, rescheduling and finally canceling 2020 events. Our thoughts have been with Madison event organizers throughout this difficult and unprecedented time. We very much appreciate the understanding and cooperation we have received from them this year.

Time marches on, and we are looking forward to 2021. We are sending reservation notices to long running events, asking them to confirm their dates for next year. While we anticipate Public Health Madison and Dane County COVID orders will still be in place at least some portion of 2021 and organizers will likely be required to submit detailed plans to meet [PHMDC requirements](#) for physical distancing, cleaning and hygiene, and be able to monitor attendance at events.

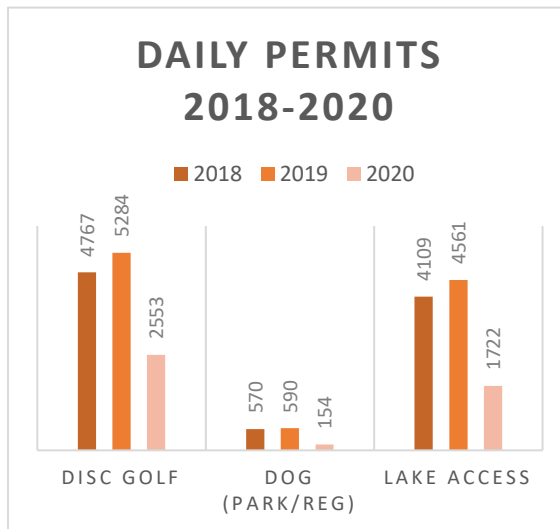
After receiving multiple requests for smaller events that could comply with PHMDC orders to reserve open park spaces, we worked to develop a Small Event application that we discussed with Facilities Programs and Fees and will be presenting at BPC this month. This gives us the framework to accommodate smaller scale events easier than our traditional Park Event process. With some delays, we continue to work on event policies and drafting a comprehensive Park Event ordinance. We expect to bring that to Facilities Programs and Fees in November and later to BPC. We are also working with IT to have a parks event application on-line in time for next year's event season.

### **Customer Services—Joanne Austin**

**Boat Storage** - The boat storage program remained very popular in 2020. Parks offers 396 spaces at 17 parks, and all were filled this year. Roughly 75% of our users returned from 2019 and there are about 240 on the waitlist. Starting in 2021, Parks will allow customers with two watercraft to store them on one rack, which will help accommodate some on the waitlist. All 31 mooring spaces were filled leaving about 40 on the waitlist.

**Athletic Reservations** – Reservations remain largely curtailed by COVID-19. A single softball league is playing games with additional safety measures, including distanced umpires, separate bases for fielders and runners, and mask requirements. Teams in this league play intra-squad games so as to keep possible contacts to a minimum. Youth soccer began practices with similar physical distancing and mask requirements. Pickleball and tennis continue to be popular throughout the parks, though there are very few reservations.

**Permits** - Onsite kiosks were closed for the safety of staff and customers back in early April. Permits have been purchased online or over the phone with the assistance from customer service staff. City IT helped to improve the online process, so the transition has been quite successful. Customers can easily purchase online and at all hours of the day. While the number of daily permits dropped, annual permits rose slightly for disc golf, and rose sharply for lake access (more than 2 times over 2019 numbers). Dog permits sales remained somewhat similar.



**Shelter Reservations** - Shelter reservation numbers are drastically lower than previous years due to COVID-19. Limited reservations (meeting Public Health orders) were allowed briefly in June and again after Labor Day. Numerous reservations were cancelled and new ones have been made over the phone with staff coordinating key pickup at the downtown office. We worked closely with the Clerk's office to coordinate park spaces for Democracy in the Park, which happened in late September and early October. The chart to the right does not include reservations for Democracy in the Park.

Main Shelters	# of Reservations
Highland Manor	33
Gates of Heaven	24
Elver Park	11
Hoyt Park	9
Tenney Park	8
Vilas Park	8
Burrows Park	7
Garner Park	6
Olin Park	5
Brittingham Park	4
Warner Park	4
Marshall Park	3
Westmorland Park	2
Demetral Park	1
Reindahl Park	1
Rennebohm Park	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>127</b>