

Community Services Section (Terrence Thompson)

Community Events (Kelly Post)

Street Use permitting

- 2025 marked the first full year operating under the updated MGO 10.056, with staff implementing new processes, working through early adjustments, and fine-tuning how agencies coordinate around Street Use permits.
- The intended outcomes of the updated processes have been achieved, including improved communication across City teams, earlier identification of potential issues, and more consistent, coordinated guidance for event organizers.
- Overall, the Street Use permitting process is running smoothly, and we are ready for a successful 2026 event season.

Park Event permitting

- The 2025 park event season was successful, with over 250 permitted events spread across the park system. The wide variety of cultural events and activities highlighted the Parks mission of providing safe, accessible parkland and equal opportunities for recreational and educational experiences.
- Community Events staff continue to coordinate closely with Parks operations, maintenance, and rangers to support a wide range of community events across our park system.
- The various types of permits that we have developed over the last few years, like the Kids Camps in Parks and Classes in Parks permits, are working well and seem to address the variety of activities and requests that we see currently in parks.

Carts in Parks

- The Carts in Parks program continues to run successfully, connecting local, City-licensed food carts with community park events and designated daily vending locations. Ongoing coordination between Community Events and the Street Vending team supports the program and helps provide clear communication, equitable access, and flexible participation throughout the vending season.

Youth Engagement Coordinator

- The new Parks Program Coordinator position supporting Goodman Pool and southside Madison youth has been posted, with an anticipated start date of April 27, 2026. The working title for the position is Youth Engagement Coordinator.

- Staff are anticipating a competitive applicant pool and are excited to identify a highly qualified candidate who can build strong connections with youth and partners and help advance Park's youth engagement efforts.

Parks Alive (Debra Alleyne)

Resilience Strategies

As Parks Alive continues to strengthen neighborhoods through our activities and ongoing presence in NRT neighborhoods, we plan to dedicate more time to integrating proven community resilience practices that promote violence resistance and foster safer communities in our engagement efforts. Recognizing that communities and individuals face both personal and collective trauma, Parks Alive aims to:

- Be a source of safety and support.
- Maintain consistency in our programming.
- Source community and city resources to make them available at events.
- Build connection points for communities and the regenerative outdoors.
- Support healthy community building.
- Strengthen existing partnerships focused on holistic wellness.
- Connect with more healthy food options while ensuring they are fun and enticing.
- Host artist-led resilience activities.
- Support the development of neighborhood identity.
- Source and include more community onsite support, vendors, and entertainment.
- Explore shared culture and values.
- Explore new partnership opportunities.

Customer Service (Joanne Austin)

Watercraft and Mooring Agreements

- 429 of 441 watercraft storage spaces were filled in 2025.
- 29 of 30 mooring spaces were filled in 2025.
- Waitlists for all watercraft storage locations dropped to manageable levels, with most locations having only about 20 people seeking storage.
- Starting in early February, we'll reach out to current watercraft storage users with instructions to renew for 2026, including a deadline. This will allow us to begin contacting those on waitlists starting April 1st. We'll contact current mooring customers in early May.

Athletic Reservations

A total of 12,963 court and field reservations were made, resulting in 35,311 hours of usage. Scheduling for 2026 is currently underway.

- Leagues with agreements began scheduling their reservations in January.
- Priority groups will start scheduling on the first Monday in February.
- Public users can begin scheduling on the third Monday in February.

Qualifying Discounts Program (QDP)

The Board of Park Commissioners approved the QDP in January, concluding the pilot program. User groups and individuals wishing to reserve courts and fields can now complete an annual QDP application to determine their eligibility for discounted rates off standard fees.

Those who received youth discount rates in the past will still need to apply for a discount but will continue to receive a 60% discount in 2026, even if they do not meet the minimum benchmarks.

In subsequent years, they will need to reapply, and the discount will decrease as follows:

- 40% in 2027
- 20% in 2028
- 0% starting in 2029

This will occur unless they meet the qualifying benchmarks in the application to receive the discount they had previously obtained. The QDP aims to provide equitable discounts for all qualifying users.

Recreation Services & Aquatics (Tracey Hartley)

Winter Recreation

- The winter recreation season will conclude on Sunday, February 15. Due to budget constraints, no additional days will be added, even if the weather permits. The grand opening of the Door Creek Shelter is scheduled for Sunday, February 1. We anticipate a high participant turnout for both the Learn To Ski and Snowshoe programs. We hope this will enhance the shelter's visibility and increase traffic there in the future. After the season ends, cleanup will begin after Early Voting.

Recreation Services

- Winter Prom, formerly known as the Daddy Daughter Dance, will take place at Monona Terrace on Saturday, February 7. This event marks Winter Prom's third year at Monona Terrace. We expect over 500 attendees, with 300 already registered. This event provides a wonderful family opportunity for all ages to dress up, create art, dance, and enjoy themselves. On Saturday, January 24, we held our annual Skate Cinema, screening a movie in the park while attendees skated on an ice rink. This year, we showed "Norm of the North" at Elver Park, attracting approximately 150 viewers. Several Groove and Glide events are scheduled for the remaining Friday nights of this winter season. Groove and Glides are mini music festivals on ice, featuring speakers, strobe lights, and music for patrons to enjoy while skating on the rinks.

Aquatics (Shane Martin)

- The positions for Lifeguard, Head Lifeguard, Head Attendant, and Aquatic Supervisor are currently posted online, with an application deadline of Friday, February 13. The Attendant position will be posted once winter concludes, and winter attendants who wish to continue working at the pool will be transferred to this position. We do not expect to hire many lifeguards or attendants this season. The Aquatic Management Team will be finalized by the end of March, and we look forward to collaborating with the Youth Engagement Coordinator to address any issues at the pool.

Rangers & Volunteers

Rangers (Steve Dray)

Staffing Update

- The full-time Park Ranger position is now closed, and we received a large number of candidates. Additionally, we will begin recruiting for the Hourly Ranger positions within the next few weeks. By early April, we plan to train our new Ranger staff so they will be ready to work independently by Memorial Day weekend.
- We want to celebrate Lead Ranger Ringwood for receiving a life-saving award for an incident in late October 2025. Ranger Ringwood's quick thinking and decisive response saved an individual's life near Olbrich Gardens. Great job, Ranger Ringwood!

Community Engagement

- Rangers have been actively involved in the community, as always. We have strengthened our relationship with Catalyst for Change, enhancing communication availability throughout the day, evening, and weekends—times when vulnerable individuals may need assistance the most. Rangers have played a vital role in connecting unhoused individuals in parks with available resources, and we have witnessed multiple individuals take steps toward finding housing.

Disc Golf

- Madison continues to offer excellent disc golf amenities for the public to enjoy. We've made improvements to our courses during the warmer seasons and remain committed to enhancing them year-round. Hiestand Park remains open during the winter months for dedicated disc golfers. Additionally, new disc golf baskets have been ordered for both courses and are scheduled to be installed in the spring of 2026!

Volunteers (John Weichelt)

- **Special Event Support:** We successfully coordinated over 30 volunteers for Candlelight Hikes at Edna Taylor Conservation Park on January 10 and at Warner Park on January 17. We also aim to recruit more than 15 volunteers to assist with the Family Winter Prom at Monona Terrace on February 7.
- **Winter Volunteering and Recruitment:** Parks continued to offer volunteer opportunities during the winter season. Key volunteer events included Weekly Conservation Volunteer Workdays at Cherokee Marsh Conservation Park and participation in ice crew activities, where volunteers helped prepare ice rinks at Rennebohm, Heritage Heights, Westmorland, Sunset, Wexford, Olbrich, Nakoma, and Hillington.
- **Volunteer Numbers Up in 2025:** In January, we collected volunteer hour data from key volunteer groups and leaders. For 2025, we recorded a total of 12,909 volunteer hours contributed by 1,803 volunteers. Additionally, we began tracking native plantings by volunteers, which included the planting of 8,477 seedlings, 25 trees, and 36 shrubs in 2025.

Warner Park Community Recreation Center (Zach Watson)

Phase 1 of the WPCRC expansion project was completed on December 31, 2025. We welcomed 2026 by reopening the fitness center in its new location, replacing the existing game room. The new fitness center opened to the public on January 2, 2026.

The revamped fitness center overlooks Warner Park and features brand-new flooring and equipment, along with classic favorites. We anticipate the new indoor pickleball courts opening in the spring of 2026. Current equipment includes treadmills, ellipticals, NuStep machines, recumbent and upright bikes, rowers, TRX suspension trainers, a multi-strength trainer, dumbbells, kettlebells, medicine balls, and mats. As we approach Phase 2, we will continue to expand the fitness center offerings. Stay tuned for more details in the spring of 2026!

Additionally, in 2026, the WPCRC will introduce all-new fitness and pickleball court memberships and passes designed to provide affordable access to our facilities.

Phase 2 of the expansion will also involve updating the existing gymnasium with new gym equipment, pickleball courts, and expanded basketball courts that will replicate the courts in the new gymnasium. We aim to complete this phase by May 2026.

Upon project completion, we are confident that we will be able to host events of all types and sizes, whether they require a small meeting space or the entire facility. Our multipurpose activity spaces will be available for individuals and groups of all ages to play, study, learn, connect, and grow.