

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

COMMUNICATIONS TO BOARD OF PARK COMMISSIONERS

DECEMBER 2025

Park Superintendent's Monthly Report Summary

December 1st marked my first day back in the best job in the City (world?). I had a fun adventure working in Metro for the past six months, and I'm glad the Mayor entrusted me with that role. I'm deeply appreciative of the work the team did during my sojourn. I was confident that they would continue to excel and they certainly did so. I certainly appreciate how the team worked together to address the myriad of challenges we face on a daily basis. I am particularly grateful for Lisa Laschinger's willingness to step into the role of Superintendent. Though I think it is the best job in the City, it certainly is not without difficult and paradoxical challenges. I was very impressed by Lisa's management through those. I also want to thank CJ Ryan for her support of Lisa and the entire team during my time away. The reality is that I cannot be the Superintendent effectively without both of them and doing it with only two is a real challenge. They managed to do it with grace and professionalism.

I am looking forward to getting up to speed on all of the important projects, initiatives, and efforts we are working on to improve the Parks system. I'm particularly focusing on improving my leadership skills as I return. I admittedly don't know what that will mean exactly, but I intend to spend some time over the next few months engaging with staff at all levels and in all areas to hear and learn what they think would be most impactful.

With less than a month left in fall, the Parks team has gotten our system ready for the winter. Ice hockey boards are up in most locations, and we just need cold weather for ice to be made. We groomed cross country ski trails in November, which is certainly rare. At our meeting, you will be reviewing an agreement with MadNorSki to be assisting with trail grooming, so that when Mother Nature decides to give us snow, we will be ready to groom our ski trails. Door Creek shelter will be open for its first winter season, and the staff and equipment are ready to go. As with any new location, we will be discovering the quirks and working out the kinks this first year, but having a winter recreation program at Door Creek will be a great addition to the far east side of town that needs it.

The 2026 Operating and Capital Budgets passed in November. The Common Council demonstrated their confidence in the Parks Division by approving an amendment that adds a 1.0 Parks Program Coordinator to address behavior issues at Goodman Pool and create community-based park activations focusing in South Madison. The City's Operating Budget will continue at the same level as last year, with minimal increases in the levy, thanks to the referendum that passed. The Parks Division also received funding to support the Warner Park Community Recreation Center expansion staffing needs, additional staffing needs at the Imagination Center to support its year-round functions, and Common Council passed a Capital Budget amendment to address the needs of the fence at Vilas Park that borders Edgewood College

The 2025 Golf season officially closed on Tuesday, November 25, with record revenue of over \$5.8 million and more than 167,000 rounds of golf played. This was the last season in which the program will offer 72 holes of golf, as planned, the Madison Parks Golf program will operate as a 54 hole program at the beginning of the 2026 season. I am grateful to the Golf team for another outstanding year. I also want to express deep appreciation to Charlie Romines, Streets Superintendent and Director of Public Works for providing mentorship to the Golf Program while I was away at Metro.

The Warner Park Community Recreation Center is on track to finish construction by end of this calendar year. We are tentatively targeting a grand opening ceremony in January, with details to be announced once we are past any possibility of construction or weather delays.

As we come to the end of the year, it is always a good time to reflect on the successes of the last year. The Parks Division staff did an incredible job showing up to move our work forward, even with significant staffing changes and transitions throughout the year. December is also a good time to shift from reviewing the past, to looking to the future. This last month, the Parks Management Team met to discuss the 2026 Work Plan. After celebrating our wins from 2025, we started on a solid course for 2026. We will continue honing in on our priorities to deliver an exceptional park system next year. You can expect a presentation in January on our 2026 goals.

Future Commission Items

- 2026 Work Plan
- Alcohol in Parks Policy
- Parking Assets in Parks Analysis
- Olin Houses
- Marshall Houses

PERSONNEL UPDATES

Promotions/Hires:

- Jim Thompson was promoted from laborer to Golf Maintenance Worker LTE. He began his new role on November 9, 2025.
- The two shared Traffic Control Maintenance Worker positions that split their time between Parks and Traffic Engineering have returned to Parks for the winter. Christer Pilman was hired in August 2025 and began working in East Parks on November 10, 2025 and Ethan Reisman returned to Central Parks on November 24, 2025.
- Lisa Laschinger returned to her role as Assistant Parks Superintendent, effective December 1, 2025.
- Eric Knepp returned to his role as Parks Superintendent from his interim appointment in Metro. Effective December 1, 2025, Eric resumed his duties within the Parks Division.

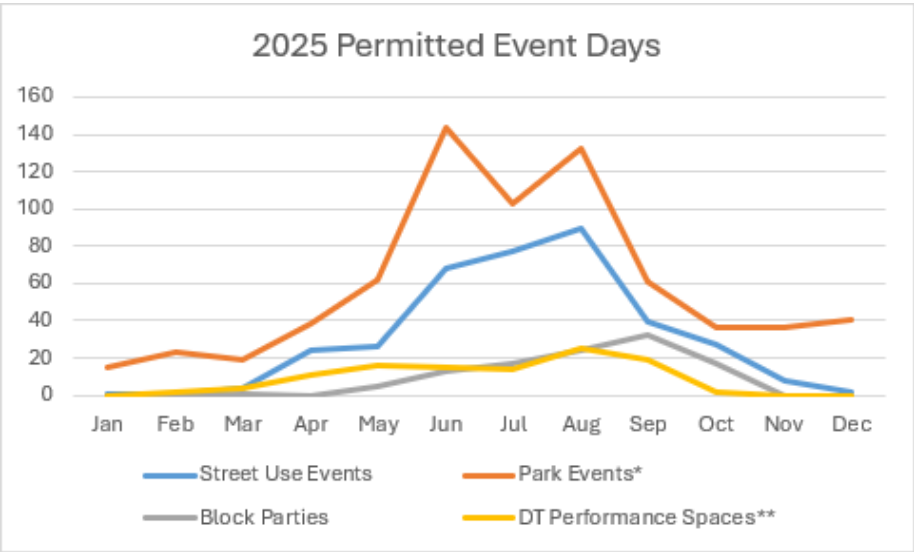
SECTION UPDATES

Community Services – Terrence Thompson

Community Events & Parks Alive

Community Events (Kelly Post)

- The Community Event team has supported a full season of community events across Madison, including concerts, runs/walks, festivals, and neighborhood gatherings, with almost 1300 permitted event days this year!



# of permits issued	2023	2024	2025
Street Use Events	138	146	147
Park Events	249	245	250
Block Parties	112	90	109

- In 2025, we collaborated with the Department of Civil Rights to create a new Event Accessibility Form to provide resources and help organizers ensure their events are accessible to all.
- In 2026, we will begin requiring a Transportation Options Plan for events with more than 1,000 attendees. The City’s Transportation Demand Management staff created a new form to help event organizers promote alternatives to driving, including transit, carpooling, biking, and walking. Encouraging these options helps reduce traffic congestion and improve mobility for everyone.

Parks Alive (Debra Alleyne)

- Fall Parks Alive:** Fall Parks Alive was the most successful we have hosted compared to previous years. These events serve as an incubator for the Jr Ranger program using the Parks Alive framework. They were held at the Warner Park Community Recreation Center (WPCRC) on November 4 and at the Revival Ridge Community Room in Allied on November 3. We saw sustained participation in Allied, reaching approximately 81 participants. At this venue last year, we had significant participation from Spanish-speaking residents, who were notably absent this year. At the WPCRC, we used door hangers and saw a significant increase in participation from Brentwood residents living in the apartments near Trailsway. We had approximately 67 participants. We usually cater for 100 people at Parks Alive. Excess food was donated to the YWCA women’s shelter.

- **Community Outreach:** We were invited to participate in a community event on November 1. The Caribbean Association of Madison (CAM) hosted a youth masquerade party that celebrated Caribbean traditions. We attended the event, provided information about Parks Alive, distributed some items, and shared the 2026 Parks Alive schedule with the president of CAM.
- **Art in Parks:** Following the site visit on October 6, we realized that the proposed location for the art installation at Imagination Center at Reindahl Park (ICRP) was not suitable. Meri Rose Ekberg, the Community and Cultural Resource Planner, asked for suggestions for relocating the installation site. We provided feedback that aligned with the park's goals and priorities. On November 24, during a meeting with representatives from Engineering, Madison Public Library leadership, and the arts community, we reached a consensus on the new location for the art installation.

Customer Service (Joanne Austin)

- **2026 Permits (Disc Golf, Dog, Lake Access, and Cross Country Ski):** The 2026 annual permits became available for purchase on November 1. An email notification was sent to all previous permit holders, and we are already noticing an increase in purchases, including ski permits for the upcoming winter season.
 - All annual permits purchased at this time will be valid until their expiration dates: Disc Golf, Dog, and Ski permits will remain valid through December 31, 2026, while Lake Access permits will be valid until March 31, 2027. Rangers will consider any newly purchased permits valid until their expiration dates.
- **2026 Shelter Reservations:** On November 3, 2025, we started accepting shelter reservations for the upcoming year. Unfortunately, a recent software upgrade made it challenging to process reservations that morning. Fortunately, our IT team was contacted immediately, and the issue was resolved within a few hours. By the end of the day, we were back in business. Notably, 29 of the reservations made that day were for graduation celebrations. Below are the top five shelters that were reserved on opening day.

Rank	Park Shelter	# Reservations
1	Gates of Heaven	13
2	Rennebohm	12
3	Westmorland	12
4	John Wall at Tenney	11
5	Garner	9

- As of the end of November 19, we had entered a total of 210 shelter reservations for 2026, with 49 of those processed online by our customers. Every customer who reserves a shelter receives a receipt and an information packet for the shelter they will be using.

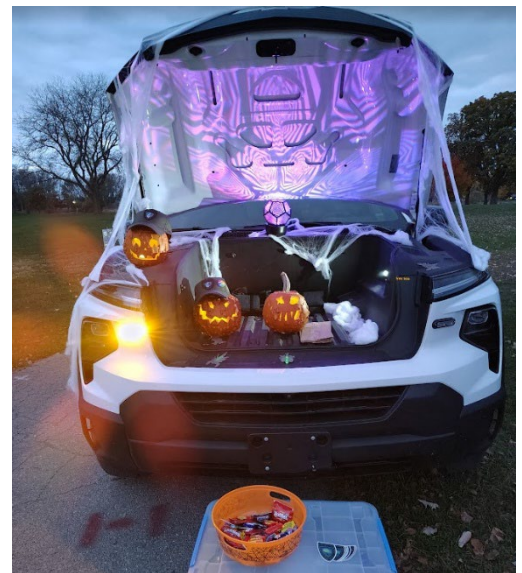
Recreation Services & Aquatics (Tracey Hartley)

- **Aquatics:** We are placing orders for items needed for 2026 at Goodman Pool. We will submit the Request to Fill for lifeguard positions by the end of the year.
- **Winter Recreation:** Door Creek will be open for winter recreation during the 2025-2026 season. We will rent ice skates, snowshoes, and cross-country skis, and sell concessions. Our hours of operation will be Wednesday to Friday from 4 PM to 8 PM, and Saturday and Sunday from 12 PM to 8 PM and 12 PM to 6 PM. We are planning a ribbon-cutting event, with the date to be announced.
 - We have hired 46 staff members for the season, and staff training begins in early December.
 - Cleaning and organizing of winter locations are currently underway.
- **Special Events:** We have successfully wrapped up the Hayride season! Our reservable hayrides sold out, and over the two days of rides through the Holiday Fantasy in Lights, we welcomed 695 attendees. It was a huge success!
- **Upcoming Events:** Looking ahead, we have an exciting schedule of Groove and Glides, Candlelight Hikes, Skate Cinema, Winter Prom, Learning Series, and Winter Clothing Drive scheduled for 2026.

Rangers & Volunteers

Rangers (Steve Dray)

- **Enforcement Contacts:** Rangers have had 52 enforcement contacts, resulting in 30 warnings, 19 citations, and three bans. Three parking tickets have also been issued to date in November.
- **Community Outreach:** Rangers participated in multiple community outreach events, including the WPCRC's Trunk or Treat, and connected with many folks in a positive way.
- **Training:** In November, the Rangers took part in another round of self-defense training to enhance their safety while working alone in parks, both during the day and at night. This training included a segment on how to effectively use vehicle lights and flashlights to illuminate park areas, helping to ensure their safety while closing parks and securing restrooms and park shelters.



Ranger truck at Trunk or Treat event

Volunteers (John Weichert)

- **Get Connected Software Build-Out:** We are continuing to enhance the City's volunteer portal by adding a variety of flexible, family-friendly, and seasonal opportunities. Key events in November included:
 - Weekly Conservation Volunteer Workdays at Owen Conservation Park and Cherokee Marsh Conservation Park
 - Trail workdays in partnership with CORP at Elver Park and Door Creek Park
 - The 2nd Annual Green Friday Cleanup at Garner Park on November 28.

- **Community and Volunteer Engagement:** We strengthened our partnerships with neighborhood associations at Arbor Hills, as well as with Friends groups and ice volunteer leads. We prepared communications for volunteers, including listings for winter opportunities related to trail work, ice maintenance, and upcoming events in early 2026, such as Winter Prom and Candlelight Walks. Additionally, we laid the groundwork for the winter clothing drive in January and community science programs planned for May 2026.

Warner Park Community Recreation Center (Zach Watson)

- The first phase of the WPCRC Expansion project is nearing completion, and we expect to open the new gymnasium, fitness center, and community studio to the public by January 2, 2026.
- The second phase of the expansion is currently going through the committee approval process. This phase will involve updating the existing gymnasium, adding mobile bleacher seating, and equipping both gyms with pickleball materials. We anticipate completing this phase by the end of January 2026.
- The KNOW Program partnership with the Madison Parks Foundation will kick off 2026 with an exciting lineup of youth and family-friendly basketball events:
- A Late-Night Basketball session will begin on January 10, 2026. This session will run from 9:00 PM to 12:00 AM and is open to all participants aged 17 and older.
- WPCRC Kiddie Ball will be introduced this year, catering to youth from kindergarten through 3rd grade. This program will focus on beginner basketball skills, drills, and structured gameplay. Kiddie Ball will take place on Saturday mornings from 11:00 AM to 12:00 PM.
- To conclude the month, on January 30, 2026, the KNOW Program will host a competitive 1-on-1 Basketball Tournament for middle and high school students aged 11–18. This event will run from 3:00 PM to 6:00 PM, and winners will receive various prizes from supporters of the KNOW Program. Interested participants should sign up in advance through our website, with pre-registration opening on January 1, 2026.

Parks Operations

Central Parks

Central Parks- General Parks

- Multiple brush clearing projects at Brittingham, Vilas, and street ends were completed.
- Nice Rink sides have been installed at Franklin Field
- Soil aeration of athletic fields took place.

Central Parks- Ecology Team

- Finished tree planting (402 trees for the year, 52 species in 47 different parks)
- Performed prescribed burns at Manchester, Eagle Trace, Kennedy and Ice Age Ridge parks
- Planted natural area beds at Rennebohm, Tenney and Olbrich Parks.

Conservation

- Conducted prescribed burns at Cherokee Marsh North Unit and Stricker's Pond.
- Mowed and pruned ski trails. MadNorSki volunteers supported staff in this work at Elver and Door Creek with two volunteer events.
- Met with Friends of Cherokee Marsh, Friends of Owen Conservation Park, and independent volunteers at Prairie Ridge to discuss brush removal and other winter projects.

Construction

- Assisted Yahara Golf with bunker restoration work.
- Replenish playground mulch surfacing for proper fall protection at Carpenter- Ridgeway, Reger, Waldorf and Tenney Island.
- Removed vegetation islands per the plan at the Goodman pool.
- Assisted MPD with loading various pieces of training equipment.

East Parks

- Hiestand Disc Golf tee pads have all been improved by adding limestone with fines to bring the surrounding grade to level to the pads. Holes 15 through 18 had the wooded edges of the holes pushed back with the forestry mower, and most hole markers had brush cleared away from them for visibility. More work to come.
- NiceRink sides have been installed at Door Creek, Heritage Heights, and Olbrich Park.
- East Parks purchased a new rotary mower for the bobcat/toolcat to help speed up brush clearing projects.
- Soil aeration and dormant seeding of athletic fields and Hiestand Disc Golf began and will continue until all fields are completed.

Facilities

- Wrapping up winterization of shelters, gardens, irrigation, and fountains.
- Installed cabinetry at Door Creek for concessions and rentals.
- Finished install of new lighting poles and fixtures at James Madison walkway.
- Finishing the removal of piers and boat launches.

Mall Concourse Maintenance

- Power washed and cleaned BRT bus stations, including cleaning windows, power washing all concrete areas, and cleaned benches.
- Extensive downtown leaf cleanup, including piling and sucking up leaves with vac unit on the back of a 1-ton.
- Winter maintenance preparations including salt calibrating, greasing John Deere attachments, salt wagon maintenance, and route familiarization with new employees. Installed sand barrels for winter use at the usual downtown locations (8).
- Started downtown winter decor, including installing lights on trees at Capitol Centre Park.

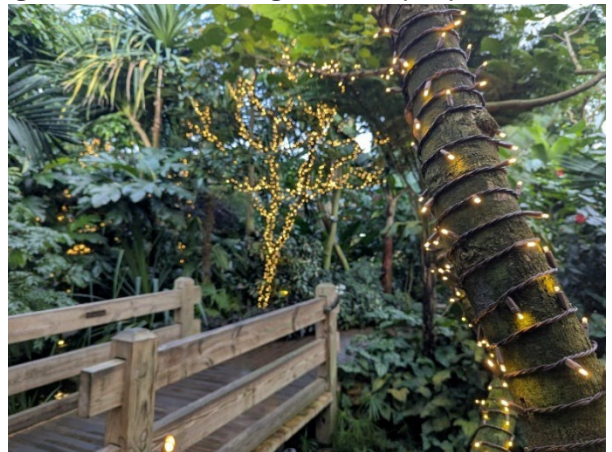
West Parks

- Worked on the Elver disc golf project which included tree trimming, stump grinding, and brush clearing.
- Installed hockey boards and Nice rinks at Elver, and Westmorland for winter recreation.
- Aerated athletic fields to mitigate compaction and improve turf growth.
- Leaf mulching and removal at area parks and Forest Hill cemetery to prevent turf damage.

Olbrich Botanical Gardens

- **10th Year of GLEAM Breaks Records:** The 10th Anniversary of GLEAM set new records all around. Beautiful fall weather that was warm and lacked rain meant we had record attendance reaching over 39,000 people. New pop-ups were hosted this year including a family night and two adults only nights. Despite the challenges, we were able to host multiple international artists from Australia, Japan, and Canada. We're already planning for 2026 with a high rate of proposals already received for next year's GLEAM exhibition.

- **Holiday Train & Flower Show:** Five children's books come to life in this year's "Snowy Storybook" themed Holiday Train & Flower Show. A spread of white poinsettias is featured including these varieties: 'Alaska White', 'Alpinia White', 'Candy Wintergreen', 'J'adore White Pearl', and 'Frozen'. The Bolz Conservatory is getting into the holiday spirit as well this year with holiday lights and decorations. The show opens on December 6th at 10am.



Conservatory trees with lights installed for holiday season

- **Comprehensive & Interpretive Plan Update:** On November 12th and 13th, Olbrich Gardens staff welcomed the design team for the 1st in-person workshop. The design team participated in a full-site tour with staff learning more about Olbrich Gardens and the stories of our gardens. Additional site information was collected through daylong workshops with Olbrich staff. That evening concluded with an input gathering workshop with volunteers and Olbrich Botanical Society Board of Directors.



Staff and consultants during tabletop discussion during Olbrich workshop