

SUPERINTENDENT'S DECEMBER 2023 REPORT

COMMUNICATIONS TO BOARD OF PARK COMMISSIONERS

Park Superintendent's Monthly Report Summary

Winter is quickly approaching and we have seen a few snow events by early December. Though we have had some snow and some colder temperatures, it is looking like this will be an "average" start to winter recreation at best this year. Forecasts are showing temps above freezing, at least for daytime highs, forecast into the latter half of December. Though the nighttime lows will be below freezing, it will be a challenge to get quality ice forming with daytime temps into the upper 40's. This also means that the snow we have seen and any modest amounts that fall again soon, will likely vanish during the warmer parts of the days. As President Harrington briefed the Commission on last month, climate change is occurring in Wisconsin, and these issues are likely to continue to be prevalent. The use of the term average is a little bit strange and why it is in quotations above. What is "average"? Is it based on 3,5, 10, 30 year averages? Though we do not know how climate change can be best managed from a winter recreation standpoint, we are doing more to better understand the impact. This year we will be closely studying the newly installed Nicerink at Goodman Park. In theory, this rink was placed in a manner that should maximize its skateable ice time. We are also focused on gathering observational data from across the system, as it seems apparent our recreational offerings are likely to change over the coming years.

The City Council adopted a 2024 Operating and Capital Budget in November. The budget deliberations took only one night, which is normally takes two or three nights to get through this final step in the budget adoption process. Overall, the Parks Division is well positioned to be able to sustain our level of service and make meaningful investments in the parks system in 2024. Notably, the Capital Budget includes sufficient funding for the construction of the WPCRC expansion which will begin in 2024. The budget also includes sustained funding for our service level in the operating budget, including investing in the staff team by providing a wage increase that catches general municipal employees up to protective service. There was a gap between those two groups extending back to the adoption of Act 10.

Future Commission Items

- Golf Enterprise Update – The Golf Team is working to prepare a report to the 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.
- Olin Houses – We will be working on a management plan for the Olin Houses as we buy them. The one we have owned for a bit is under a leaseback, but the new acquisition will not be by the spring. We anticipate buying more of these and it would be good to begin developing the plan for holding strategy. We are hopeful to have a plan in place in the first half of 2024.
- Parks Division Work Plan / Roadmap – Staff will present the Division's roadmap to the Board between March and May of 2024. The roadmap provides an overview of significant change initiatives that the Division is undertaking and/or working on in 2024. The roadmap elements each have an assigned manager who are leading the work associated with that element.

Personnel Updates

Promotions/Hires:

- Shannon Barstow was promoted to Greenskeeper 3 at Yahara Hills Golf Course. He previously was Greenskeeper 1 at Monona Golf Course and served as provisionally appointed Greenskeeper 3 at Yahara since May 2023.
- Mariah “Rah” Filla was hired to a Park Ranger position. They started with the Ranger Team on November 13, 2023.
- Chad Hughes was promoted from West Parks Supervisor to Operations Manager. Chad has held many progressively responsible positions within Park Operations, most recently as West Parks Supervisor. Chad officially started his new position on November 27, 2023.
- Travis Miller was hired as Athletic Leadworker in East Parks. He starts his new position on December 11, 2023.

Departures:

- Dan Gill has retired from his position as Parks Maintenance Worker with East Parks after 34 years with the City of Madison. His last physical day of work was November 15, 2023.
- Greg Genin will be retiring from his position as Operations Manager effective January 5, 2024. We appreciate Greg’s five years of service and dedication to leading Park Operations since October 2018.

Section reports

Community Services Report December 2023 – Terrence Thompson

Community Events & Customer Service

Events (Kelly Post)

- This time of year is when we take a “break” from permitting events. Our focus shifts to finalizing 2023 event data, collecting outstanding balances, and preparing for the following year’s events.
- Community Event staff has been meeting with all the City staff on the Street Use Staff Commission to gather feedback on processes and policies as we work concurrently on updates to processes, applications, and websites for 2024 Street Use events.
- Community Event staff is involved in the ongoing discussions with Metro, Traffic Engineering, Community Development, and other City agencies on BRT construction, BRT bus routes, and other construction that will impact downtown/Capitol Square events next summer and in the future. Staff is gathering as much info as possible to be able to inform annual event organizers of potential impacts on their events as soon as possible.

Parks Alive (Debra Alleyne)

Fall events

- We completed Parks Alive events created in partnership with the Sequoia Library in three park alternative locations. These locations were the Madison Ho-Chunk Community Center near Owl Creek Park (26 attendees), The Boys and Girls Club near Penn Park and Allied Park (45 attendees), and The Salvation Army near Darbo/ Worthington Park (8 attendees). The success of the events was directly tied to community dissemination of the information. This pilot demonstrated the need for community building that exceeds the NRT circuit. Our partnership with REAP allowed us to serve healthy, seasonally appropriate, and locally sourced foods. We noticed that the participants were excited about trying culturally diverse foods they may not have ordinarily eaten.

Youth Partnerships

- While organizing fall programming, the need for deep community engagement became a prevalent topic. With the leaders of the alternative sites, we discussed the need to cultivate and develop the community leaders of tomorrow by empowering today's youth. Because youth engagement funds are built into the budget, we plan to propose to the backbone team the assembly of a PA Youth Team that would be instrumental to the decision-making, planning, and execution of a youth-led program at their local Parks Alive park. With the support of the backbone team, we plan to pilot this program for the Summer of 2024, starting in January 2024, in select neighborhoods to develop community buy-in for the program and, ultimately, the goal of building stronger and safer neighborhoods.

Customer Service (Joanne Austin)

2024 Shelter Reservations:

- We began accepting reservations for next year on Tuesday, November 14. 122 total reservations were processed between 8am-11:30am. 54% of these reservations were made within the first 30 minutes of the day, 76 of them being placed online. Wedding celebrations accounted for 33% of the reservations, with graduations being 25%.



Garner Park

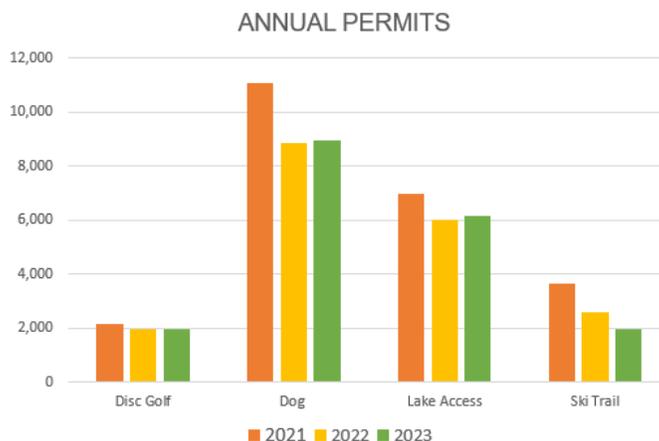


Tenney Park

Annual Permits

- 2024 Disc Golf, Dog, Lake Access, and Cross Country Ski permits are now available for purchase. Below are annual permit totals sold 2021-2023.

| ANNUAL PERMITS | 2021 | 2022 | 2023 |
|----------------|--------|-------|-------|
| Disc Golf | 2,161 | 1,950 | 1,963 |
| Dog | 11,069 | 8,851 | 8,961 |
| Lake Access | 6,956 | 5,998 | 6,132 |
| Ski Trail | 3,632 | 2,608 | 1,948 |



Recreation Services & Aquatics

Winter Events

- Planning is underway, with meetings scheduled and event dates set for the upcoming season.

Winter Operations

- We are interviewing, hiring, and collecting paperwork for Attendants. We have 15 newly hired and 18 returning staff and would like 40 Attendants on the team. Training, setup, and prep work are underway at the winter locations. We are working with IT to get the POS systems operational.

Summer Operations

- We have scheduled pre-season training and will email returning staff this month.
- We are posting for one Aquatic Supervisor and lifeguards in December to get a jump on finding the staff we will need for summer 2024.

Rangers & Volunteers

Rangers (Jason Vroman)

- Rah Filla was hired as the West District Park Ranger. Rah began work with the Division on November 13, 2024. Rah has previous experience with the WI DNR and many customer service roles. Additionally, Rah graduated from UW-Madison and has a background in natural resources. Welcome Rah!

- Rangers located a large camp at Garner Park and worked to connect at least one occupant with local housing resources. Rangers will partner with Ops to remove the abandoned property.



- Initial clearing and seeding work for the disc golf course holes 2 – 4 redesign at Elver Park has been completed. We worked with a local contractor to complete this phase of the project. Parks staff will evaluate conditions in the spring and seek to complete the redesign by the fall of 2024 after installing baskets and tee pads. Additionally, Elver is closed to disc golf for the season, and Heistand will remain the winter course this year.



Volunteers (John Weichelt)

- Recent volunteer workday events include Trek Bicycle, US Bank, and Global Health Alliance with clean up and brush removal at Turville Conservation Park, Vilas Park, and James Madison.
- We met with Ice Adoption volunteer leads for 8 locations and verified they can continue partnering to maintain ice for the upcoming ice season.
- The Volunteer Program is assembling an annual volunteer report. As part of this process, a Friends Service Report has been developed to engage friends groups to submit more of their hours and communicate their yearly plans with Parks. We have begun getting important information from our friends' leads.

Warner Park Community Recreation Center (Zach Watson)

WPCRC Expansion Update

- The 2024 Budget included The Capital Budget Amendment before the Common Council, which approved an additional \$2,587,000 in funding to complete the WPCRC Expansion project, now estimated at \$8,235,000.00 to complete.
- The geothermal test bore update is scheduled for January 2024. The WPCRC expansion project will include the future use of a geothermal system to heat and cool the space. The system will be funded through \$500,000 in tax credits from the Federal Government.

WPCRC KNOW Program

- To date, we have had nearly 5,200 RecTrac scans for youth ages 11-21 participating in various KNOW programs held at WPCRC, and we anticipate reaching 5,700 scans for KNOW programming by the end of 2023.

Parks Operations

Conservation:

- Worked with the Ecology Team staff to conduct prescribed burns on approximately 70 acres across seven parks (Apple Ridge, Bitzer, Cherokee Marsh, Elver, Flagstone, Hiestand, and Nesbitt Open Space).
- Began preparing the cross country ski trails for winter by pruning overhanging limbs, mowing back edges of trails, and removing leaves. This work was supported by a MadNorSki ski club volunteer work day.

Construction:

- Renovated the Demetral Park softball field diamond #1, which included infield grading, turf lip removal, and the installation of new sod.
- Restored an area at Giddings Park by removing an asphalt path and sowing grass seed into the area.
- Installed a new batting cage at Bowman Park and a new swing set at McClellan Park.

Facilities:

- Continued seasonal closing and winterizing of the park facilities, irrigation systems, fountains, and shelters. Also removed the piers, with the exception of the boat launch piers that will remain until late fall.

- Installed a water service line at Hoyt Park, and replaced the roof and painted the Quann Park sun shelter.
- Constructed an Aldo Leopold style donor bench to be placed at Cherokee Park.

General Parks:

- Prepared for winter operations by installing the NiceRinks and hockey boards, clearing encroaching vegetation from pathways, staking the snow routes, and preparing the equipment.
- Supported the annual Olin Park Fantasy-in-Lights community hayride events.
- Finalized the seasonal leaf cleanup and mulching operations at all parks.
- **Ecology Team:**
 - Installed native plantings in the landscape beds at Warner, Honeysuckle, Penn and Orton parks.
 - Advanced the work on the natural area measurement score card for assessing tier rankings and restoration progress in individual management units.

Mall Concourse:

- Installed the seasonal décor, including hanging the BID's snowflake lights and adding winter decorations to the planters and landscape beds.
- Prepared the area for winter with leaf cleanup, and final turf mowing and fertilizing.
- Supported year-end events including “Shine On”, Madison Marathon, and the last Farmer’s Market of the season.

Olbrich Botanical Gardens



- **Royal Thai Pavilion & Bridge** –On October 27, 2023, Olbrich Botanical Gardens hosted the Minister Counselor of Science and Technology Mr. Sedthapandh Krajangwongs from The Royal Thai Embassy, Deputy Consul-General Mrs. Natnapang Damrongsoontornchai from The Royal Thai Consulate-Chicago, Mr. Anuthep

Meelertsom, Mayor Satya Rhodes-Conway, Parks Superintendent Eric Knepp, Managing Director, International & Constituent Programs Mrs. Lora Klenke from the Wisconsin Alumni Association, and International Alumni and Development Specialist Mrs. Kimberly Santiago from UW-Madison. The visit consisted of an update from Project Manager Amy Scanlon on the renovations to the Royal Thai Pavilion and a site visit to see the work up close. The visit was featured on the Mayor's Office Blog: <https://www.cityofmadison.com/mayor/blog/2023-11-20/keeping-madisons-royal-thai-pavilion-beautiful> and also featured in an article by the Kingdom of Thailand, Ministry of Foreign Affairs <https://www.mfa.go.th/en/content/pr-chicago-11072023-2?page=5d5bd3cb15e39c306002a9b5>



- **New Exit Turnstile** – A much larger new turnstile was installed at the Gardens this month. This new larger turnstile now makes it easier for everyone to exit the Gardens after hours. This project was made possible through funding from the American Rescue Plan Act grant that Olbrich Botanical Society received combined with Capital Improvement Funds from Madison Parks. The gate to the left of the turnstile is still being worked on to align with the turnstile.
- **Olbrich's Gift Shop** – The Gift Shop at Olbrich Botanical Gardens was highlighted as one of the 10 Madison-area boutiques to shop at for the holidays by Brava magazine. This article was featured in anticipation of Small Business Saturday coming up on November 25th, 2023. <https://bravamagazine.com/shop-small-madison/>