

SUPERINTENDENT'S DECEMBER 2021 REPORT

COMMUNICATIONS TO BOARD OF PARK COMMISSIONERS

Park Superintendent's Monthly Report Summary

November was a little dryer than normal, with no appreciable snowfall. As we start the third snowiest month (in aggregate on average) there are no signs of an early snow pack forming at the moment. We average about 12 inches per year in December, so even though it isn't on the ground yet, the team is actively continuing preparation for it. Snow brings lots of challenges and opportunities to the Parks Division team. We maintain a significant amount of responsibility for snow and ice control for Parks and other City assets. We also work to establish ice rinks, sledding hills, snow shoe, and cross country skiing opportunities. Some of these require snow and some snow makes it harder. It certainly makes it hard to make it all happen, but we are ready and excited to enter another winter season.

In regard to winter recreation, we will not be able to support a machine made snow loop at Elver this year. We are working closely with partners to plan for the future return of that loop, but there are significant hurdles that need to be surmounted to make this possible. The Division has never received budgetary authority to support this work and the costs have grown for all involved over the years (e.g. utility costs are a key driver). The team anticipates the Commission being engaged in those conversations moving forward. We will also be keeping winter warming shelters closed to the public. There are a number of factors in this decision, but given the spaces themselves, the staffing team we have in place, the hope of significant increases in youth vaccination rates within just 2-3 months hence, and the fact that the season went well last year, we think this is a reasonable path forward.

Parks is actively recruiting for multiple vacant positions and are glad we have a quality Human Resources Department to help us navigate through these processes to attract and hire talented, dedicated, and committed team members. Overall, the turnover rate throughout the pandemic has been higher than our average and we continue to look forward to stabilize our team in numbers, as they have been stretched and pulled across many facets of work to sustain and constantly modify our operations. Overall, the team needs support and filling vacant positions is a key part of that.

Future Commission Items

- Golf Enterprise Update – The golf team is working to provide both the Commission and the Golf Subcommittee and update on the Enterprise Fund and operations as the 2021 season comes to a close. The current target for this informational update is in December or January. This will correspond with a goal of presenting an update and additional plan details related to Glenway for 2022. The goal of this item is for the January meeting.
- Update on WPCRC expansion plans – Funding for design and development work is included in the Parks Division's 2022 Capital Budget request, with construction funding in 2023. Staff anticipates briefing the Commission on this important project in January or February.
- Donor Recognition and Partnership Policies – The Long Range Planning Subcommittee is commencing work around the issues of donor recognition and partnership policies over the first few meetings of 2022. The hope is to have a draft policy for feedback in the first half of 2022.

- Operating Budget Service Level Briefing – The team is working to prepare a presentation to the Board on service level changes based on final outcomes of the budget process. As currently resourced, there will be reductions in services from historic norms in aquatics and operations that will have an impact. Given the reductions are mostly in hourly staffing the impacts are a challenge to plan for with specificity, but will create challenges for hours of coverage for lifeguards at beaches, mowing and trimming operations, restroom and shelter date availability, as well as impacts on general maintenance support for the park system. The goal is to present information on this in February 2022
- 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 six to nine months. An anticipated timeframe for the Commission to review a draft update to the Plan is late summer 2022.

Section reports

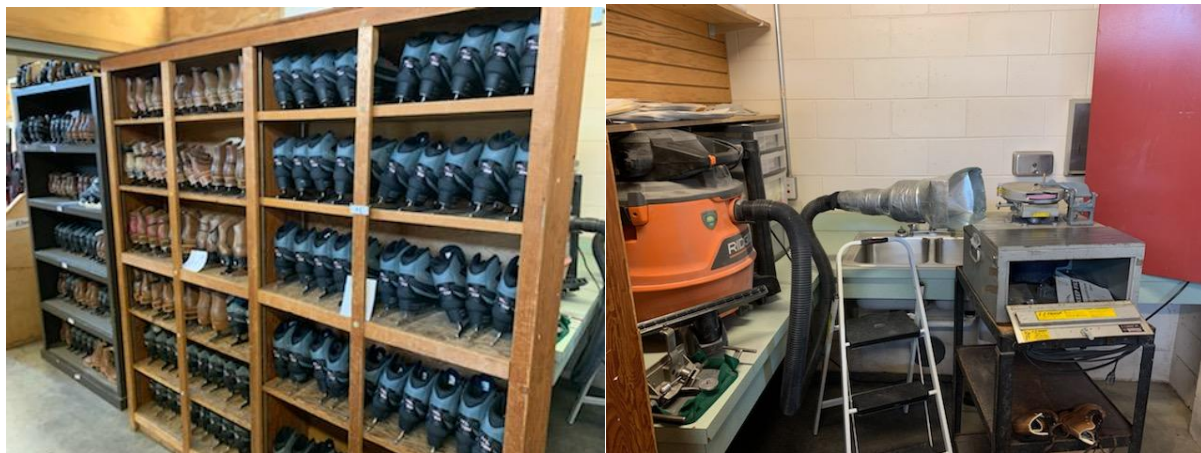
Community Services Report – Christopher Peguero

Customer Service Front Staff (Joanne Austin)

Customers began placing their 2022 reservations on November 9. There were 157 total reservations made on this day, with 71 of them being made online. 2022 permit (dog, disc golf, lake access and cross country ski) sales began on November 15 with over 850 purchased so far.

Rangers (Joanne Austin)

Skate, Skates and more Skates - Rangers have diligently been sharpening hundreds and hundreds of skates in preparation for the winter operations season at Vilas, Elver, and Tenney Parks.



Warner Park Community Recreation Center (Terrence Thompson)

WPCRC hosted the 22nd Annual Holiday Fest Arts & Crafts Fair on Saturday, December 4. The event was a success after being canceled in 2020 due to COVID-19. Over 70 crafters from the Midwest sold their handmade goods, including jewelry, baskets, garden art, cards, pottery, woodwork, baby gifts, soaps, balms, lotions, knitwear, paintings, home décor, and more, just in time for the holidays.

Recreation Services Coordinator (Tracey Hartley)

Hayride follow up. Public Hayrides seen 101 participants for the two days and had 15 of the 16 reserved hayrides booked. A great turn out for fall hayrides.

Moving into winter, I hired Riley Berning, Winter Attendant Coordinator and he is working to prepare for the upcoming season. Currently we are short staffed and trying to hire more attendants.

Due to the short staffing situation and new uptick in Covid cases and now the new variant upon us rentals at locations open this winter include; Elver, Tenney, and Vilas. The shelters at Tenney and Elver will not be open to the public, but Parks will provide additional outdoor seating and restrooms are accessible from outside. The Vilas shelter will be open for restroom use and rentals, no seating indoors. Extra outdoor seating provided at Vilas as well. Locations will also have limited hours this season. Locations closed on Mondays & Tuesdays and hours open Wednesday – Friday 4-8pm, Saturdays 12-8pm and Sundays 12-6pm. If able to be, open for the holidays based on conditions– holiday hours 12-6pm.

New equipment updates. Additional snowshoes purchased to allow for additional rentals at Vilas and some new ski equipment will be available at Elver. A big thank you to Madison Parks Foundation for their donation, Parks will have 30 new skate assist, 10 per location, Elver, Tenney, and Vilas, available to the public and 29 new pairs of snowshoes at Elver to accommodate the new snowshoe trail. Additional funding from Madison Parks Foundation will provide more programming opportunities moving into 2022. Thanks MPF! Looking forward to winter events as well to include; Winter Prom, Skate Cinema (movie at Tenney), Learn to Snow Snake, Winter Backpacking, Curl, Play Hockey to name a few. Additionally, bringing back Groove & Glide events at winter locations. Looking forward to many winter fun activities.

Community Events – Kelli Lamberty / Kelly Post: Lessons Learned from COVID

A summary of the challenges and opportunities presented to Madison Parks Community Events during the on-going COVID-19 pandemic. What was learned from making decisions with limited information, responding to the public health concerns directly impacting the essence of community events – people gathering in public spaces. Reference [Legislative ID# 64836](#)

We were challenged, along with the rest of the world, to make decisions with limited information about what we were facing and what actions were needed to address the pandemic in relation to Community Events in Madison.

- 1) Flexibility and adaptability are key. With things changing so quickly throughout the pandemic, we needed to be able to communicate and work with organizers to relay the latest health orders, and help them reschedule, relocate, postpone and finally cancel events – and then turn around and make things work when the orders were lifted.
- 2) Authority to make decisions – In order to be flexible and adaptable, it was essential to have the ability to make/approve requests for park use outside of the regular process and procedures. This included being able to administratively approval park event applications and requests; developing and utilizing new permits to allow safe events and activities to occur; ability to create and provide opportunities for the Madison community to access Madison parks and streets for safe outdoor activities and provide new venues to assist in the economic recovery of local entrepreneurs.

The lessons we learned from these two areas in particular, will likely have the longest lasting impact on how things are done in Community Events. We ask that the Open Space, Day Camp and Class permits that were implemented during COVID be made permanent. They all addressed a need that won't be going away with the end of the pandemic.

In another summary, we're asking that Carts in Parks program be extended to next year, in order to, among many things, consider the future of vending in Madison Parks.

Finally, we're looking at revising the criteria for events that have typically gone to BPC or FPF for approval. The goal will be to establish criteria that keep parks accessible to the community by lessening unnecessary requirements, and still keeping the commission(s) informed of new, large and/or unusual events.

- 3) Ability to develop procedures/processes quickly – Linked to the other lessons, was learning how to create and develop COVID protocols. We learned where to find resources – local and national Health agencies were very helpful, especially PHMDC. Also very helpful were other municipalities' event offices/sites. We used the information at these sites to assist us in where and how to best communicate with event organizers. (a plug here for continuing to send Community Event staff to the Municipal Special Events Summit if/when it happens again) We also had invaluable assistance from Ann Shea and the City's IT Department.
- 4) Coordination and cooperation with other Parks agencies, commissions, other City departments, event organizers and the Madison community at large. Very little of what is listed here would have happened if we hadn't had the help and assistance of the broad community. From organizers that were exceptionally understanding about the predicament we all found ourselves in to our operations, front desk and ranger staff graciously helping us to make sure the events that did happen were safe and had what they needed. New relationships were forged and better communication will result from going through this challenging and unusual situation.
- 5) Finally, we learned that "telework" is a good fit for Community Event staff. Kudos to City IT for their tireless work to provide tools and resources making it feasible for City staff to work from home during the pandemic.

For our team, teleworking has proved to be convenient, efficient and effective and offers needed flexibility to us and the community we work with. I didn't think it would be the case, but having virtual Street Use Staff Commission meetings worked out well. This is especially true for the groups that don't plan events on a regular basis. It is easier for them to make time for a meeting they can attend from their home or office than it is to make their way downtown at 10am on a Wednesday. I would request that Street Use meetings remain virtual, or that organizers have the option to attend virtually, in the future.

CARTS IN PARKS – 2021 SUMMARY OF PILOT PROGRAM

TEAM CITY - The City of Madison Economic Development Division, Planning Division, and Parks Division teamed up, applied for and received a NACTO Pandemic Response Grant to establish a Carts in Parks pilot program. Reference [Legislative ID# 65798](#)

The foundation of the Carts in Parks program was two-fold:

1. Support community market opportunities for new, emerging, and established entrepreneurs. Form relationships with community organizations like the Latino Chamber of Commerce (LCC) and UJAMAA Business Network.
2. Offer vending locations in Madison Parks for City licensed food carts/trucks that needed a boost to their economic recovery due to the COVID-19 pandemic. City of Madison licensed food cart and truck operators on average have lost 69% of their revenue due to loss of sales during the COVID-19 pandemic. This part of the program allowed for daily vending in various Madison Parks and coordination of food carts/trucks at Community Group and Neighborhood Park Events, when appropriate.

Summary of the Latino Chamber of Commerce Plaza Markets

- The LCC hosted 11 markets in Penn Park. There were merchandise vendors, a veggie stand, taco stand, food trucks, bakery stand and more.
- The Sunday LCC Plaza markets included Latino musicians. The Thursday markets focused on physical and mental wellness; offering yoga and Zumba.
- The LCC Plaza markets also offered spaces for informational vendors and non-profits to hand out information.
- 60% of grant funds were used to offset the cost incurred by the LCC for the markets and to hire employees from the Penn Park neighborhood to be liaisons to promote the markets in the neighborhood as well as working during the markets themselves.
- Madison Parks waived permit fees, including vending fees for all LCC Markets.

Summary of UJAMAA events

- UJAMAA Business Network is a cooperative of multicultural owned startup businesses that offer a diverse selection of products and services, focusing on entrepreneurship as a pathway out of poverty.
- UJAMAA hosted a few community markets in several Madison Parks with vendors and entertainment.
- UJAMAA's last event of the season was coordinated with Mentoring Positives another amazing organization mentoring youth through entrepreneurship. This event was held in Worthington Park.
- Madison Parks waived permit fees, including vending for all UJAMAA markets.

Summary of the Daily Food Cart Vending program

- 15 parks used for Daily Vending
 - Some parks were used only once, as it was determined that the park was not a viable daily vending location.
- 26 food businesses signed up for Carts in Parks Daily Vending
- 11 food carts/trucks participated in the Guaranteed Sales program
- Food carts/trucks were able to schedule themselves for shifts in different Madison Parks using the When to Work app.
- Food carts/trucks were connected with city agencies, Neighborhood Resource Teams, community groups and Neighborhood Associations to vend at their park events.
- 40% of the grant money was used for the Guaranteed Sales Program to compensate food carts that didn't make a certain amount of sales during a shift in a Madison Park.
- Madison Parks waived the park vending permit fees.

Economic equity and accessibility

- The Latino Chamber of Commerce Plaza Markets helped to support Latino entrepreneurs and microbusinesses by giving them a weekly market to vend at, some infrastructure (tents, tables), and information on licensing and permits to help them navigate City of Madison and Public Health requirements.
- The UJAMAA Business Network was able to provide a few dates and locations for their coop of multicultural entrepreneurs to sell goods and promote their businesses.
- The majority of food cart operators in the City of Madison identify as people of color, women and/or immigrants.
- The Carts in Parks program focused on minority owned businesses in order to increase accessibility in Madison Parks to all.
- Assisted NRT leads with connecting food carts/trucks to events happening in NRT neighborhoods.

Looking Forward

- The Community Event team will be proposing Carts in Parks 2.0 at the January BPC meeting.
- The Community Event team would like to continue on the path of making Madison Parks more accessible to communities of color by continuing to make and grow relationships with community organizations that represent BIPOC, like LCC and UJAMAA.
- We learned a lot in 2021 about locations and times that are best for food carts and the public.
- The Community Event team found working with Planning and EDD invaluable and will be looking to collaborate with these and other City agencies in the future to determine permitting processes and fees as well as policy and ordinance changes.
- There was a learning curve regarding how these markets and daily vending impact our Operations Staff. Moving forward, they will be included in the planning process from the beginning so we know what support Madison Parks can provide and which parks are ideal for these activities.

- The Parks Vending permit and ordinance has not been updated in many years. The Carts in Parks program will help to shape recommendations for our vending policies in the future to better reflect current times.

Planning and Development

2021 Construction Season Winds Down:

- With the colder weather and the asphalt plants closing, Planning and Development staff has halted construction work for the season. Most projects were completed, a few will be wrapped up next spring. These include Aldo Leopold Pump Track and Skills Trail, the paved path at Country Grove Park, and the new playground at Eken Park.

Work Planning for 2022 Begins in Earnest:

- With the adoption of the 2022 CIP by the City Council, Planning and Development staff have begun to put together our work plans for 2022. Staff will draft the exact schedules for the many capital projects that will go through the Board of Public Works process in the coming year. Please stay tuned for additional details in early 2022.

Olbrich Botanical Gardens

- **GLEAM, Art in a New Light.** In 2021, attendance for GLEAM doubled with over 33,000 visitors attending the exhibition. Surveys from the exhibition show that 14.5% of the attendees were new visitors to the gardens. Artists for GLEAM 2022 are currently being selected for next year's exhibition.
- **Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Training.** Olbrich Botanical Staff will join staff from the Aldo Leopold Nature Center and University of Wisconsin Arboretum for a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Training conducted by Cream City Conservation & Consulting. NatureNet is hosting the training. The training is held every Tuesday morning from January 18-March 1, 2022.
- **New Website.** Coming in 2022 a new website for Olbrich Botanical Gardens. Olbrich Botanical Society was awarded a \$50,000 grant from the IMLS American Rescue Plant Grant Program to build a new website. A new website will provide virtual visitors to Olbrich Botanic Gardens with an updated user-friendly and fully accessible online experience.
- **Bolz Conservatory.** In November, Olbrich celebrated the 30th anniversary of the Bolz Conservatory. With a mission to conserve and interpret plants native to the world's tropical forests for study, enjoyment, and public benefit, the Bolz Conservatory is home to nearly 700 plants that represent 80 plant families and 500 species and cultivars. Programs in the Bolz Conservatory returned in November. Live music was enjoyed by guests attending the Friday evening Canopy Sessions and guests learned about plants at the Tropical Plant Spotlight on Wednesdays and Saturdays.
- **Holidays at Olbrich.** November was a busy time for staff as they grew multiple varieties of poinsettias. Guests can enjoy the poinsettias on display in the Holiday Show or pick up their own plant to enjoy at home in the Gift Shop. The poinsettias are available for purchase in the Olbrich Botanical Gardens Gift Shop. The upcoming Holiday Show, runs Dec. 4-31, 2021, will also feature the poinsettias in the "Planes, Trains, and Automobiles" themed display for all ages.