



**City of Madison**  
**Proceedings - Final**  
**BOARD OF PARK COMMISSIONERS**

City of Madison  
Madison, WI 53703  
www.cityofmadison.com

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Wednesday, January 10, 2007

7:30 PM

Olbrich Botanical Gardens  
Upstairs Meeting Room  
3330 Atwood Avenue

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**I. CALL TO ORDER**

**The regular meeting of the Madison Board of Park Commissioners was held on Wednesday, January 10, 2007 at Olbrich Botanical Gardens, 3330 Atwood Drive. President Barker called the meeting to order at 7:40 p.m. A quorum was present and the meeting was properly noticed.**

**II. ROLL CALL**

**Present:** Paul E. Skidmore, William Barker, Stephen A. Webster, Betty Chewning, Emanuel Scarbrough and Betty N. MacDonald

**Absent:** Santiago Rosas

**Parks staff present:** James Morgan, Si Widstrand, Elinor Riley, Donald Studesville, Patti Jorneby, LaVonne LaFave

**City staff present:** Janet Piraino, Mayor's Staff

**III. ELECTION OF OFFICERS**

**A. President of the Board of Park Commissioners**

**President Barker opened the floor to nominations for President. A motion was made by Chewning/ Webster to nominate Emanuel Scarbrough as President. A motion was made by Skidmore to nominate Bill Barker who respectfully declined. Skidmore/MacDonald moved to close nominations and to cast a unanimous ballot for Scarbrough (with Scarbrough abstaining). MOTION CARRIED. President Barker thanked everyone and pledged his continued service to the Park**

**Commission and its Committees**

B. Vice President of the Board of Park Commissioners

A motion was made by MacDonald/Barker to nominate Stephen Webster as Vice President. Skidmore/MacDonald moved to close nominations and to cast a unanimous ballot for Webster (with Webster abstaining). MOTION CARRIED unanimously.

C. Standing Committees to be discussed in February

President Scarbrough announced the appointments to the standing committees of the Park Commission would be made in February. He will contact each Commissioner regarding their preferences.

**IV. PUBLIC COMMENT**

There were no members of the public who wished to comment on items not on the Agenda.

**V. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

A motion was made by Barker/MacDonald to approve the Minutes of the December 13, 2006 regular meeting of the Park Commission. MOTION CARRIED unanimously.

**VI. COMMITTEE REPORTS**

A. Golf Committee 2007 Fee Proposal

A motion was made by Skidmore/Webster to approve the Golf fees for 2007 as recommended by the Golf Committee. MOTION CARRIED unanimously.

B. Olbrich Botanical Society Minutes of December 12, 2006 Meeting

A motion was made by Rosas/MacDonald to accept the Minutes of the November 21, 2006 meeting of the Olbrich Botanical Society. MOTION CARRIED unanimously.

Use of Olbrich Botanical Gardens Facilities by Mission Related Organizations such as Garden Clubs and Plant Societies

**Registered Speakers:**

Stephanie O'Neal, Wisconsin Hardy Plant Society                      Neutral  
Kathi Dwelle - not speaking, Wis. Daylily Society                      , Oppose  
Wilma Brouwer-Herwig, Wis. Daylily Society, Oppose  
Jean Bawden- Rock Garden Society, Oppose  
John E. Sheehan - not speaking, Wis. Daylily Society, Oppose  
Conrad Wizesinski, Wis. Daylily Society, Oppose  
Judy Stevenson, Orchid Growers Guild, Oppose  
Gene Dewey - not speaking, Wis. Daylily Society, Oppose  
John Baker, Madison Area Iris Society, Oppose  
Alice Peterson, State African Violet Society, Oppose  
Tom & Rosemary Kleinheinz - not speaking, Wis. Daylily Society. Oppose  
Carole Hopp, Wis. Garden Club Federation, Oppose  
Pat Greenhead, Madison Herb Society                      , Support

Mary Ellestad, Badger Bonsai Society, Oppose  
Superintendent Morgan reported the Olbrich Botanical Society brought this issue forward as it was looking at all of the policies for all groups that use the facility. They noted there was a huge difference between the many great groups and while many do make significant donations, others host big programs, plant and food sales and leave nothing for the building or their only contribution is that the program is open to the public and there is no money coming back to Olbrich. Part of the problem is groups that reserve one of the rooms for a certain length of time but then stay way beyond that time adding overtime costs for Olbrich staff that does not get passed on to the user. OBS is looking for the users to have some accountability when the stay beyond the time of the reservation. The OBS Board has reviewed this proposed policy change and voted to adopt it upon recommendation of its executive committee. They had studied policies at other public gardens to determine what was appropriate. Olbrich relies heavily on wedding revenue and must turn away high paying users because a plant group may want only the Commons on a Saturday. OBS is attempting to balance many different needs and this may not be a perfect proposal but does get the different groups on an even playing field. Many groups use Olbrich's kitchen supplies, both paper and foodstuffs without reimbursement. Some groups have significant treasuries that have been built up by their use of the facility.

Members of the audience indicated that the Olbrich Botanical Society Executive Committee did not discuss this with the plant societies. The amount of additional revenue was not presented at the OBS Board meeting. Riley stated that a letter was sent to the Garden Clubs in December notifying them of this proposed policy but the clubs didn't have an opportunity for input at an Olbrich Botanical Society meeting.

A motion was made by Skidmore/Chewning/MacDonald to refer this issue back to the Olbrich Botanical Society with a strong suggestion that they receive input from all the stakeholders to arrive at an amicable consensus before bringing it back to a future Park Commission meeting. **MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.**

Commissioners thanked the speakers for coming to express their concerns and apologized for the manner in which the proposed policy was brought forward and stated that the Commission does not micro-manage staff. They encouraged Olbrich and the various garden clubs to have a good collegial discussion. An acknowledgment was made that the issue pointed to the need to address the situation. The question is how to begin a dialogue to address the problems that have been mentioned (such as staff having to stay beyond stated reservation times; leaving the facility dirty and using the facility and not giving anything back) and accepts that some behaviors need to change. Unfortunately all users get swept up in a policy regardless of whether they contributed to it. President Scarbrough then stated that if any of the speakers had been present downstairs they would have seen how important volunteers are for the Parks system and that Madison Parks are Number One because of their volunteers and how they interact with staff.

#### C. Warner Park Community Recreation Center Minutes of November 15, 2006

A motion was made by Webster/Skidmore to accept the Minutes of the November 15, 2006 meeting of the Warner Park Community Recreation Center. **MOTION CARRIED** unanimously. A motion was made by Skidmore/Barker to approve the restructure of the WPCRC Advisory Committee and its amended Bylaws as set forth in the Action Report of the November 15, 2006 meeting. **MOTION CARRIED**

UNANIMOUSLY.

**VII. REPORT OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE BOARD OF PARK COMMISSIONERS**

President Scarbrough invited Bill Barker to comment on his presidency. Barker thanked everyone for the two years he was allowed to be the President of the Park Commission. It meant the world to him to work with staff, volunteers and commissioners. He believes it is good to have different commissioners serve in this capacity because of the different perspectives they bring to the position. He noted the good work Scarbrough has provided great leadership in chairing the ad hoc committee on Alcohol and Related Behaviors. Scarbrough will also provide that Park Commission Presidential continuity to the Parks Foundation. The Commission has dealt with many tough issues during his presidency and there has been excellent discussion leading to creative solutions. A round of applause followed..

**VIII. REPORT OF THE SUPERINTENDENT OF PARKS**

Superintendent Morgan commented on Barker's tenure as President. He told of the Foundation meeting where Foundation President Don Last referred to a book containing the 1907 Minutes of the Park and Pleasure Drive Association and reading how significant it was that people who had no great recognition did great things for our community in terms of parks for future generations. He felt that Barker was one of many people who taken a leadership role and have advanced the Park Commission's mission and made decisions and steered processes that will affect people hundreds of years from now. Very few of Madison's committees or commissions make decisions that last forever and that's what parks are all about. They are the stewards of something very special.

A. Written Report of Supervisors' Activities

A motion was made by Skidmore/Webster to approve the written report. MOTION CARRIED unanimously.

B. Informational Items

Superintendent Morgan reported that the Parks Division conducts a survey of park users every couple of years and the results for 2006 were in the packets. This survey is a component of a citywide measurement is part of the Mayor's initiative. What sticks out are the positive comments on reservations handled by LaFave's front office staff. Park users report mostly positive experiences. The results are also shared with Parks supervisors and staff to improve our operation.

The Special Events list for 2007 was also included. That list will grow by 50% or more before the end of the year. Each event requires a file, staff meetings and then coordination between the sponsor and field staff. The third item is very special to everyone in Parks. The Parks Division nominated the Goodman Brothers for the Martin Luther King, Jr. Humanitarian Award. The United Way cosponsored the nomination. We are proud to announce that the Goodmans' will receive their award next Monday.

**IX. CORRESPONDENCE, RESOLUTIONS, ORDINANCES**

[05308](#)

Authorizing the execution of an Underground Utility Easement to Madison Gas and

Electric Company across a portion of Paunack Park located at 1500 Waunona Way.  
14th Ald. Dist.

**A motion was made by Skidmore, seconded by Webster. The motion passed by acclamation.**

**05310**

Authorizing the execution of an Underground Utility Easement to Madison Gas and Electric Company across a portion of Olbrich Park located at 3527 Atwood Avenue.  
15th Ald. Dist.

**A motion was made by Skidmore, seconded by MacDonald, to RECOMMEND TO COUNCIL TO ADOPT - REPORT OF OFFICER. The motion passed by acclamation.**

**RECOMMEND TO COUNCIL TO ADOPT - REPORT OF OFFICER**

**04950**

**SUBSTITUTE - Establishing a James Madison Park Surplus Property Planning Committee for the following properties: 640 and 646 E. Gorham, the Collins House, and the land under Lincoln School under the guidelines of the Procedures for the Disposal of the Surplus City Real Property, and to appoint the Committee Members.**

**A motion was made by Barker, seconded by Skidmore, to RECOMMEND TO COUNCIL TO PLACE ON FILE - REPORT OF OFFICER. The motion passed by the following vote:**

**RECOMMEND TO COUNCIL TO PLACE ON FILE - REPORT OF OFFICER**

**Absent:** Rosas

**Aye:** Skidmore, Barker, Chewning, Scarbrough and MacDonald

**Abstain:** Webster

**Registered Speaker:**

**Janet Piraino of the Mayor's Office, Supports**

**Piraino noted three points for the record. 1) The recommendations of the committee will come back tot he Park Commission before any land is deemed surplus and then the formal committee would be created. 2) There was a budget amendment that removed the direct link between the sale proceeds and improvements to the land. The Mayor has made a commitment to use those proceeds to improve James Madison Park. 3) The Mayor hopes consensus can be reached and that everyone can give a little bit. The Mayor is concerned that if consensus is not reached there will be a lose-lose situation. It was noted that the Mayor would appoint the members that would serve on the Planning Committee.**

**MacDonald expressed concern that the original idea was that the proceeds from the sale of James Madison parkland would be used to pay for rewriting the Zoning Code. The Mayor has since withdrawn that proposal. Superintendent Morgan noted there were three renditions - the first proposal was to sell the property and use the proceeds 100% to rewrite the city's out of date Zoning Code. The Neighborhood Association did not support that proposal and they originated the idea of the proceeds going to pay for park improvements. The second proposal was that some of the proceeds would go to pay for park improvements. They mayor is now proposing that the boundaries of the park be redefined so that the Collins House would be outside the boundaries with Blount Street forming the**

visual edge of that park.

Members noted grave concerns with this Resolution and the potential for the future of the park. They were also concerned about the composition of the Committee to be created that would have only minor representation from the Park Commission. The committee would consist of two alders from the area who are in favor of selling the land, together with residents from the neighborhood, an additional alder and only one Park Commission member. It was stated that the Park Commission has twice taken a very strong stand against selling the land under Lincoln School Apartments and it is a very bad precedent. They are also very uncomfortable with the composition of the proposed Planning Committee and not in favor of doing this and won't be in favor of looking at it again next month. The Park Commission has been quite consistent with maintaining the integrity of the Commission's historic values of protecting resources for the citizens of Madison over a long period of time. Additionally it was suggested that the Substitute Resolution should take out any language referring to the land under Lincoln School. President Scarbrough referred to the passage from the 1907 Park and Pleasure Drive Association Minutes that spoke of decisions that are made now will affect our parks for future generations. In many cases administrations are in office for one or two terms and the Park Commission's charge is to look at things for the long term.

If the Planning Committee is formed and makes a decision to sell the land, that decision would come back to the Park Commission. The Commissioners do not believe their previous decision would change (to not sell the land). Piraino stated the Mayor would like all options to remain on the table and try to reach some sort of consensus.

Clarification was made that the Collins House has not been declared surplus. Widstrand interjected that there had been discussions regarding declaring the Collins House surplus but then the Lincoln School issue came up and they were trying to package them together. However, the structures at 640 and 646 have been declared surplus and do not need to be tied to this Resolution. The sales could proceed for those two buildings but not the land under them. Commissioners stated they were clear they did not want any language regarding the sale of the Lincoln School land to be part of this Resolution and it would have to be clear that we are not talking about selling any land but are discussing the sale of the structures only. Piraino again stated that the Resolution relates to big picture issues and the mayor wants all options on the table in the hope of achieving consensus.

Barker noted that to say the Lincoln School building will be there a long time and we wouldn't be able to get that land doesn't sit well with him as a geologist because he is used to thinking in terms of eons. In fairness to the Mayor, it's not a bad idea to get consensus of what to do with the park but by injecting that one element of selling the land under Lincoln School into that proposal is not honest.

Chewning recalled when the land was originally purchased for James Madison Park and the dwellings were razed, the main component has always been about the land. The big picture is to hang onto the land and try to increase it. Barker referred to Minutes discussing the original creation of James Madison Park and the statement that even if it took 100's years to remove the buildings, they were not going to sell the land under those buildings. When the Commission voted two years ago to surplus those two structures it was with assurances that the

land under them would never be sold. Skidmore reminded the Commission that the Park Commission has never sold land that we didn't think was surplus and this land definitely is not surplus. The sale is a bad idea and it's shortsighted. He could never support the sale of land in James Madison Park.

A motion was made by Barker/Skidmore to place on file substitute Resolution #04950 Establishing a James Madison Park Surplus Property Planning Committee for the following properties: 640 and 646 E. Gorham, the Collins House, and the land under Lincoln School under the guidelines of the Procedures for the Disposal of the Surplus City Real Property, and to appoint the Committee Members.

**MOTION CARRIED** with Webster abstaining. Webster noted he abstained because he was not a part of the original discussions regarding Lincoln School.

05128

Creating a Central Park Design and Implementation Task Force.

A motion was made by Webster, seconded by MacDonald, to **RECOMMEND TO COUNCIL TO ADOPT - REPORT OF OFFICER**. The motion passed by acclamation.

**RECOMMEND TO COUNCIL TO ADOPT - REPORT OF OFFICER**

A motion was made by Webster/MacDonald to approve Resolution ID#05128 Creating a Central Park Design and Implementation Task Force.

Superintendent Morgan discussed how the Central Park concept fits into the Parks Division vision. Approximately five years ago, Urban Open Space Foundation (UOSF) made promises very clearly stating that they would create and fully endow the park. They have not been able to generate funds and in fact have not received any significant funds in the past 24 months. The concept plan keeps morphing and from the city's standpoint the issues of capital funding and operational funding for maintenance of the park have not been resolved. This proposed committee would begin to create a framework to make those decisions and begin discussion of long-term benefits for the community. He believes it is at risk of not happening unless the city has some input at this point. The public is asking if Parks supports it and up to this point the official answer has always been that Parks does not because there are things that have to happen before Parks can do it. This committee will answer the questions about who pays for what. The Olbrich Botanical Society model was suggested when the proposal was formulated because of the Parks Division's great partnership with this building. The city is responsible for day-to-day maintenance. With Central Park, Parks could do the mowing, clean the bathrooms and snow removal on the bike paths, those types of things we typically do in parks while the things related to flower beds and community gardens, concert venues, fountains, bike changing room, wedding chapel ceremonies, etc. could be handled as Urban Open Space initiatives. These are among the 15 +/- very glamorous ideas that have been brought forward at the meetings that could be developed and operated by UOSF.

In the past, there have been issues about how UOSF wants to do everything in one big splash. The big, expensive parks like this within the Parks Division are done with phased in development. There is the issue with the relocation of the railroad tracks and all those types of things are not coming toward resolution because of the credibility issues and history issues of this project. This

committee will create the framework to make those decisions and determine how responsibilities are divided up.

Skidmore noted two concerns. He is concerned about draining Parks resources to do everything at one time. A Central Park, a downtown park such as this, could be incredible because of the lack of other open space on the Isthmus and what it could do, but it could also exhaust all the resources that are necessary and valuable for the entire Parks system. Parks has a wonderful plan that has been implemented for decades to get money in, to acquire land and build parks in a very methodical manner. Resources from other parts of the city should not be used to maintain this proposed downtown park. Nor should the Parks Division fund something that might more appropriately be funded by the Visitor's Bureau or could possibly be an economic development tool or an urban planning tool. The best thing may be to have this study to find out what options might be available. He isn't opposed to a downtown Isthmus park but it makes him uncomfortable and he feels it could spin out of control and affect parks in the balance of the city.

Barker acknowledged that he has been in favor of this park and has worked on it behind the scenes for a couple of years. He shares the above concerns and is bothered by lots of the representations that were made about how it would pay for itself. As we look into the future, Madison is densifying itself rapidly. Those of us who want to maintain a good quality of life for our grandchildren and ourselves recognize we need to get as much open space as possible in what will be a very dense urban downtown. This will be the Vilas Park of our age. The reason the Parks Foundation has not gotten on board is that they have sensed the hesitancy of the city. It may not be possible to get past that perception but this committee has the best chance of figuring this out. He also relayed that the Mayor is skeptical about whether this committee can save this project. The Mayor knows there is public support for this park and he has the exact same vision that this will be the Vilas Park of our age. Down the road if the park happens, it will create major changes in the Isthmus and could well generate enough tax base to support the park. Unfortunately it won't generate anything if it stays a rail yard and weeds.

Chewing noted the creation of such a committee sets in motion an important task and the composition of the committee is really important. The Mayor's office appoints the members to the committee. Her concern is that members be able to work together. Widstrand noted that one of the problems with the previous UOSF process was that it led to expectations way beyond anything that the Parks Division would normally do and that is why the Parks Division wanted to stay out of it and kept stressing that it was an UOSF initiative. If the Parks Division would provide some funding it would cover basic park functions but somehow this committee is going to have to get those expectations under control so that someone from outside isn't dictating heightened expectations.

Commissioners were asked to look at the unbelievable jewel that is Olbrich, noting the Parks Division could never afford it on its own. It is the Parks partnership with the Olbrich Botanical Society that allows this facility to exist. The proposed Central Park is nowhere as sophisticated as Olbrich but the Park Commission shouldn't turn its backs on the possibility of an excellent outcome. If this proposed Committee doesn't move forward then this project may well come to an end.



Superintendent Morgan acknowledged there is a trust issue but if the committee can proceed with a quality planning process and the city is involved, it is possible to see a realistic outcome. It will be placed under the Planning Department with Park Commission input. Issues such as identifying funding sources and areas of responsibility may come down to dividing responsibilities because it is too much for the city. With the shape of the State Budget and other financial aspects, the city may not want to do it or it may come down to saying the city will not put the balance of the parks system in jeopardy to do it or these are the trade offs if the city/Parks does it. At this point those are unknown options because the process hasn't occurred.

The motion was then restated. A motion was made by Webster/MacDonald to approve Resolution ID#05128 Creating a Central Park Design and Implementation Task Force. **MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.**

**X. OLD BUSINESS**

**XI. NEW BUSINESS**

A. Request for the use of Vilas Park on April 7, 2007 for the Mad City 100k start and finish at Vilas Shelter

A motion was made by Skidmore/Chewning to approve the request for the use of Vilas Park on April 7, 2007 for the Mad City 100k start and finish at Vilas Shelter based upon sponsor's compliance with all staff recommendations. **MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.**

**XII. ADJOURNMENT**

On motion of Barker//Skidmore the meeting adjourned at 9:20 p.m.