

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT September 2025
COMMUNICATIONS TO BOARD OF PARK COMMISSIONERS
Park Superintendent's Monthly Report Summary

Though Summer does not officially end until September 22, the celebration of Labor Day and the return of students to school indicate a cultural shift to autumn. With slightly cooler temperatures during this month, but still summer-like weather in store, the park system will continue to remain busy and the Parks Team continues to ensure the parks are well-maintained for all users.

The summer of 2025 continued to see high volumes of reservations and permitted events. Goodman Pool saw a slight decline in attendance due to the implementation of rule changes that were needed to address behavioral issues. As of Labor Day, the Golf Enterprise is currently over 4,000 rounds ahead of this time last year and is gearing up for a successful fall season. Course improvement work is progressing nicely at Yahara and the irrigation contractor is currently on site.

The Parks Division continued to work towards its strategic goal of creating welcoming and inclusive park spaces and programming. The Jeff Erlanger Spray ground opened at Rennebohm Park on July 29 and was incredibly popular throughout August. The Volunteer Program continues to evolve with a wide variety of opportunities for those interested in engaging with the park system more closely, which has been enhanced through the new Volunteer Management software, which allows for increased access to these activities. Combining these infrastructure improvements with activities that actively invite people to the park, such as our Parks Alive and Summer Nights at Wright programs, is a strategy that has been proven to increase the safety of the parks, as well as increase the residents' appreciation and connection to their neighborhood parks.

In addition to summer activities, the team is working to prepare for the fall and winter seasons. The Parks Construction team has been working on the outdoor space at the Door Creek Shelter to create a multi-functional area that will accommodate a Nice-Rink, which is expected to be completed in time for this winter's ice-skating season. The Warner Park Community Recreation Center expansion continues to progress, with current projections showing that it will open before the end of the calendar year.

Future Commission Items

- The following items will be brought to the Commission over the next year:
 - Alcohol in Parks Policy
 - Parking Assets in Parks Analysis
 - Olin Houses
 - Marshall Houses
 - Fall Work Plan Update

Personnel Updates

Promotions/Hires:

- William Goss was promoted from Parks Worker in Central Parks to Parks Facility Maintenance Worker within the Parks Facilities Maintenance team. Will begin his new position on August 18, 2025.
- Mary Byron was hired as a permanent Ranger within the Community Services Team. Mary started on September 2, 2025.

Departures:

- Ryan Winkler resigned from his position as Golf Course Maintenance Worker (Limited Term Employee) on the Golf Construction Team. Ryan's last day was August 1, 2025.

SECTION UPDATES

Community Services

Community Events (Kelly Post)

This time of year, the Community Events team slows down on permitting events. We reflect on the busy 2025 season, work on process improvements, and communicate with events on how things went for them in 2025, as well as what to expect and plan for in 2026.

In September, the Community Events team will reach out to our annual events to gather their 2026 park and date requests, so we can enter them into our system before November 1, 2025, when shelter reservations open to the public.

We are contacting our annual Olin Park events to communicate about the project scheduled on the pavilion for the 2026 season and work through alternate locations or using alternative space within Olin Park.

We have been working with Ann Shea and City IT to design the new Special Events in Madison webpages and plan to launch them at the start of 2026. In conjunction with the redesign of the webpages, we will be updating all relevant information as needed.

Parks Alive (Debra Alleyne)

- **Arts and Culture:** In August, Parks Alive hosted a series of events focused on Arts and Culture, which were met with great enthusiasm from the community, especially as they were a surprise. In 2024, we received a grant from the Madison Arts Commission to feature live music at Parks Alive. Although we did not receive a grant this year, we were still able to provide live music in 9 out of 11 parks successfully.
- **Music Collaboration:** Parks Alive partnered with the following organizations to bring music to the Parks Alive events:
 - The Madison Arts Commission and FoMAC to provide a live funk music band at our joint event.
 - The Madison Jazz Society and Madison Music Collective to sponsor musicians to play live jazz at 4 parks.
 - Make Music Madison to source local musicians to play at 4 different parks with diverse offerings such as Steel Pan music, Hip Hop/R&B and poetry, Blues, and Latin Rock.
- **Parks Alive X Jr Ranger Collaboration:** The Park Rangers were a staple at Parks Alive this year. In addition to demonstrating disc golf, they rode bikes at the Aldo Leopold pump track with the bicycle enthusiasts and taught participants orienteering skills. Our hope is to incubate the Jr Ranger program within Parks Alive. In the fall, the Jr Ranger program would take on more of a featured role. In partnership with the Rangers lead by Ranger Rah, we will explore autumnal activities with the flair of a Parks Alive event at selected parks with the ability to operate both indoors and outdoors.

Customer Service (Joanne Austin)

As users continue to actively enjoy our parks, we are beginning to shift our focus to prepare for next year. Our preparations include the following:

- Confirming the opening and closing dates for shelters with Operations and Planning staff.
- Determining which shelters and athletic fields will be available and which will not.
- Submitting proposed fees to the Facilities, Programs, and Fees Subcommittee and the Board of Park Commissioners.
- Blocking off dates at shelters designated for the 2026 elections.
- Updating forms and preparing for necessary updates to the website.
- Invoicing athletic groups that will soon conclude their 2025 season.
- Ordering 2026 permits for Dog Parks, Lake Access, Cross Country Skiing, and Disc Golf. Sales will begin on November 1, 2025.

Please note that customers can start reserving shelters for 2026 on Monday, November 3, 2025.

Recreation Services & Aquatics (Tracey Hartley)

Aquatics Program (Shane Martin)

- The Goodman Pool closed on Sunday, August 24, 2025. A new entry waiver policy went into effect on Thursday, July 17, 2025. This policy, announced to the public on Tuesday, August 19, 2025, allows youth aged 11 to 15 years to visit the pool without an adult with a signed waiver form.

Currently, the pool staff are finishing cleaning tasks for the season. Splash pads and beaches will remain open through the Monday of Labor Day weekend. In August, the Madison Fire Department utilized the pool's deep water for scuba diving certification for several firefighters.

Recreation Services

- The Ride The Drive event was canceled due to inclement weather, dangerous conditions, and flooding. It was scheduled for Sunday, August 10. We want to extend our gratitude to all the volunteers, staff, vendors, and city agencies that contributed to the planning of the event.

In July, we held 11 Movies in the Parks, and in August, we have had 4 Movies in the Parks so far. Additionally, there were 3 Learn To Events in July; however, the Learn To Event scheduled for August was canceled due to cold temperatures.

We are pleased to announce that a new Event Services Assistant has been hired and will be starting on Tuesday, September 2.

Rangers & Volunteers

Rangers (Steve Dray)

- Recruitment: Ranger Juanita Jackson has completed her training and is working independently. Ranger Jared Way is nearly halfway through his training and is performing very well. Ranger Mary Byron and hourly Ranger Andrew Sitko started on Tuesday, September 2, 2025.
- Training: Training is a vital part of being a Ranger, and we take every opportunity to enhance our skills, enabling us to provide the highest level of service to the public. This month, our team participated in CPR, AED, and severe trauma first aid training to ensure we are prepared to respond effectively in emergencies.



- Enforcement Contacts: Rangers have had 76 enforcement contacts, resulting in 47 warnings, 18 citations, and 11 bans. Forty-five parking tickets have also been issued to date during the month of August.
- Community Outreach: Rangers have participated in community outreach at various events, including Parks Alive and National Night Out.

Volunteers (John Weichelt)

Volunteer Website (Get Connected)

- Posted new opportunities online, including seed collection, cleanups, and special event roles. Collaborated with staff and the communications team to promote the website and volunteer sign-ups.
- Began planning training modules, recognition ideas, and strategies for better tracking of volunteer hours.

Conservation and Land Stewardship

- Seed collection projects are underway, with small groups and independent volunteers collecting various species. We are also planning to schedule a larger group of 150 for early October.

Partnerships:

- In addition, we continue to build partnerships with organizations such as the University of Wisconsin groups, Sustain Dane, Clean Lakes Alliance, Fiskars, and Thermo Fisher to organize conservation-focused volunteer days this fall.

Warner Park Community Recreation Center (Zach Watson)

KNOW Program

- On September 13th, we will host an abbreviated Family Fun Night featuring activities such as a movie screening with popcorn, balloon twisting, and face painting.
- The Hair Braiding course will start in September; we are currently finalizing a vendor to provide the service.
- Beginning in mid-September, we will lead "Lunch programming," which will alternate between East and Shabazz High Schools.

WPCRC Facility/Expansion Update

During the week of August 25 to August 29, the annual facility maintenance shutdown was very productive. We have completed all planned tasks and reopened to the public on Tuesday, September 2, 2025.

The parking lot construction is nearly finished. The sidewalks and parking islands have been concreted, and the resurfacing of the blacktop is scheduled for Tuesday, September 2, 2025.

On Thursday, September 4, 2025, a planned power shutdown of the building will occur from 5:00 a.m. to 8:00 a.m. This is necessary for Vogel to install power for the new building.

Staff continue to collaborate with Vogel to coordinate change over of major mechanicals. This may temporarily impact the comfort levels in the building or otherwise require some closure of the building, but staff are working to ensure minimal impact and to keep the project on schedule to open by the end of 2025.

Olbrich Botanical Gardens

- Interpretive Plan – Along with the comprehensive master plan, Olbrich Botanical Gardens will undergo an interpretive plan. Reed Hilderbrand, the same firm selected for the comprehensive master plan, was selected for the interpretive plan. The end result will be an interpretive plan that will outline our core themes and message
- GLEAM – The 10th Anniversary of GLEAM is now OPEN! It runs from August 30th to October 25th. This year's exhibit features artists from Madison, across the United States, and international artists from Canada, Australia, and Japan. New featured nights include an adults only night and family nights with additional entertainment. To learn more about this year's exhibit and to purchase tickets visit <https://www.olbrichgleam.org/>
- Thai Festival – On Sunday, September 14th from 11am-4pm, Olbrich Botanical Gardens will host a Thai Festival in collaboration with the Thai Center for Fine Arts and the Royal Thai Consulate – Chicago. The event will kick-off with a ribbon cutting celebrating the restoration of the Royal Thai Pavilion. Performers from Chicago and Thailand will dance and sing at the Royal Thai Pavilion. A variety of Thai foods will be available for