

Capitol City Band Association

Jim Latimer, Music Director and Conductor

PO Box 258007 Madison WI 53725-8007

Telephone: 608 835-9861

Email: jhlatime@wisc.edu

Visit us: <http://mmqccb.org>

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Madison Planning Commission
City County Building
210 Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.
Madison WI 53703

RE: Possible Use of Rennebohm Park for Community Gardens

Dear Commission Members:

I recently became aware of the discussion about a need for and possibly relocating the Hill Farms area community gardens to a portion of Rennebohm Park in a sunny location. I respect the value of and need for community gardens and how this idea fits into a sustainability- and environmentally-conscious society.

A garden will change the face of Rennebohm (or any) park. It seems that one must weigh carefully the value of activities that change the shape of things i.e. does the activity enhance or improve the park? The activities now enjoyed in Rennebohm Park including Capitol City Band concerts enhance the beauty of the park. Will a community garden enhance the beauty of the park? As a community participant and one who is somewhat familiar with the many activities at Rennebohm Park (many of them going on at the same time), my first concern is about the aesthetics of a garden in a beautiful park. We all know that gardens are beautiful when they are fresh, luscious and green and that they become less so as they age, bear fruit and die down.

Here are some concerns: Will any activity of the park be altered or eliminated in order to serve gardening? The shelter garage is used as a warming house for the winter activities and for storage for the Capitol City Band equipment from Memorial Day to Labor Day each summer. Knowing that gardeners need access to water and storage for equipment, what would be the plan? Where do you envision such a large plot? What community activity of the park would be altered or eliminated to accommodate gardening? Would this in any way affect the summer concerts-in-the-park series by the Capitol City Band (48th season begins June 9). Would this in any way affect the concert-goers who park on both the east (hockey rink area) and west side of the shelter for the Thursday evening concerts? Would it affect in any way those who reserve the park shelter for a variety of activities?

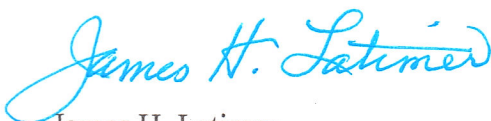
The sunniest plot is probably the hockey/skate rink area which is also used as a parking lot throughout the summer for the seniors of the community who attend Thursday evening concerts-in-the-park. The Parks Division went to great length and expense to work with the Rennebohm Foundation to extend the concrete so that the elders and those physically challenged could not only easily attend concerts-in-the-park throughout the summer but also park in the parkland to limit the amount of walking. Three years ago the Parks Division installed a graveled path so that buses could cross (and not break up) the asphalt in order to park after dropping off senior and/or challenged residents to attend the concerts. On a given Thursday evening in the summer, in addition to the off-street parking, there are 30-40 cars parked to the west of the

shelter (rink area). And there are another 40 cars (and 5-7 buses) parked to the east of the shelter, with care to remain the required footage away from the playground for safety concerns because the children and families at the playground are a big part of Rennebohm Park. Should we be concerned about any aspect of how we currently deliver the summer concert series?

Rennebohm Park is one of Madison's most beautiful parks and already well-used. Are there other sites being considered for the establishment of community gardens? The park seems to be at its capacity, enjoyed by the many cultures and ages of the neighborhood and the community at large. It would hardly seem wise to alter or displace any current activity. I can attest to audiences of 5000-6000 over the summer for band concerts. Music, too, is a great part of sustainability and environment in people's lives. Music brings visitors to the Hill Farms area from the boundaries of Dane County to Stevens Point, Richland Center, Dodgeville, Monroe, Columbus, Sun Prairie, DeForest, Albany and at times from neighboring states. Visitors to the park for whatever reason also boost the local economy by frequenting the area businesses including the restaurants and retail. The Rennebohm Park Shelter, by vote of the council, has been named "home of the Capitol City Band."

Of course, I am concerned about the parking space for concerts-in-the-park; but I am also concerned about maintaining the overall beauty of the park for the neighborhood and securing a suitable place for community gardens.

Sincerely,



James H. Latimer
For the Board of Directors
Capitol City Band Association