

SUPERINTENDENT'S MARCH 2021 REPORT

COMMUNICATIONS TO BOARD OF PARK COMMISSIONERS

Park Superintendent's Monthly Report Summary

The absolutely frigid depths of February have passed us, and Spring weather appears to be upon us. Be careful though, winter rarely gives up easily. Parks Winter Operations performed an increased workload in the midst of decreased hours, increased COVID-19 protocols, and an incredible increase in demand for Parks winter activities. We even managed to sneak in a new amenity for the final week of Winter Operations: Snow Snake. More on that later. We'll be ready for more snow clearing, should this be a Fool's Spring, but have largely closed up shop for our ice maintenance, cross country ski trail grooming, and equipment rentals. Snow will continue to be made and trails groomed at Elver park as long as overnight temperatures allow, though this is likely to end any day. Should this warm, sunny weather continue we look forward to opening golf courses to a public that proved hungry for golf in a pandemic stricken world. Parks staff work to ready other snow-less amenities such as watercraft storage, lake access, disc golf, shelter reservations, and athletics. New public health orders allow a return of shelter reservations and athletics, which we're largely cancelled in 2020. Staff are receiving reservation requests and safety plans for these uses in the parks. Large planning projects continue across the system, with the Olin Park Facility, Vilas Park Master Plan, and Glenway Golf Park headlining the work.

- As mentioned, Community Service staff worked to include a Snow Snake before snow began rapidly melting. This non-venomous activity was brought to us by Ho Chunk Tribal Preservation Officer Bill Quackenbush and Alder Arvina Martin. The winter game of Snow Snake has been traditionally played amongst the Great Lakes tribes throughout many generations. Some say it comes from the old ways of life when the men would return from a winter hunt and the village would gather to share the hard work that came after the hunt. After the work was done, there was time to enjoy the many winter games and social events that took place, the game of Snow Snake being one of them. Today, the game of Snow Snake continues to have the ability to draw people together to enjoy the outdoors during the long winter months. The game entails building a long, over 300 foot long, mound of snow, dragging a log down the center to create a bobsled-like run down the center, and smoothing that run out to push snow snakes down as far as possible. Building the game is as much a part of the activity as playing. Park staff worked directly with Bill and learned the history of the game while working up a sweat. The snakes are carved from wood and vary in length, for those without carving skills a wooden broomstick works like a charm. Parks hosted three Learn To sessions and taught the tradition game to 79 participants. This new activity is something we hope to provide more often and to more users in future winter seasons.
- As mentioned above, winter equipment rentals and care of the ice and trails are at a close. Parks saw record numbers of rentals and cross country ski permit purchases, more than doubling previous records in both regards. This would not have been possible without the hard work of Parks staff and partnerships with adopt-ice groups and MadNorSki. Staff maintained what we believe to be our best ice and trails after diligently tending to an increased number of bus stops, interior pathways, sidewalks, and paths to clear. All of this was done while staff participated in the workshare program. The stresses of the workshare program, added responsibilities, and the clear importance of the outdoor amenities we provide created what could have been

an insurmountable task for our staff and their ability to provide near perfect service deserves recognition by all.

- We have just received Public Health Order #14, which will allow a number of our services to return to near normal. We'll see park fields full of athletics again, park shelters hosting gatherings for those who may not have seen each other in over a year, and in general, more opportunities for people to enjoy the parks. All of this will be done with safety and the Public Health orders at the fore. We believe we will be able to provide all services and amenities that Parks provided prior to COVID-19 with necessary modifications. Community Services staff are already enjoying providing amenities after a year of having to reach out to reservations with the unfortunate news that their reservation would need to be cancelled. I recognize that not only was this difficult for park users, but for staff who work here because they want people in the parks. The coming months will continue to be difficult and we will need to be diligent in safely providing amenities, but to use a phrase that was used far too early and casually by some, we believe we've turned a corner.

Future Commission Items

- Lake Monona Waterfront (formerly Law Park) Master Planning – Staff continue to work towards completion of the preliminary report and to prepare for the next phase of the master planning project. There have been project delays due to staffing levels and significant extraordinary efforts required of active projects. Staff anticipates an update to the Commission in April/May.
- Vilas Park Drive Intermediate Solution to promote ped/bike safety – Staff anticipates an April or May presentation on proposed intermediate solutions in advance of master plan based project work to promote a safer and more enjoyable Vilas Park Drive experience for all park users, with an emphasis on peds/bikes.
- Olin Park Facility Update – Staff will be seeking Commission review and approval for the project plan that has been discussed to repurpose the building acquired as part of the expansion of Olin Park. The plan would convert the building to a Park facility that serves the park and its users for generations to come.

Personnel Updates

- Jim Maier, Olbrich Gardens Facility Maintenance Worker retired after more than 21 years of service.

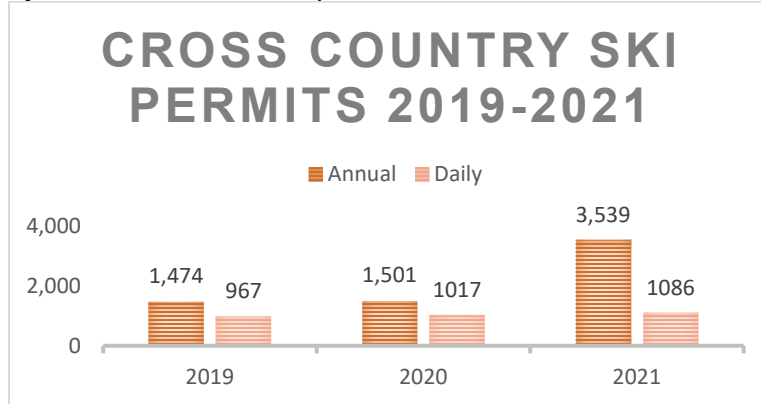
Section reports

Community Services Monthly Highlights—Lisa Laschinger

Customer Services (Joanne Austin):

- With PHMDC's Emergency Order #13 issued on February 8 (in effect until March 10), we are all hopeful for additional increases in the number of people that can safely gather in indoor and outdoor spaces. We are receiving additional inquiries and are scheduling more shelter and athletic reservations each day. We are informing customers of current orders and are letting them know they must abide by orders that will be in effect on their reservation dates.

- All outdoor winter activities have seen a substantial increase in popularity this winter and Cross-Country Ski Permit sales are a testament of this as users have sought healthy and safe activities. We had such a huge increase in sales that we actually ordered more permits, which we still ran out of this winter. We're hopeful that customers enjoyed this winter activity so much that similar permit sales will continue in the future.



Warner Park Community Recreation Center (Terrence Thompson):

- On February 19, 2021, nine middle school students from the WPCRC participated in a focus group for the Madison Youth Arts Center (a new community facility currently under construction with an anticipated completion date of summer 2021). The focus group was led by a UW-Madison graduate student whose master's thesis identifies how the Madison Youth Arts Center can be a place for youth to participate and benefit fully in the arts by addressing access barriers and empowering youth voice and leadership. The focus group engaged in rich and insightful discussions surrounding access barriers to the Madison Youth Arts Center. Youth verbalized how they envisioned themselves and their peers getting to the arts center and identifying different resources needed and challenges surrounding program availability, types of programs offered, safety, food resources, transportation, and opportunities for youth leadership roles. Overall, the youth expressed their excitement for the Madison Youth Arts Center and look forward to seeing the center open.

Aquatics (Josh Schmitt):

- The planning for the 2021 Aquatics Season is well underway. I am happy to report that Alicyn Nicholson will be returning in her role as Aquatics Manager overseeing the operations of the Goodman Pool. Alicyn has been with the Goodman Pool since 2017 and has been in Aquatics even longer. Posting for additional job opportunities are currently posted and we are getting excited for the summer season.

Rangers (Josh Schmitt):

- Rangers are wrapping up the busiest winter season we have seen in years and preparing for the similar volume of park use we saw in 2020. In the next week or so we will be posting for hourly Park Rangers and looking over our training program for updates. We are very proud of the work Rangers have been doing in the field and the services we have been able to provide in the past year.

Recreation Services (Tracey Hartley):

- Winter Recreation has wrapped up safe and highly successful season. Equipment Rentals increased to almost double what they were in 2020, highlighting the community's need for safe outdoor recreation during these times.
- The first learn to event of the year occurred on Friday, February 26 at Warner Park. Learn to SNOW SNAKE, hosted by Bill Quakenbush from the Ho-Chunk Nation of Wisconsin and Alder Martin. We had 79 people participate in three different sessions for a fun Great Lakes Native American Region Winter Game.



Community Events (Kelli Lamberty):

- We continue to research criteria for event permitting with various attendance/COVID protocol requirements. We have received a few requests to post signage in parks for virtual events (ie. Run/walk type events). We have determined it is best to use our existing park event permit and established process to allow signs for strictly virtual events due to COVID using a park event permit.
- PHMDC's most recent orders increased the numbers allowed at public gatherings, as a result, we anticipate receiving a number of park and street use event permit applications. Street Use Staff Commission meetings will be starting again in mid to late March.

Planning and Development

Single Track Bicycle Network

- Madison Parks continues to plan for the possible development of a citywide system of multi-use, bike optimized, off-road trails. We hope to have the final plan ready for the BPC review later this spring and to build the Aldo Leopold Park Pumptrack this summer.

2021 Playgrounds

- Planning efforts continue for 2021 playgrounds. The contract will be ready for bidding by May, we should have a selected contractor by the beginning of July.

Parkland Restoration Efforts

- The City recently awarded a three year contract to Tallgrass Restorations.

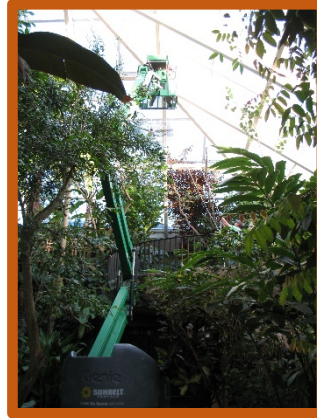
Olbrich Botanical Gardens

Attendance

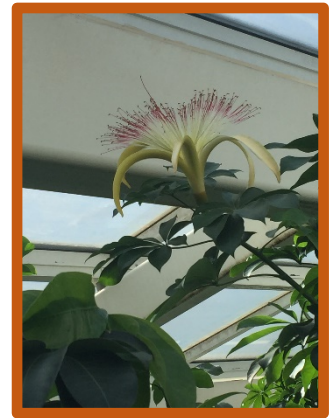
Total attendance for January 2021 was 6,193, a little more than half of January 2019's 10,008 attendance number.

Bolz Conservatory

Increasing visitors for the Bolz Conservatory especially during the extremely frigid weather in February. The Conservatory closes for 2 weeks in March (March 8 – 19) in order to conduct pruning (using a lift) and to take care of any other projects such as planting, walkway repair and others that need more extended time without visitors in the space.



It takes staff 8 days to complete the pruning using this rented lift



The beautiful bloom of *Pachira aquatica* as seen from the lift.

Volunteers

Volunteers are slowly being invited back to their jobs. Greenhouse crews will begin transplanting in March – with schedules managed for social distancing. Outdoor garden crews are being scheduled for an April start. And, as vaccinations continue to be completed, more customer-facing volunteers are expected to return. Throughout the pandemic, Volunteer Services Manager, Marty Petillo, has worked hard to stay in touch and keep the volunteers engaged. Sadly, we know that some will not be able to return but are hopeful for a return to a 'version of normalcy' by fall.

Programs & Exhibitions

Virtual programming continues to be produced by OBG's talented staff.

Rainforest Rhythms, a live performance series focused on cultures from the rainforest is the most recent program to 'go virtual'. The performance – taped live in the Bolz Conservatory - can be viewed online at www.olbrich.org. An accompanying I Spy activity highlights plants in OBG's Bolz Conservatory that relate to the performance!

The first **Canopy Session** was recorded on February 5 with *Red Rose*. One of their performers has offered to partner – pro bono – with OBG to provide quality streaming sound for future Canopy Sessions. Two additional dates have been added on March 19 and April 23. Canopy Sessions can be viewed online.

RAINFOREST RHYTHMS

Take a virtual vacation to Cuba with *Rainforest Rhythms* at olbrich.org to learn more about Cuban culture and plants that grow in the tropics.

I Spy... plants found in Cuba in the Bolz Conservatory!

Look for the  symbol as you explore today during your visit.

Grapefruit (*Citrus x paradisi*)

I Spy ... a thorny tree with shiny leaves, but no fruits yet!

Did you know? Grapefruits are a hybrid between a sweet orange and pomelo. Pomelos are the largest citrus fruits in the world! Cuba has been a major grower and exporter of grapefruits.

Breadnut Tree (*Brosimum allicastrum*)

I Spy ... a very large tree!

Did you know? Breadnut trees were a possible food source for indigenous peoples in the Americas. The seed of the breadnut can be ground up and used to make flat bread, porridge, and beverages.

I Spy ...plants found in Cuba activity