

## Parks Superintendent Report

May 2020

Spring is always a very busy time of year for Madison Parks. Typically our staff report would share the story of preparing our parks for the upcoming busy summer season, wrapping up the hiring process for our numerous seasonal employees, training and onboarding, introducing several new initiatives, processing some exciting new events and updates to returning events, finalizing capital improvement contracts and boasting of outstanding programming for members of all ages within the community. As our community and world is aware, this has not been a typical spring for anyone. So much has happened in Madison Parks since early March 2020, when Coronavirus (COVID-19) took center stage.

COVID19, a flu-like virus, which at first seemed to be only something from a country far away, quickly became the focus of our work. As public health officials learned more about the virus and how to slow its spread, we learned how to manage and provide services during a pandemic, moving faster than we ever thought possible. In order to protect the community, a number of directives and orders have been issued to-date by Governor Tony Evers, State of WI Department of Health Services, Public Health of Madison and Dane County and Mayor Satya Rhodes-Conway. As the situation has continued to evolve daily, so has our response and our services. Parks management worked closely with public health liaisons throughout the process to ensure strictest compliance.

- March 13: PHMDC issued a mandate prohibiting gatherings larger than 250 people
- March 16: Governor Evers issued a mandate prohibiting gatherings larger than 10 people
  - Park shelter, athletic and event reservations impacted by COVID-19 are allowed to cancel without penalty, with any deposits refunded 100%.
- March 18, when non-essential businesses closed to the public, most City offices also closed to the public, including Olbrich Botanical Gardens and Warner Park Recreation Center.
  - All Sections worked diligently to update and continuously revise the Parks Division's Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP) and determine essential services and minimum staffing levels. The COOP has been a vital resource for planning needs since we have been in emergency response mode.
  - Staggered staff shifts were determined, which helped to provide opportunities for telecommuting and reducing the numbers of staff working together at the same time.
  - Ranger staff were relocated to Wisconsin Medical Society to reduce staff presence in Goodman Maintenance Facility.
  - IT provided a tremendous amount of support enable staff to work remotely.
- Governor Evers issued the [Emergency SAFER AT HOME Order](#), effective from March 25, 2020 at 8AM until April 24, 2020 at 8AM.
  - The order set very clear expectations for what services are to continue and what are to be suspended. The order stated that, our parks, trails, and open spaces are essential resources for health and wellness of the community. While users are expected to comply with Social Distancing Requirements, the Madison Parks

system has been able to continue to be open for passive recreation, including walking, fishing, biking, hiking, running among other solo activities that can be safely enjoyed.

- Staff with the ability to telework, have been encouraged to do so
- All park gatherings, including reservations, events and volunteer activities were cancelled or postponed.
- Field staff worked within restrictions to keep them safe, including adhering to social distancing, increased sanitization practices and limiting vehicles to one person.
- We put systems in place to track crucial supply inventories and began gathering and recording critical data.
- The following park facilities were closed under this order:
  - All playgrounds
  - Irwin A. and Robert D. Goodman Skate Park at McPike Park
  - All sport courts, including basketball, tennis, pickleball, etc.
  - All fields for the purpose of contact sports, including football, soccer, ultimate Frisbee, etc.
  - Drinking fountains
  - All restrooms
  - Disc golf and the city's four golf courses will remain closed until further notice
- Governor Evers extended the [Emergency SAFER AT HOME Order](#) to be effective until May 26, 2020 at 8AM. This order maintains nearly all other previous restrictions, but allows the following:
  - Opening of golf courses
  - Opening of restrooms at the municipalities discretion
  - Granting local municipalities the ability to close parks/areas if they become problematic
- [Badger Bounce Back Order](#), released shortly after the extension of the orders, provides some structure around how we return to some form of normal.
- [Interim Order to Turn the Dial](#), was issued this April 27 and defines abilities of certain nonessential businesses to operate within the current orders
  - For Parks, this provided the golf courses the ability to offer carts within restrictions.

Throughout the past two months, the Parks Team has worked tirelessly to keep the community safe, make sure the parks, golf courses, Olbrich Botanical Gardens and Cemetery are maintained, that critical support and planning work continues and not to mention take on new roles protect the community's right to vote safely. We celebrate our accomplishments!

- Election Work. Parks Superintendent, Eric Knepp, was assigned to organize absentee voting operations and some Parks staff were redeployed to assist for the April 7 election. More than 85,000 absentee ballots were mailed.
- Parks and Engineering staff worked together to convert the Warner Park Recreation Center to a temporary shelter for healthy single men experiencing homelessness. Extensive work was done, such as removal of furniture/art, installation of electrical service for laundry facilities, boarding of windows, removal of signage and features susceptible to damage and coordination of services to prepare WPCRC for its new guests. The shelter, operated by Porch Light and Beacon and supported by the City of

Madison and Dane County, has served approximately 85 guests per night since it opened on March 30. Parks staff continues to provide ongoing support.

- Continuous public communication through the City and Parks websites, news releases, blog posts, general parks inquiries, social media and media interviews.
- Connected with organizers and partners, and helping them with changes in their plans.
- Implemented numerous COVID19 policies and procedures successfully, including changes to operations in response to orders, new local and federal emergency leave provisions, vehicle cleaning policies and face covering policies.
- Developed ways to keep park users engaged, such as the [Move-It Madison](#) partnership with MSCR, which will take place throughout the month of May and Olbrich's Flash Flower online sale of fresh bouquets direct from the grounds.
- Reimagined well-loved events, such as [Self-Guided Nature Walks](#) prepared by volunteers and staff, and Olbrich's [Plant Sale with the Pro's](#).
- Worked to implement a robust park monitoring program to gather data and educate the public on proper use of the park spaces during these times. This took significant effort from Operations and Rangers on the front end as part of their daily duties, while Planning worked to support a monitoring program that is allowing us to use Parking Enforcement Officers to set eyes on every park each day.
- Worked to engage volunteers in new ways by identifying suitable solo projects and making connections.
- Implemented the new Dogs In Park Policy!
- Opened all four golf courses within strict parameters, that continue to change on a daily basis. Over the course of less than a week, we were allowed to open to walking only and not provide food, but quickly evolved to offering carts and limited food and beverage in a new way.
- Secured, supporting and learning a new format for a virtual meeting in May Board of Park Commissioners.
- Developed ever-so-changing staffing plans, began operations of multiple shifts from multiple locations and impressively provided seasonal orientation to 24 hourly laborers on ZOOM!
- Hosted our first ever all Parks quarterly meeting by SKYPE, with a record of 60 people in attendance.
- Improved the transportation network and worked to keep residents safe by widening the bike path shoulder near the Monona Terrace on the John Nolan Path.
- Worked to keep the community safe and promote equitable access to information. Staff worked with Dane County Parks and PHMDC to produce guidance and signage, which we had translated into Spanish, Hmong and Chinese by Department of Civil Rights. These signs were printed, laminated and placed throughout parks to alert users to closed amenities and to share instructions about safe distancing practices.
  - Along with signage in parks, tennis courts were locked, some nets were removed and basketball nets were zip-tied shut to discourage unsafe social gathering.
  - Signs are posted at playgrounds, dog parks, disc golf courses and at the skatepark to alert the public regarding closures.

- Examples of signage below:

**PLAYGROUND  
CLOSED**

**UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE  
DUE TO COVID-19**

More information: [publichealthmdc.com/coronavirus](http://publichealthmdc.com/coronavirus)

**ESTA ÁREA DE JUEGOS ESTÁ  
CERRADA HASTA NUEVO AVISO  
DEBIDO AL COVID-19**

Visite [publichealthmdc.com/coronavirus](http://publichealthmdc.com/coronavirus)  
para más información



**CHAW UA SI MUAB KAW LAWMM  
THAUM ROV QAB QHIB TOM NTEJ NO  
MAM QHIA PAUB VIM COVID-19**

Yog xav paub ntiix:  
[publichealthmdc.com/coronavirus](http://publichealthmdc.com/coronavirus)

由於COVID-19的原因遊樂場已關閉，直至另行通知

更多信息：[publichealthmdc.com/coronavirus](http://publichealthmdc.com/coronavirus)

Help keep our community healthy and safe

**PLEASE STAY 6 FEET (1.8 M)  
AWAY FROM OTHERS**





**6 ft**

**Ayúdenos a mantener nuestra  
comunidad sana y segura:  
manténgase a 6 pies (1,8 m) de  
distancia de los demás**



**6 ft**

**Thov pab peb lub zej zog kom  
txhob muaj mob (healthy) thiab  
teb meem (safe): Thov nyob kom  
deb li 6 feet (1.8 m) ntawm lwm  
cov neeg**



March 19, 2020  
[publichealthmdc.com/coronavirus](http://publichealthmdc.com/coronavirus)

As we move into May, we will continue on with many of our normal duties. We will do our best to plan for the coming months without fully knowing what is ahead. In terms of future planning, [Badger Bounce Back Order](#) provides some structure around how we return to some form of normal, which we realize will take some time. Key areas of focus in the coming weeks and months will be:

- Prepare for future Commission and Task Force on Municipal Golf meetings. Begin preparations for subcommittee meetings as they become authorized.
- The following items were removed from the May BPC agenda in consultation with the President and Vice-President of the Commission to manage the complexity of the agenda during our first virtual meeting:
  - 60305 Request from Friends of Goodman Waves for the use of the Goodman Pool for meets, team socials, and other associated activities under the terms of a fee modification until January 1, 2022.
  - 60070 Request from Sessions at McPike Park, Inc. to extend amplification at McPike Park to 11 PM Friday, Saturday and Sunday, August 21, 22 and 23, 2020.
  - 60367 Request from Big Oak Child Care for non-exclusive use of Orton Park for 10-11 weeks of summer camp Monday through Friday starting in June and ending in August under a Fee Modification.
  - This determination was made based on the presumption that the BPC will take action on item 60250 in some manner to provide authority the body is comfortable with to staff. If no action is taken these events would either not be able to happen or would be brought to the Commission in June.
- Develop increased communication channels for the Commission, Alders, public and employees.
- Work with the EOC, HR, and the Mayor's Office to develop a staffing plan for intermediate term to support the work of Parks. This includes placing staff from other agencies into productive work for parks. In addition to the Parking Enforcement Officers working with us, we will be welcoming a number of other City staff in the coming weeks to help with the work that lies ahead.
- Continue the work of the Taskforce on Municipal Golf in Madison. The groups work has been extended, due to the recent lack of ability to meet. The final report is due July 31.
- Evaluate, reimagine and possibly make some hard choices regarding our aquatics and summer event programs. The Goodman Pool specifically
- Work to support the work of community partners on supporting the homeless and transient population during the pandemic. This involves working with the City's Emergency Operations Center to support appropriately sited and managed encampment sites, some of which could be on park property.
- Develop and finalize plans for slowly turning the system back to normal, by determining when and how to open offices, which restrooms to offer, how to open Olbrich back up to the public and how to reintroduce other park amenities playground, disc golf, sport courts and athletic fields.
- Work with partners to help them be successful through these difficult times, though none will likely operate as normal. We are providing them resources to aide in developing plans for summer operations.
- Continue to support WPCRC as homeless shelter.

- Continue to work with park users and event organizers to support events within restrictions of orders. We are working with PHMDC to develop guidance for events when the time comes.
- Continue to work through critical vacancies, including Payroll Clerk, Plumber, West Parks Supervisor and others on a case-by-case basis.
- Develop and finalize 2021-2026 Capital Budget and begin the Operating Budget process.
- Major planning effort continue to move ahead, including Vilas Park Master Plan, Law Park Planning,
- Continue to make a difference in the lives of so many.

We have accomplished tasks we never thought we'd take part in, we've seen nearly every aspect of our daily work lives change and we have provided outstanding services to keep the park system open and safe to all users as they are so desperately needed right now. While our offices may not currently be open to the public, we are certainly open for business. The parks system continues to play a major role in promoting the mental and physical well-being of the entire community. This is truly purposeful work that we can all be proud of.