

## **SUPERINTENDENT'S MARCH 2023 REPORT**

### **COMMUNICATIONS TO BOARD OF PARK COMMISSIONERS**

#### **Park Superintendent's Monthly Report Summary**

February seemed quite short, perhaps shorter than normal and with it ending, we move to the end of our winter recreation season. There could certainly be some winter opportunities out there still, but our focus is forward to the spring. The winter recreation season was not all that we had hoped or prepared for, but many positive experiences were had and memories made in Madison Parks this winter. I am particularly grateful for the partnership with MadNorSki. Though it was a suboptimal winter for skiing, I am confident that the partnership is strong and we are well positioned to move forward together.

In regard to the spring/summer seasons, the Parks team is working to prepare the system and programs for a great year. Event applications are coming in at high levels. Athletic scheduling is well underway and shelter reservations are picking up. The WPCRC team continues to plan forward for expansion. Aquatics program preparation is in full swing and All-City Swim is less than five months away. The Golf team is already selling season passes as well.

A key part of that work is working to hire staff in the remaining vacant positions. The Parks Alive planning is ongoing and will hopefully have its new leader soon. The team is working to develop the position description for the Volunteer Coordinator position. The goal is to ensure from the beginning we are intentionally involving and integrating many staff partners in the process to better equip the Coordinator in making sure we can find a way for everyone to connect to our parks through volunteerism. I do not yet know how this will look in detail in five years, but I am truly excited about the substantial opportunities this position and program enhancement has for our Parks and community. Connecting residents more deeply to their Parks and nature is important and I this will be a focus area for the Division moving forward.

The Operations team is focusing time and effort to create a plan for implementation of the newly created Public Works Laborer positions shared between Parks and Streets. The goal of this program is to emphasize entry-level permanent positions more so than seasonal staff to meet the diverse needs of public works related work. A significant portion of this work is maintenance of the medians and traffic islands across the City. The current plan is for Streets to lead and manage the team doing finish cut mowing in these areas and Parks to focus on the landscaped areas. The Conservation team and the Ecology teams both have vacancies that are in the recruitment process as well. I am excited to see where we can go with continued focus on land stewardship in all of our parks as well as in other areas such as medians.

The Lake Monona Waterfront Ad Hoc Committee's work continues to progress. The survey closes on March 23<sup>rd</sup> and there has been a significant number of responses to date. Please continue to share and amplify this opportunity. The Committee and staff desire a robust survey response as this input will weigh significantly in the Committee's decision making process.

Growth and development of Olbrich Gardens will be a key conversation for us moving forward. Our partnership with Olbrich Botanical Society is strong and the Strategic Plan work is critical. We are going to need to focus resources on addressing deferred maintenance issues at the Gardens, but I am confident the future is bright and together the Gardens can continue to thrive, grow, and inspire our community and its visitors.

### Future Commission Items

- Golf Enterprise Update – The Golf Team is working to prepare a report to the Golf Subcommittee, Facilities Programs and Fees Subcommittee, and the Board of Park Commissioners on the past 2 years of operations as well as an outlook on future opportunities to continue to implement the Task Force on Municipal Golf in Madison Parks' recommendations. Given recent staff departures and budget actions, the goal is to present additional information to the BPC before June 2023.
- Results Madison / Division Work Plan– The City has been working on Results Madison, which moves towards a more significant utilization of data in decision-making, including budgeting for the past few years. Staff will be preparing information on this and the Parks Division's work plan to present to the Commission. The goal is to present information to the Commission this spring.
- Land Management Plan Update – The Parks Division team will be working over the coming months to conceptualize opportunities to improve land management standards and the corresponding plan moving forward. The Plan has done a lot of good to move the system forward, and the work of the Habitat Stewardship Subcommittee on the Plan is nearly complete. An anticipated timeframe for the Commission to review a draft update to the Plan is in April or May.

### Personnel Updates

#### Promotions/Hires:

- Hannah Penn has been promoted to Parks GIS Specialist. She started her new position February 5, 2023.
- Amanda Kuhl has been provisionally appointed as Volunteer Coordinator for Olbrich Botanical Gardens. She started this position on February 20, 2023.

#### Departures:

- Jeff Epping retired from his position as Horticulture Supervisor at Olbrich Botanical Gardens on February 24, 2023. The Parks Division appreciates Jeff's leadership and dedication in transforming Olbrich Botanical Gardens over the last 30 years. I want to take a moment to thank Jeff Epping for his years of service to Olbrich. He has led with vision, empathy, and grace in making a place of beauty even more beautiful and sustainable. I will always appreciate what he has done for our City and its visitors, and also for me personally.
- Brandon Mann has resigned from his position as Conservation Technician. His last day was March 3, 2023. He has been a key member of the Conservation Program for last 10 years.

## Section reports

### **Community Services Report March 2023 – Terrence Thompson**

#### **Community Events (Kelly Post):**

- The Community Events team is proud to work with many great organizations that host events in our parks and on public rights-of-way. These events help to define our community, celebrate the traditions and cultures of our residents, instill civic pride, and add to the economic prosperity of our City.
- The Community Events team receives applications for 2023 Park Events and Street Use Events daily. We are happy to report our new online Park Event permit process is working well!
- The Community Events team will provide the Board of Park Commissioners with an accruing monthly report of park event permits administratively approved through the updated criteria for the approval process (established in 2022).

| Park Event permits - administratively approved in 2023 - that would have come to committee for approval prior to the updated criteria |                                                       |            |                 |                   |      |      |                 |         |                                                           |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------|------------|-----------------|-------------------|------|------|-----------------|---------|-----------------------------------------------------------|
| 2023 Date                                                                                                                             | EVENT                                                 | Park       | Est. Attendance | R-returning N-new | PA 1 | PA 2 | Temp. Structure | Vending | Past Criteria that would have required committee approval |
| 4/23                                                                                                                                  | MATA/Outreach event: Celebrate Trans Joy in Community | Vilas Park | 500             | R-1 day           | 1    |      | 1               |         | Change of location, estimated attendance                  |

#### **Warner Park Community Recreation Center (Zach Watson):**

- WPCRC welcomed 29 families and 184 attending our February 10, 2023, Family Fun Night.
- WPCRC and NewBridge began our Intergenerational Drum Circle at the Arts for All. The program consists of NewBridge Seniors and KNOW Program teens working together for (2) four-week sessions, culminating in a joint performance at the Dane Arts Performances during the summer of 2023.
- WPCRC hosted the first of three MSCR Elementary School league basketball games on Monday, February 27, 2023. KNOW Program participants supported the MSCR games by scorekeeping and continuing to learn how to referee. The first games were well attended by school staff and participating team's families.

#### **Recreation Services & Aquatics (Tracey Hartley & Shane Martin)**

- Learning Series update:
  - On 2/5/23, we partnered with the Madison Capitols for Learn to Play Hockey at Tenney Park with 15 participants.
  - On 2/17/23, we partnered with MadNorSki for Learn to Cross Country Ski at Elver Park with 31 participants.
  - On 2/18/23, we partnered with Paul Noeldner at Goodman Community Center for Learn about Native Seeds with 12 participants.
- Upcoming events:
  - Dog Park Cleanup - 4/1/23
  - Earth Day Challenge - 4/22/23
  - Bird and Nature Festival - 4/23/23
- SUMMER planning is underway to include preparations for ALL-CITY Swim Meet being hosted at the Goodman Pool. Aquatic Positions are posted online, and we plan to attend job fairs, go into the schools, and reach out to the community to fill the positions.

### **Customer Service (Joanne Austin):**

- Athletic user groups with active agreements and fee modifications are entering their 2023 reservations into Spotz. Public users can begin entering reservations starting March 15, 2023.
- Existing boat storage and mooring agreement holders were contacted earlier this year to determine if they intend to renew their spaces, which will expire on April 1, 2023. Many have already renewed, and a few have told us they do not want to store their watercraft again this year. This proactive decision to make early contact should make the renewal process smoother for customers and front staff who administer this program.

### **Rangers (Jason Vroman):**



- Rangers Michaela Daly and Jason Vroman attended the first UW CALS Connector event to engage with UW students studying Natural Resource. Students were very interested in learning about the different career paths, seasonal, and internship opportunities Madison Parks has to offer.



- Rangers participated in the first self-defense training at Badger Krav Maga. This training will better prepare staff to escape potentially dangerous situations safely. The first defense of Rangers will always be to avoid and disengage when presented with a dangerous situation.



- The Ranger team worked with Recreation Services and the Public Information Officer, Ann Shea to develop signage to deter a recent spell of vehicle break-ins at Warner Dog Park. Staff put together signage alerting park users of the recent crimes and advising them to secure their belongings. The break-ins have since stopped!

## Planning and Development

### Inclusive Playground at Rennebohm

- Bids were opened on 2/23/22 for the Rennebohm Park Inclusive Playground and the contract has been awarded to low bidder Joe Daniels Construction Co., Inc, for \$352,452.70. Work on the contract to install the new playground equipment, poured-in-place rubber surfacing, benches and associated site work is anticipated to begin in early May and continue through July.

### Sycamore and Country Grove Master Plan Updates (added Kestrel)

- Country Grove Park Master Plan
  - The master planning process was initiated because the park was identified as a location for a new prototype shelter and parks recently acquired new land on the east side of the park.
  - Public engagement included two public meetings and a community survey, all of which have been completed. Feedback was generally positive and residents are excited about the potential new amenities at the park.
  - New amenities proposed in the master plan include:
    - Single track mountain bike trails
    - Shelter building with rest rooms
    - Sand volleyball court
    - New basketball court location
    - Mini-pitch/Futsal court
    - Practice disc golf baskets
    - Tennis or pickleball courts
    - Sun shelter and community patio
    - Naturalized area with walking paths
  - In the coming months staff will present the plan to the BPC as an informational item in April and as an action item in May.
- Sycamore Park Master Plan
  - Public engagement to date has included two public meetings. The first meeting was informational to find how residents are using the park and what they would like to see. At the second meeting, staff presented a draft plan and listened to feedback. A third public meeting is currently scheduled for March 30<sup>th</sup>. At this meeting staff will present a revised plan based on the feedback received.
  - New amenities proposed in the master plan include:
    - Single track mountain bike trails
    - Pump track
    - Shelter building with rest rooms
    - Sun shelter
  - In the coming months staff will present the plan to the BPC as an informational item in April and as an action item in May.

- Kestrel Park Development Plan
  - Kestrel Park is located in a newly developed area and is currently undeveloped. The Park Development Plan process was initiated to determine the provide direction for the build-out of the park. Funds have been approved as part of the 2023 Capital Improvements Budget for development of this park.
  - Public engagement to date has included one public meeting where staff presented a draft plan which was well received. Staff plans to host a second public meeting where a revised plan will be presented for feedback.
  - New amenities proposed include:
    - Playground
    - Community patio
    - Open play field
  - In the coming months staff will present the plan to the BPC as an action item. The specific meeting date is to be determined.

#### Town of Madison Park Development Plans

- Parks is holding additional public input opportunities in March, including a virtual meeting via Zoom on March 2<sup>nd</sup> and an in-person presentation at the Arboretum Neighborhood Association annual meeting on March 16th. At Fraust Park, staff are considering amenities which support active recreation, such as play equipment, a basketball court, or a Gaga ball pit, and amenities which encourage a sense of community, such as community gardens, a picnic shelter, or community patio. Harvey Schmidt Park is being considered for more passive recreation opportunities, with amenities such as natural surface trails and wildlife observation areas. This is due in part to the existing conditions at Harvey Schmidt, including the muck soils and propensity to flood, and in part from neighborhood preferences.
- The planning process for Heifetz Park will be extended through the season, as there are many critical factors currently undergoing changes, such as potential acquisitions. The process will continue once these factors are more concrete and will include in-person public input opportunities.

#### **Olbrich Botanical Gardens**

##### **Volunteer Appreciation – February 14, 2023**

The volunteers of Olbrich Botanical Gardens were celebrated on February 14, 2023 at the annual Volunteer Luncheon. Mayor Satya Rhodes-Conway attended and shared her appreciation for the volunteers. The Mayor presented Jeff Epping with a Mayoral Proclamation acknowledging his career with Madison Parks. Parks Superintendent Eric Knepp and Olbrich Botanical Society President Alnisa Allgood also spoke, sharing their thanks and appreciation for the volunteers. The keynote speaker for the event was Director of Horticulture Jeff Epping. He led a presentation on the changes and growth of the outdoor gardens during his 28-year career at Olbrich Gardens.

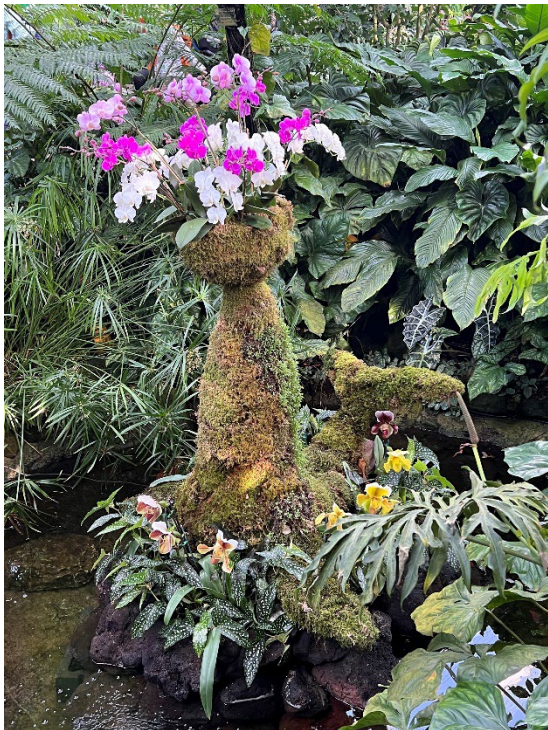
## Volunteer Appreciation – February 14, 2023



The City of Madison City Channel recorded the event and it's available for viewing at this link: <https://media.cityofmadison.com/mediasite/Showcase/madison-city-channel/Presentation/568f2351a3f14babb048fe59259449b21d>

## **“Under the Glasstop” Orchid Escape**

Orchid Escape continues through the end of the month. Record attendance levels continue to be set for February with each weekend featuring a large event. The first weekend Olbrich Gardens hosted Orchid Quest which is put on by the Orchid Grower's Guild. It was the first year back for this much loved event since the pandemic. The next weekend the Weaver's Guild hosted their Madison Weaver's Guild Fine Arts & Craft Sale on both Saturday and Sunday. The third weekend was the Open House for Olbrich Gardens along with the Pour'n Yer Heart Out Iron Pour with Fe'Lion Studios. Over 2,600 people attend this event. On top of the events going on at Olbrich Gardens, the Winter Farmer's Market continues every Saturday at Garver Feed Mill. They also hosted the very popular Femme Festival on Sunday, February 19, 2023. Winter is busy as can be at the Olbrich Gardens and Garver Feed Mill complex!



### **Orchid Escape Media Coverage:**

- The Larry Meiller Show Blog – WI PBR - <https://www.wpr.org/everythings-coming-orchids>
- NBC 15 - <https://www.nbc15.com/2023/02/06/orchid-exhibit-offers-reprieve-wisconsin-winter-olbrich-botanical-gardens/>

## Pour'n Yer Heart Out Iron Pour



