

April 18, 2022

Eric Knepp
Parks Superintendent
Madison Parks Department
210 Martin Luther King Jr. BLVD #104
Madison, WI 53703

Dear Mr. Knepp,

Please accept this letter and accompanying materials as a formal request to rename the Yahara River Bike Path "The Ed Jepsen Way," after Ed Jepsen who passed away on December 25, 2021.

The Yahara Parkway and adjacent parks

"Ed was so dynamic and wonderful. I was a member of the city committee in 1995-96 that first planned out the removal of nearly all Thornton Avenue (along the Yahara) and creating more greenspace and a bike/ped path. That plan was great...but it's the easy part. Ed did the hard part...following up, going to meetings, raising the issues, advocating, questioning and pushing...and today's path... which is exactly as we planned it -- it there only because of Ed's leadership and tireless advocacy."

Bert Zipperer, former 6th District Alder

The break wall redesign, bike path, underpass bridges and shoreline restoration were the result of many years of hard work, commitment by Ed Jepsen. In fact, there is a distinct possibility that they would not exist if not for Ed, nick named "Captain Tenacity" for his decades-long commitment to this project.

Thanks to Ed's decades of leadership and dedication to the Yahara River Parkway and the adjacent parks, people can safely traverse the river path from Lake Monona to Lake Mendota, native flora dominate the landscape once again, and the parks have played a key role in revitalizing east side neighborhoods.

In addition to his work at Tenney and the Yahara Parkway, Ed has served in numerous roles and committees on behalf of the protection, enhancement and expansion of Madison's green spaces.

Ed started his Madison Parks journey in 1990 when he led the effort to rebuild the Tenney park break wall to make it accessible for pedestrians and adding benches and planters.

In 1994, Ed was on the Tenney neighborhood planning committee and championed the Yahara River protection and restoration as a priority in the plan. Ed worked with historian, Beth Miller, to nominate the Yahara River Corridor as a historical designation.

In 1996 Ed served on the Ad hoc committee to create a plan for the for Yahara River Parkway corridor. He was on the long-range parks planning committee for the Madison Parks Commission for decades.

A crowning volunteer effort for Ed was his work with the Friends of Yahara River Parkway, a nonprofit group that advocates for the parkway and adjacent parks. Under his leadership and decades of work, the Yahara Parkway underpass for East Johnson Street and East Washington Avenue was completed. Pedestrians and cyclists no longer had to dodge cars to cross these arterial streets through the Isthmus.

The Friend of the Yahara Parkway have a long list of accomplishments under Ed's leadership. Please see attached project timelines

Ed Jepsen's Guiding Principals

- Get your hands dirty.
- Keep learning.
- Share what you know.
- Be respectful.
- Bring joy.
- Notice beauty. (And create it.)

He lived these principals by being actively engaged, doing the hard work and embracing: inclusivity, coalition building, his role as an educator, active listening but never giving up. Ed would take the long approach to make sure that the final project was understood and accepted by all stakeholders. In the end, even the skeptics understood why decisions were made and worked with Ed.

Ed was an educator and mentor to so many. Even though the project was “completed,” and Ed had moved to the west side, former neighbors and parks dept staff would regularly reach out to Ed to gain his insight or hear his thoughts about issues or projects in Madison Parks.

“Ed and I worked together for many years on the commission's Long-range Parks Planning Committee. When you worked with Ed, there were things you could always count on: He seldom missed a meeting; he came well prepared with good tough questions; he was a thoughtful, considerate listener, especially in dealing with people he might disagree with; and he had a fine dry wit that kept meetings from ever getting too contentious.

In essence, Steady Ed was a wonderful example of a "public servant" who didn't really care about the glory or the praise. He just wanted to get good things done, for his neighborhood and for his city.”

Dave Wallner, Former 2nd District Alder

Please see attached quotes.

A life devoted to conservation and love of nature

His life-long dedication to the appreciation and conservation of, not only Madison's parks and green spaces, but the entire State of Wisconsin and beyond.

Ed devoted his life to land conservation and stewardship of our natural resources. Ed also committed the majority of his philanthropy to conservation, donating regularly to more than 20 environmental groups.

Ed loved his 37 years of working for the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources with a focus on conservation, resource management and stewardship. He was responsible for longitudinal plant studies related to climate change and traveled extensively in the Midwest to gather data on ozone impacts.

Natural stewardship and respect for our natural places was not just a job, or a volunteer opportunity, it was a way of life. Ed's spirit needed nature. Wherever he was, he loved to seek out and explore the

highest peak. Ed was revered by nieces and nephews as "the nature app" for his extensive knowledge of fauna, flora, geology and history.

Ed was happiest in nature., he was always on the lookout for a good sunset and would drive far and stay up late to witness eclipses, strawberry moons, and northern lights, etc. Ed loved all peaceful outdoor activities; fishing, hiking, canoeing, snowshoeing, kayaking, camping, native gardening, and cross country skiing.

“It seems everyone who knew Ed praised not only all he accomplished, but how much they enjoyed working with him. He wanted parks – beautiful parks – for everyone to enjoy. He always came prepared. He had strong opinions, but he listened and respected other points of view. He could lighten a tense moment with his quick wit. And he was recklessly kind. Because that’s just “The Ed Jepsen Way.”

Kristin Groth, Kira and Andrew Jepsen, Ed’s wife and children

Please find attached:

Project Timeline

Quotes about Ed

Capital Times Article

Letter of Support from the family

Letter of support from the Tenney Lapham Neighborhood Association

6th District Alder

Letter from the Marquette Neighborhood Association.

Letter read at Ed’s celebration of life by the Friends of the Yahara River Parkway.