

## **SUPERINTENDENT'S DECEMBER 2024 REPORT**

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

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

Fall went by quickly this year as the leaves are off the trees and we have ice forming on the water already. The end of November's temperatures were significantly below average and the sustained freezing provides some optimism for a coming winter season of outdoor recreation. The team is prepared to operate our ice rinks and corresponding rental concessions. If the weather over the next three weeks plays out as forecast and longer-term averages, it seems possible, perhaps even probable, we will have skateable rinks over the Holiday break from school, which is always our goal.

The Rennebohm Water Play project is moving forward to bidding in the next month. The cost profile of the planned project has changed as we have worked to make sure it is fun and engaging area that can be considered for replication in other areas of the City. The increased cost is being handled in partnership with the Foundation adding additional Capital support and the Parks Division using available resources to help. This keeps a long-term maintenance fund with the Foundation to take care of this asset. This is an important step in our strategy to gain private support for ongoing maintenance concerns for the system.

A number of other big projects are continuing to progress as we move into the winter season. Tenney Beach House, WPCRC expansion, Country Grove shelter, and Door Creek shelter projects are all on track and we are excited to see them opening over the next year. Golf ended the year with over 160K rounds and over \$5.5 million in revenue. Certainly, a record revenue year, and likely a record rounds year as well. Golf's work at Yahara for the revamping of the 18-hole course continues to progress as well. See below for how Construction, along with many other sections of Parks, is helping to make this revamp a true internal partnership between multiple sections. I would strongly recommend visiting Yahara this winter, especially if we get to skiing weather, as there are some really nice oaks that are much more visible due to ongoing land management work as a part of the project.

#### Future Commission Items

- Budget – The City Council Adopted the 2025 Budget with limited changes from 2024 for the Parks Division. This continuation of services was made possible by the fact that the referendum for operating funding was successful. The one significant change was the inclusion of the Pay to Park in Parks Pilot Program (see next bullet).
- Pay to Park in Parks Pilot – Finance Committee [Amendment #2](#) passed and was included in the Operating Budget that the Council Adopted in November. The amendment creates a Pay to Park in Parks Pilot program. An amendment has been introduced to eliminate the pilot program from the Budget. This would create a \$23,900 budgetary gap that the Parks Division would be expected to manage internally. This amendment failed at the Finance Committee on December 2<sup>nd</sup>. It will go to the Council on December 10<sup>th</sup>. Until there is clarity regarding the outcome of this potential amendment, staff will not be working on this further. I would expect an update to the Commission in January.

- Alcohol in Parks – Council President Figueroa Cole has requested that we provide a briefing on the regulation of Alcohol in Parks. Staff is working to assemble historical information as well as current data on this issue. This is taking a little longer than originally planned as we did lose some significant institutional knowledge when former Ranger Supervisor Vroman left the City. We do anticipate providing this report in January or February.
- Marshall Houses – Parks staff continues to work with Real Estate and the City Attorney's Office to engage with the property owners of the historic homes in Marshall Park. The goal is to bring an update and potential options for moving forward to the Commission in the next couple of months.
- POSP Update – Parks staff is planning to provide an update on the POSP progress to the full BPC in January. The LRP subcommittee has been working diligently on this over the past six months.
- Olin Houses – Staff are working on a management plan for the Olin Houses as we acquire them. We own three of the houses at this point and would like to have a management strategy in place moving forward. The current plan on the three is working towards demolition on one home, extending the lease on a second, and evaluating options with Real Estate on the third. We do anticipate buying more of these and it would be good to begin developing the plan for holding strategy. We are hopeful to have a plan in place in 2025. Given the condition of the one home and imminent demolition this issue is less pressing than we anticipated earlier in the year.

## Section Updates

### Olbrich Botanical Gardens



**New Art Collaboration** – Stop by our Gift Shop on your next visit and you'll find an assortment of new products featuring a stunning piece of original artwork custom-made for Olbrich by Madison-based artist [Rae Senarighi Fine Art](#) (@transpainter on IG).

The design features a colorful explosion of flora - the artist's signature style - behind blocky white letters that read "OLBRICH BOTANICAL GARDENS". All flowers and foliage depicted are native to Wisconsin and were intentionally chosen for their importance to the local ecosystem and pollinators. Currently available products featuring the design

include long-sleeve t-shirts in adult sizes, mugs, stickers, tote bags, coasters, and patches.





• **Fall Plantings, Spring Blooms** – The last planting of the year in the Atwood Ave. median took place this month. Staff planted 1,100 bulbs including Allium 'Purple Sensation', *Allium schubertii* and Narcissus 'Sunlight Sensation'. Next spring, passersby will enjoy spring blooms in the middle of Atwood Avenue.

- **Holiday Train Express: Sugar Rush** – All aboard the “Sugar Rush” Holiday Express! This year’s theme, “Sugar Rush” turns the Atrium into a candy winter wonderland. Complimenting the sweet treats are a variety of unique poinsettias including Poinsettia ‘Candy Bubblegum’, ‘J’adore Soft Pink’, ‘Biancaneve White’ and ‘Princettia Sparkling Rose’. The show opens on December 6 and runs through December 31, 2024.



## Community Services Report December 2024 – Terrence Thompson

### Community Events (Kelly Post)

- Community Event staff are wrapping up 2024 with a few permitted winter events, invoicing, and payment collections.
- We are also finalizing some updates to the Street Use Ordinance (MGO 10.056). These amendments would allow Street Use Permits to be reviewed by City staff administratively, instead of a formal “Street Use Staff Commission.” This should result in more efficient communication, more accurate applications, and better planning for event organizers and City staff.
- We look forward to 2025 and working with all the amazing events and organizers that help make Madison a special place to live.

## **Parks Alive (Debra Alleyne)**

### **Government Alliance on Race & Equity (GARE) Conference**

- Parks Equity Team members joined several City staff at the annual GARE Membership Meeting in St Louis, MO, from November 20-22, 2024. This conference, consisting of 4,000 equity practitioners from across the country, proved very useful. Several sessions discussed case studies and successful programs aimed at youth engagement and violence reduction, which is an essential part of the Parks Alive program.

### **Fall Parks Alive:**

- Fall Parks Alive has successfully concluded. The Parks Alive staff and the Park Rangers scheduled three events on November 11th, 13th, and 18th at the Revival Ridge Community Room (Allied), Warner Park Community Recreation Center (Warner), and Elver Park. Unfortunately, we canceled the Elver event due to inclement weather.

Attendees enjoyed a variety of indoor and outdoor activities. Indoors, our naturalist presented on pumpkin harvesting and seed storage, and there was an art activity. The Astronomy Club also gave an engaging presentation on celestial sights.

Outside, the Wisconsin Bike Federation taught kids how to ride and provided bike safety tips, while the Astronomy Club set up telescopes for stargazing and exploring planetary formations.

As usual, we had a DJ, free food, and warm cider for everyone to enjoy. Approximately 75 participants attended the event at Allied, while 35 participated at Warner.

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

### **Winter Recreation**

- Door Creek will begin winter operations starting in 2025. We are currently obtaining quotes for equipment. We will offer concessions and rent skis and snowshoes.
- We have conducted several interviews for winter and special event attendant positions. We will continue hiring for these roles throughout the rest of the month and into the winter season, with multiple candidates being considered for both positions.
- Weather permitting, Elver, Odana, Tenney, and Vilas will open on Saturday, December 21, unless we are able to open sooner.
- We are planning winter special events including Groove and Glide, Candlelight Walk, Candlelight Hike, Winter Prom, Learn 2 Serie XC Ski, Skate Cinema, and Winter Clothing Drive.



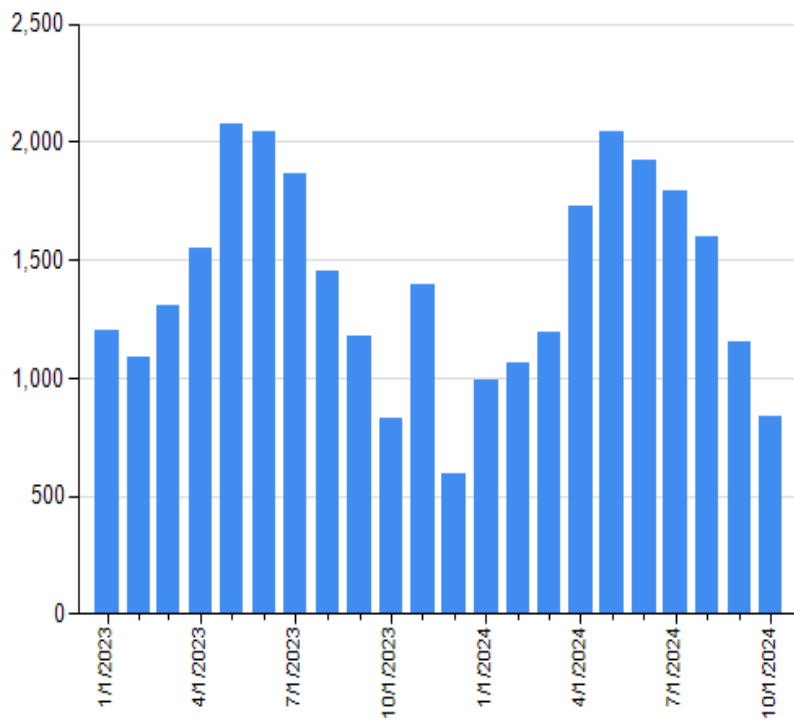
**Customer Service (Joanne Austin)**

**Incoming Customer Service Calls:**

- The incoming call volume continues to follow the trend observed in previous years. As illustrated in the graph and table, the number of calls received tends to drop significantly, typically beginning in August each year. We anticipate a surge in calls in early November when we start taking shelter reservations for the following year. However, call volume is expected to remain low until March and April, when the reservation season begins. So far, in 2024, we have received 14,312 calls, which

Period	Calls	Minutes
2023-01	1,198	1,668
2023-02	1,091	1,870
2023-03	1,309	2,560
2023-04	1,552	3,342
2023-05	2,079	4,423
2023-06	2,044	3,649
2023-07	1,861	3,266
2023-08	1,452	2,758
2023-09	1,180	2,309
2023-10	827	1,304
2023-11	1,394	1,610
2023-12	591	848
2024-01	993	1,318
2024-02	1,061	2,330
2024-03	1,190	2,520
2024-04	1,725	4,092
2024-05	2,039	4,058
2024-06	1,924	3,700
2024-07	1,794	3,755
2024-08	1,601	3,200
2024-09	1,151	2,170
2024-10	834	1,523

**Incoming Calls by Month**



amounts to over 477 hours

spent on the phone with customers.

**2025 Permits (Disc Golf, Dog, Lake Access, and Cross Country Ski)**

- On November 1, customer service staff began processing 2025 shelter reservation requests, and we also started selling 2025 permits on the same day. An email notification was sent to previous permit holders, and we have already seen many 2025 annual permits purchased. Any annual permits purchased at this time will be valid until their expiration dates: Disc, Dog, and Ski permits are valid through December 31, 2026, while Lake Access permits are valid through March 31, 2026.

## 2025 Shelter Reservations

- On November 1, 2024, we started processing shelter reservations for 2025. 115 reservations were made that day, with 65 completed online and 50 processed by staff over the phone or at the front counter. For each reservation, we ask how many participants are expected to attend. The 115 reservations made on November 1 will account for over 9,300 attendees and 953 park use hours. The most popular reserved shelters on this opening day were as follows:

Rank	Park	Reservations	Share
1	Highland Manor	20	17%
2	Olin Pavilion	19	17%
3	Gates of Heaven	15	13%
4	John Wall Pavilion	11	10%
5	Vilas	11	10%

## Rangers & Volunteers

### Rangers (Steve Dray)

### Community Outreach

- Rangers Grant and Gibbons assisted Ranger Filla in launching the Junior Ranger program, which had its inaugural meeting at the Parks Alive event on Monday, November 11. They held a follow-up meeting on Wednesday, November 13. This marked an excellent kickoff for what we hope will be a successful initiative to educate children about nature, conservation, and safety.

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### Elver Disc Golf Update

- Park users enjoyed their time at the Elver Disc Golf Course, especially with the newly redesigned holes 2-4. However, the season has ended, and it is time to close Elver for the year. All hands were on deck for the removal of the 36 baskets. We are thankful for our equipment and grateful to our hard-working Rangers who made it happen.

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- Hiestand Disc Golf Course will be open for the winter of 2024-2025 for those who can't play enough disc golf during the warmer seasons. Preparation work has begun to make the course winter-ready.

## **Volunteers (John Weichelt)**

### **Volunteer Events**

- We organized a three-day buckthorn clearing event in November with the HCST group at Hiestand and Door Creek parks. Each day, 11 volunteers worked for three hours.



- Helped organize the PARR 3 meeting and gave a presentation on the important role of volunteers in the parks.
- Collaborated with the Friends of Owen Park to launch a new event pilot program called Green Friday, which is scheduled for November 29. This event will feature a cleanup at Garner Park.
- On November 9th, the monthly cleanup at Brittingham Park reached a new record, with 57 volunteers participating to clean the water's edges. This successful cleanup is now being regarded as a model to replicate in other parks that need attention.



## **Volunteer Program Development:**

- We are continuing to enhance the volunteer management website. Current efforts include integrating a foundational waiver, implementing background check procedures, and posting available volunteer opportunities.
- Additionally, we have clarified the equipment usage policies, particularly concerning the use of chainsaws by certified volunteers.

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

- October's Halloween Family Fun Night (FFN) welcomed over 350 community members to our 3rd annual Spooky Halloween event. Attendees enjoyed outdoor activities, including a movie, hayrides, food trucks, a bonfire with s'mores, a trunk-or-treat, and family fun inside the WPCRC featuring a costume contest.
- WPCRC Expansion Update: Steel delivery for the expansion project is delayed due to the review process coming in later than anticipated. The project schedule is being reworked to accommodate the delay, and construction may tentatively move inside to begin the Men's/Women's Locker Room/bathroom remodel. We will have a more concrete plan shared on December 11th.
- The 25th Annual WPCRC Holiday Fest Arts and Crafts Show was held on Saturday, December 7th, 2024, from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. Over 80 vendors registered, and another 40 were on the waiting list. The event hosted over 1,500 shoppers as we enter the holiday season.

## **Operations**

### **Central**

- Mulched leaves and cleared parking lots of leaves prior to rainfall events.
- Ice Rink Structures have been set: board stakes at Vilas and Nice Rink frame at Franklin Field.
- Hay Wagon Rides in Parks have been ongoing with the final ones in November.
- planted over 200 of the 306 total trees this fall
- Planted many of the extra plugs from lakeside with volunteers at Nakoma, Tenney and Warner.
- Performed herbicide treatments to reed canary grass, Tree of heaven and oriental bittersweet.

### **Conservation**

- Prescribed burns on a total of 20 acres of prairie habitat at Cherokee Marsh North and South Units. This has been the extent of our fall burn season.
- The Operation Fresh Start crew worked on removing invasive shrubs from the shoreline of Acewood Pond, and installed bat boxes provided by ANR Pipeline at Edna Taylor.
- Volunteers controlled buckthorn at Cherokee Marsh Mendota Unit, Owen, Prairie Ridge, and Turville Point, and controlled burdock and mullein at Owen.



- Construction
- Playground work included removing the old playground from Manchester Park, new handrails on the playground at Oak Park Heights, adding mulch to Tenney playground, and continued work at Olbrich nature play site including slides and a climbing structure created from Park trees.
- Dug 3 new bunkers at Yahara golf.
- Installed new gates at Hoyt Park.

### East Parks

- Performed clearance and structural pruning of trees.
- Performed maintenance pruning and cutback along bike paths, on the perimeter of some parks and sidewalks
- Completed winter preparations for snow, ice, and recreation.

### Facilities

- A 300-gallon gas tank was removed and replaced with a new double walled tank at Tenney Park MSCR Pontoon Rentals. The surrounding chain link fence was also repaired.
- Fishing and boat launch piers were removed for winter.
- Wood playground border was installed for the nature play playground at Olbrich – Lakeland.

### Mall Concourse

- Continued leaf cleanup and tree pruning for snow routes clearances.
- Calibrated all salt applying equipment.
- Installed winter decor projects including the iconic snowflake lights.

### West

- Performed Walking Sprints Tours prep at Forest Hill Cemetery.
- Planted trees with Ecology Team.
- Supported neighborhood Halloween events with table delivery and trash services.