

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

APRIL 2026

COMMUNICATIONS TO BOARD OF PARK COMMISSIONERS

Park Superintendent's Monthly Report Summary

Spring is always one of the busiest times of year for the Madison Parks Team, and this no exception! The seasonal operational changes are nearly complete and the team will soon begin mowing operations. Planning is well underway for all of the amazing things that will happen across the park system this summer. Staff are busy assisting organizers who are excited to book their reservations and get their permits in place for the many events and activities. The team is planning several major events for April, including Earth Day Challenge and Bird and Nature Festival. All four golf courses are now officially open for the season. Hiring and onboarding of all seasonal hourly staff is well underway also.

The Park Development Plan process for Southeast and Southwest Areas is moving forward, as multiple public engagement meetings have been conducted, with just a few remaining. Staff are beginning to incorporate feedback received thus far. Along with the 50 Park Development Plans from the Southeast & Southwest Areas, the Commission will soon be briefed on the Hartmeyer Roth Park Development Plan. The Madison LakeWay design for the initial phase is nearing completion and the project continues to move forward the late summer bidding timeline.

Olbrich Botanical Gardens hosted the final public engagement meetings in Mid-March, and staff are working with the consultant team to compile all feedback received into a refined plan. In the next month, the Commission will be briefed on the Olbrich Botanical Gardens Comprehensive Master Plan.

Plans for the Odana Golf Course and Park Redevelopment continue to move forward at a very rapid pace. Staff and the design teams will be hosting a virtual public information meeting on April 30. In the meantime, a survey is available online for any wishing to participate and provide their thoughts on how they use the spaces now and would like to use them in the future. Staff continue to collaborate with other City agencies, as well as key stakeholders and neighborhood associations who are interested in supporting the project.

Please take a moment over the coming month to get out and explore your favorite parks or find new favorites! The landscape is changing every day.

Future Commission Items

- Alcohol in Parks Policy
- Olin Houses
- Marshall Houses

Personnel Updates

Promotions/Hires:

- Tyr Severson was hired as a Parks Worker with the Mall Concourse team. Tyr's first day was March 16, 2026.
- Andrew Shea was promoted from Parks Seasonal Laborer to a Parks Worker at with the Mall Concourse team. with the Mall Concourse team. Andrew's first day was March 16, 2026.

Departures:

- Jonathan Sutherland resigned from his position as Facility Maintenance Worker at Olbrich Botanical Gardens. His last day was February 28, 2026.
- Joanne Austin will be retiring from her position as Parks Administrative Supervisor. After 25 years of service with the City of Madison and 21 years with Madison Parks, her last day will be May 8, 2026. Her work with the Parks Division and especially with the Board of Park Commissioners has been incredibly important and we will miss her.

Section Updates

Community Services Section (Terrence Thompson)

Community Events (Kelly Post)

- The new Special Event webpages launched on March 24. We collaborated with IT and the Park's Public Information Officer to train on the City's new web software and to update all event-permitting pages. The redesigned site is more user-friendly, allowing us to make updates directly and enhancing our efficiency.
- We are concluding interviews for the new Youth Engagement Coordinator position and anticipate announcing a new hire soon. We anticipate the new staff member will start on April 27, 2026. Additionally, we have hired an AASPIRE Youth Engagement Intern to support this role for the year.

- Spring is one of our team’s busiest seasons, as we respond to event organizers’ questions before applications are submitted. During this time, we often coordinate with 50-75 organizers simultaneously and work diligently to provide prompt replies to keep applications on track.

Parks Alive (Debra Alleyne)

- *Bolstering Parks Alive Onsite Support:* We have started reaching out to neighborhood associations to increase the number of on-site supporters for the program. We are educating them about Parks Alive and encouraging their participation. Additionally, we have had discussions that may lead to future collaborations. Increasing neighborhood participation is a long-term goal for the program, and this year we are taking initial steps to secure more investment from community members.
- *AASPIRE Interns:* The AASPIRE intern team has decided to support Parks Alive by assigning each intern a shift this year. Based on feedback from last year, the interns found the experience to be enriching and informative. Our goal is to incorporate this initiative into the program for the current year, which should account for approximately 30 shifts throughout the summer.

Customer Service (Joanne Austin)

- Watercraft storage agreements for 2026 begin on April 1st, while those for 2025 ended on March 15th. Watercraft storage agreements not renewed have been tagged by Rangers for removal. Customers on the waitlist have been contacted.
- Since the opening of the Door Creek Shelter, we have observed an increase in athletic reservations at the park.

Recreation Services & Aquatics

Recreation Services (Tracey Hartley)

- *Dog Park Clean-Up on Saturday, April 11:* Staff will provide tools for cleaning up waste and trash at various city-owned dog parks. After the clean-up, staff will collect the trash and sanitize the equipment.
- *Earth Day Challenge on Saturday, April 26:* Staff will supply tools and equipment to over 50 city parks for volunteers to help clean up trash. After the event, staff will remain at their last park to assist with clean-up and will return later to gather the trash and equipment for disposal.
- *Bird and Nature Fest on Sunday, April 27:* The Bird and Nature Fest at WPCRC is the largest event of its kind in the city. It features live music, demonstrations, and numerous activities for children.

Aquatics (Shane Martin)

- Pre-season planning for Aquatics is underway. Schedules have been finalized with all groups at the pool, including the Goodman Waves Swim and Dive Team, the McFarland Sharks, and MSCR.
- Interviews for Lifeguards and Attendants are ramping up. The job posting for Lifeguards was removed on March 23 to avoid overstaffing this year. We do not anticipate any staff shortages this year.
- The Goodman Pool is set to open on Thursday, June 11, weather permitting, and this will also mark its 20th anniversary.

Rangers & Volunteers

Rangers (Steve Dray)

- *Enforcement Contacts:* In February, Rangers conducted 25 enforcement contacts, resulting in 17 warnings, 6 citations, and 2 behavioral bans.
- *Disc Golf:* Both disc golf courses are currently closed, but we anticipate they will open in late April. We are excited to announce the installation of brand-new disc golf baskets, which should arrive within the next few weeks. This upgrade will greatly enhance the courses.
- *Equipment & Training:* Lost Dogs of Wisconsin generously donated four pet microchip scanners to the Park Ranger work unit. Rangers received training on using the microchip scanners, as well as related policies and procedures. This equipment will enhance our ability to investigate lost or abandoned pets in the parks.
- *Recruitment/Hiring:* We have selected four new Hourly Park Rangers for the 2026 season, who are scheduled to start the second week of April. Additionally, our new full-time Park Ranger will begin work in the last week of March. Interviews for the hybrid Parking Enforcement/Park Ranger position took place last week.
- *Encampment Abatement:* The Parks Operations team assisted Rangers in the cleanup of an encampment we had been coordinating with the occupant on for several months. We are also developing abatement plans for another abandoned encampment in an east-side conservation park.

Volunteers (John Weichelt)

- *Earth Day Challenge Finalization and Scale:* The logistics for the Earth Day event on April 25 have been finalized, which include 46 supply drop-off sites and 12 staffed pickup locations across the city. Additionally, we have coordinated extra service opportunities for Earth Week leading up to the event. Corporate and community groups will total up to 300 participants who will help support parks outside of the main Saturday activities.

- *Garden Program Growth and Expansion:* We completed the spring plant ordering process, totaling 24 orders, a significant increase in participation. The program has expanded beyond traditional flower beds to include conservation and restoration areas, introducing new sites and enhancing the ecological impact of our volunteer gardening efforts.
- *Spring Event and Recurring Volunteer Program Development:* We are advancing our planning for Dog Park activities on April 4 and the Bird and Nature Fest on April 26. We have also organized disc golf cleanup efforts at Hiestand Park on March 28 and Elver Park on April 11. Additionally, we are continuing to build a strong network of recurring volunteer opportunities, including monthly efforts at Blair Street Gardens, Elver Park, Tenney Beach, and various Park Friend-adopted sites. Our focus remains on establishing consistent and repeatable engagement opportunities that extend through the spring, summer, and fall.

Warner Park Community Recreation Center (Zach Watson)

- The hoops, backstops, curtain, and mechanical components for the Green Gym will be delivered and installed by Carroll Seating between April 6, 2026, and April 10, 2026. This installation will finalize the major equipment upgrades planned for the space.
- Floor refinishing for the Green Gym is scheduled to begin on April 13, 2026, and will be ready for light foot traffic by April 29, 2026. This work ensures the area can be fully utilized once all equipment is operational by May 24, 2026, aligning it with the standards of the recently updated Blue Gym.
- Additionally, the Madison Parks Foundation has equipped the WPCRC kitchen with brand-new commercial-grade appliances, significantly enhancing the space. These upgrades will allow the KNOW Program partnership with the Madison Parks Foundation to serve more community members and expand hands-on cooking opportunities for youth.

Olbrich Botanical Gardens (Tanya Zastrow)

- *Comprehensive & Interpretive Plan Update:* We hosted 3 public meetings for the comprehensive master plan. They included two in-person public meetings on March 17th and one virtual meeting on March 19th. The meetings included an online survey which asked for thoughts on the two design scenarios. The survey closed on April 3, 2026 and had over 500 responses. In addition to the meetings, staff are attending neighborhood meetings and conducting a pop-up at Breese's Stevens Field.
- *Tree Pruning:* Parks Arborists assisted in tree pruning throughout the outdoor gardens in early April. They provide valuable expertise, skills, and equipment for tree pruning in the gardens.
- *Bolz Conservatory Pruning:* The Bolz Conservatory undergoes an extensive tree pruning every March due to the tree canopy reaching the glass. The pruning is necessary for the health of the plants and to keep the plants appropriately sized for the space.
- *Sherman & Friend:* Sherman the turkey was spotted in the gardens recently with a friend.



Planning & Development (Adam Kaniewski)

Planning and Development staff have been very busy over the past month. As spring arrives, so does construction season and staff have been busy coordinating the start of construction of numerous projects in addition to continuing to move forward with design, permitting, and contracting for projects expected to begin later during the year or in 2027. P&D staff are also working hard to prepare the Parks Capital Improvement Plan budget request for submission to the Mayor's office in mid-April. The team is also excited to welcome back AASPIRE Intern Gabrielle Murphy in the same role. She returned on March 30. Planning and Development plans to hire a second AASPIRE Intern this year, expected to start in early June.

Parks Capital Projects - Design

- Work has been occurring at lighting speed for the [Odana Hills Golf Course and Park renovation project](#). While the work has been a true team effort with parks management, golf staff, and other City agencies, P&D staff have been assisting with

the project, particularly the park and new clubhouse portion. The role of P&D staff assistance has included obtaining a design consultant, identifying the project schedule, providing information and input to the consultant team, creating the public online survey, obtaining a land survey and wetland delineation for the property, and preparing public notice materials for the public meeting scheduled for April 30 in virtual format.

- Design is underway for a reimagined [Cypress Spray Park](#). The project will include full replacement and reimagining of the splashpad and playground. A public input meeting is scheduled on April 20 across from the park at Centro Hispano. The goal for start of construction is fall 2026.
- Staff engaged with a structural engineering consultant to evaluate settling issues at the Warner Park Boat Launch Restrooms. Due to the extent of needed repairs, City Engineering – Facilities Management will be overseeing the project with assistance from P&D staff.
- Proposals were received in response to an RFP for the design of the [Warner Park Southeast Recreation Area](#). A panel of staff have been evaluating the proposals and expect to award a contract in late April.
- Design and community engagement for the next round of playground replacements continues. In March, the second public meetings were held for [Orton Park](#), [James Madison Park](#), [Marshall Park](#), [Heifetz Park](#), and [Newbery Park](#).
- Preliminary design has begun for the Haen Family Park Sun Shelter Replacement, Paunack Park Sun Shelter Replacement, Reindahl Park Inclusive Playground, Garner Park Parking Lot Reconstruction, Marshall Park Boat Launch Reconstruction, and Carpenter-Ridgeway Singletrack projects. Construction for each project is anticipated to occur in 2027.
- Staff have been working to prepare a RFP for consultant design services for the Olbrich Park – North Parcel project while also preparing materials to submit for a Brownfields grant through the Wisconsin Economic Development Commission.

[Parks Capital Projects – Construction](#)

- Demolition of the single family house located at 354 E Lakeside St., began on March 30. The property was purchased by parks in 2024 for an expansion of Olin Park. The property will be restored with an aggregate path, seating area, native plantings, and some turf area.
- Replacement of the [artificial turf at Breese Stevens Field](#) continues and is expected to be complete by May 1.

- Bids were received for the [Warner Park Pickleball](#) and [Worthington Park Futsal](#) projects on April 2. Parks staff has recommended bid award and expect it will be awarded by Common Council at their April 21 meeting. Construction is anticipated to begin in May and be completed by September 4.
- Construction has begun for the playground replacement at [Kennedy](#) Park and will be followed by [Sandburg](#) Park, [Ontario](#) Park, and [Skyview](#) Park. Construction of all four playgrounds is expected to be complete by August 14.
- The [Olin Park Pedestrian Bridge](#) is currently being fabricated and the new bridge is expected to be installed in late April or early May. The existing bridge has been closed since early 2025 due to sever corrosion of steel supports.

[Park Planning](#)

- Staff have been holding a series of Public Input Meetings to receive input for Park Development Plans for the 50 neighborhood and mini parks in the [southeast](#) and [southwest](#) areas. Meetings are being held by Alder District. Meetings have been held four out of six Alder Districts so far.
- The first public input meeting for [Hartmeyer-Roth Park will](#) be held on April 14, virtually.
- P&D staff have been working to engage with a Geomorphologist consultant to perform work in accordance with the Vilas Park Cultural Resources Report.

[Development Review / Park Impact Fees](#)

- A consultant has been selected to provide services to update the Needs Assessment, which was last updated in 2016. This work is expected to take place throughout the remainder of 2026 and into early 2027.
- In the month of March staff completed reviews of 16 development projects and coordinated and processed 13 separate Park Impact Fee payments totaling about \$120,000.