

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

JULY 2026

COMMUNICATIONS TO BOARD OF PARK COMMISSIONERS

Park Superintendent's Monthly Report Summary

July is Parks & Recreation Month, and with so much happening in Madison Parks, it's a great time to get out and explore! The Operations team is busy supporting events and making sure parks are in great shape for everyone.

Summer programming is well underway. [Parks Alive](#) is in full swing, and I encourage you to take a moment to check out at least one of the neighborhood events over the course of the summer. The inaugural Southside Park Programming is underway with programming at the Goodman Community Pool and surrounding park, as well as weekly Nights at Wright in partnership with Wright Middle School through July 30. Warner Park Community Recreation Center began hosting summer basketball camps. The [Ribbon Cutting and Grand Reopening Ceremony](#) for the WPCRC expansion project is scheduled for July 8, 2026.

Olbrich Botanical Gardens was recently recognized as a nominee for the Governor's Outdoor Industry Tandem Award for Collaboration. While not selected as the winner of the award, the award highlighted the partnership between the Olbrich Botanical Society and the City and recognized the role that Olbrich plays in outdoor recreation.

The Golf Enterprise Program is having a great year. Over 52,100 rounds of golf have been played so far this season, just slightly behind 2025's record Rounds and Revenue numbers, which was to be expected with the reduction of 18 holes at Yahara Hills Golf Course. The program continues to exceed adopted budget targets and the team is working hard to provide quality playing conditions. Yahara improvements are progressing nicely and are expected to be complete by the end of the year, including new cart path installations that will begin in the next month or so.

Staff are in the process of preparing the Parks Division's Agency request for the 2027 Operating Budget. The baseline budget allows for continuation of services at the same level as the 2026 Operating Budget. However, all agencies have been asked to submit a 2% budget reduction proposal, which if selected by the Mayor, would result in a reduction in services. The Parks Team is being mindful of equity implications as we are evaluating options that will have less negative consequences on the fewest amount of park users.

Personnel Updates

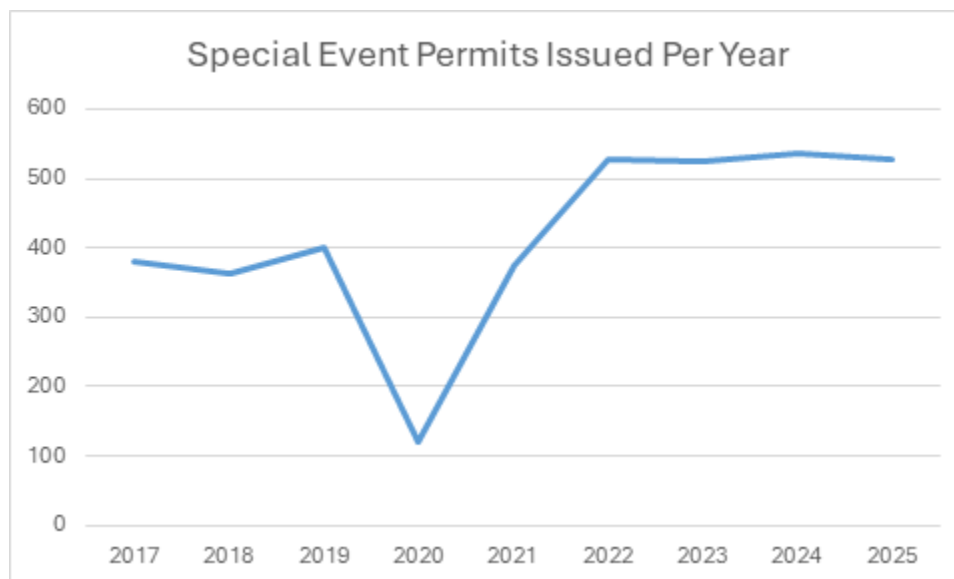
- No personnel updates this month.

Section Updates

Community Services Section (Terrence Thompson)

Community Events (Kelly Post)

- June remains our busiest month for park event permits — we've been averaging around 60 permits in June alone, which is about 30% of what we issue all year. That level of activity in a single month puts real pressure on staff and requires a lot of coordination to keep things moving and maintain our high level of customer service.
- Since the pandemic, permit volume has climbed significantly — we're now averaging over 500 permits a year, up from around 375 before, an increase of more than 33%. We're taking a closer look at what that means for workload and staffing to ensure we can keep up with demand without impacting access to Parks and customer service levels.



Customer Service (Kevin Goke)

- Peak season is in full swing: 173 graduation reservations were completed, 412/441 watercraft storage spaces are sold, and Highland Manor shelter is nearly fully booked with just 7 Saturdays left available in 2026.
- Athletic reservations are active and up this season; the team has developed a new proactive communication approach that now gives customers earlier notice when Parks cancels fields, setting clearer expectations around user-discretion reservations during a stretch of increased weather cancellations.
- The Customer Service team is cross-training within its ranks to manage peak-season demands while down one staff member. It continues to extend that support beyond their own section — including significant time spent assisting Goodman Pool staff and helping customers navigate WebTrac account access.

Parks Alive (Debra Alleyne)

- Miles Coppage joins us this season as the Parks Alive AASPIRE intern, pursuing a Master's in Public Policy with interests in community engagement, equity, and music performance; K'Shawne Neal joins us as the Wanda Fulmore intern, a high school senior who enjoys the outdoors and physical activity.
- In 2026, Parks Alive has partnered with AASPIRE so that all 22 City interns will rotate through Parks Alive shifts as part of their community service component, broadening community engagement opportunities across departments and helping to meet the on-site staffing needs that make events safe and successful.
- The Madison Dane County Violence Prevention Coalition met on June 17; Public Health has completed a revamped violence prevention roadmap, which is expected to be released later this year. This violence prevention roadmap is integral to Parks Alive's programming approach.
- The new roadmap is expected to include an expanded role for parks and the Parks Division in violence prevention recommendations; details are pending as new data are released.

Goodman Pool & Southside Youth Engagement (Lauren Travis)

- The Summer Nights at Wright weekly youth program takes place on Thursdays from June 25 through July 30 at Wright Middle School. The program provides activities, music, food, engagement, and safe spaces for south side youth.
- Since Goodman Pool opened on June 12, we have maintained a regular on-site presence four days per week (Monday-Wednesday and Friday from 2pm-6pm), focusing on youth engagement, relationship-building, and fostering a positive and

welcoming environment. An AASPIRE intern has also joined these efforts and is developing structured engagement activities for youth at the pool.

- We will continue to expand collaborations with community partners, including Focused Interruption, Public Health Madison & Dane County's Office of Violence Prevention, Commonwealth Development, Madison Police Department, Madison School & Community Recreation (MSCR), and Legacy Protection Services. Additionally, we are participating in bi-weekly violence prevention meetings with the Mayor's Office and community organizations to strengthen coordination, information sharing, and awareness of emerging community needs and trends to inform programming for south side youth.

Recreation Services & Aquatics

Rec Services

- There have been 16 events held from May to June 23, 2026. Highlights include:
 - Two Family Fun Nights at the Warner Park Community Recreation Center.
 - A Flower Garden Pickup for volunteers planting flowers in parks on Wednesday, May 13.
 - Five movie screenings.
 - A ribbon-cutting ceremony for Country Grove Park on Thursday, May 21.
 - Staff members were present at Law and Brittingham Parks for Bike Week and helped promote Ride The Drive.
 - Gratitude in Nature featuring goats on Sunday, June 7.
- Planning for Ride The Drive is progressing well. The event is set for Sunday, August 9.

Aquatics

- The majority of the public has received the new entry policy well.
- Aquatics staff dedicated six Staff Assistance Days to helping members of the public sign up and address questions about the new policies and procedures.
- We have encountered numerous technical issues and have worked diligently to resolve them. We have created a How-To manual for the Attendant Staff to address the most common issues, and the Aquatics Management Team is managing the less common and more complex issues.
- When multiple issues arise or wait times are longer than normal, we have implemented a system to expedite the process and move the line along more quickly.
- The new Youth Engagement Coordinator has spent several days at the pool, and Focused Interruption Coalition has been present at Goodman Pool.

Rangers & Volunteers

Rangers (Steve Dray)

- **Enforcement Contacts:** Rangers had 95 enforcement contacts in June, resulting in 33 warnings, 37 citations, and 25 behavioral bans. Rangers also issued 20 parking citations.
- **Disc Golf:** Rangers and operations continue to make improvements to the Elver and Hiestand disc golf courses. There have been many comments on the new baskets, and the signage throughout the courses is being updated as well.
- **Jr. Ranger Program:** Rangers hosted a Jr. Ranger - Water Safety Day event in conjunction with MSCR at the Warner Park lagoon on Friday, June 5th. Rangers love helping kids engage with nature through teaching and hands-on activities. Everyone involved learned a lot and had a great time.



- **Unhoused Response & Encampment Abatement:** Rangers have seen unprecedented numbers of unhoused individuals in parks. We have had over 119 contacts with unhoused individuals as of June 25. Just for context, year-to-date in 2025, there were 43 unhoused contacts, and in 2024, there were 28. Rangers, with the help of operations staff, cleaned up an abandoned encampment in an area of dense woods in the Hiestand disc golf course. Multiple loads of refuse and discarded property were removed from the park.
- **Bike Patrol:** As the weather gets nicer, the parks get busier and more crowded, making bike patrols in our centrally located parks a more valuable tool. Rangers trained in bike patrol completed five patrol shifts, totaling 58.1 miles and resulting in 9 enforcement contacts. Bike patrol is a great way to synergize community engagement with patrol and enforcement.

Volunteers (John Weichelt)

- Continued Ride the Drive recruitment through Bike Week outreach, radio promotion, volunteer sign-up materials, partner communication, and ongoing role planning for the August event.
- Supported summer volunteer roles across Parks Alive, goat checking, beach cleanups, invasive removal, garden support, and other seasonal needs by keeping postings updated and helping volunteers connect with current opportunities.
- Coordinated with beach cleanup leads to support recurring volunteer efforts, tool needs, and stronger volunteer presence at high-use lakefront parks, including Bernie's Beach and Vilas Beach.
- Continued Get Connected updates, role development, department coordination, and planning for expanded Citywide use of the volunteer software, now that the VPAT update is IT-approved.

Warner Park Community Recreation Center (Zach Watson)

- The K.N.O.W. Program partnership with the Madison Parks Foundation, launched its first summer basketball camps on June 15–16. The next sessions are scheduled for July 6–7, and registration is available online through our website.
- The renovation of the Green Gym was completed on Saturday, June 27. With this renovation finished, we will be expanding pickleball offerings. We will work with staff to set up additional availability, which will be reservable online.
- We have finalized the floor plans and buildout plans for the fitness center. This project, which includes the installation of walls, entrances, storefronts, and new equipment, is expected to be completed by the end of August.

Olbrich Botanical Gardens (Tanya Zastrow)



Figure 1: Sugar Ave during Summer Breeze Block Party

- **Summer Breeze Block Party** – For the first time, we collaborated with Garver Events on a Summer Breeze Block Party. This was a fusion of our popular Summer Breeze event with their Food Truck Friday event. The food trucks were placed along Sugar Avenue between Olbrich Botanical Gardens and Garver Feed Mill. Chalk designs brightened up Sugar Ave. For a small fee, guests could enter the gardens to enjoy a variety of activities, music, and crafts. The block party was a huge success with over 1400 tickets sold over the 2 days.
- **Coneflowers in Bloom!** – Before you even enter the Gardens, you will see 3 different species of coneflower blooming in the gravel gardens around our entrance. Tennessee coneflower (*Echinacea tennesseensis*), yellow coneflower (*Echinacea paradoxa*), and pale coneflower (*Echinacea pallida*) are all in bloom. You will also see the willowy pale pink flowers of pale coneflower (*Echinacea pallida*) in the Atwood Median.

- **Blooming Butterflies Returns:** The much-loved Blooming Butterflies returns July 15th and runs through August 9th. In preparation for the event, the Bolz Conservatory will be **closed July 13th & 14th**.

Operations (Chad Hughes)

Central

- Supported the annual Juneteenth celebration at Penn Park.
- Landscape Maintenance crew completed their spring planting list and have moved on to landscape bed maintenance. They have noticed that the native bed plantings installed within the last few years need less maintenance than traditional ornamental beds.
- The Land Steward Technicians worked on weed control in native areas using integrated pest management practices. Improvements in native diversity and invasive reduction have been noticed in some of the natural areas that they have been working on for the last few years.

Conservation

- Worked on invasive species control, including bird's-foot trefoil, crown vetch, dame's rocket, sweet clover and wild parsnip
- Re-vegetated recently cleared powerline right of way at Sandburg Woods.
- Hosted volunteer workdays at Acewood, Sandburg Woods, and Turville Point.

Construction

- Finished up work at Elver disc golf.
- Completed gate installs at Pilgrim Park and Spring Harbor beach.
- Installed concrete bench pads along with mounting the donor benches at Lerdahl, Hoyt, Sycamore, Yahara River, Walnut Grove and Olin Parks.
- Refurbished the boat launch at Brittingham park to allow Dane County ease of access for their weed harvesting equipment.

East Parks

- Mowed native planted medians on Packers Ave to control undesirable species.
- Parks Arborists have been cleaning up significant amounts of storm damage across the park system.
- We interviewed for and have chosen a candidate to fill the shared Parks & Traffic Engineering position.

Facilities

- Supported the Goodman Pool startup to ensure it was ready for opening day.
- Replaced outdoor lamps at Peace Park after safety concerns were raised.
- Repaired a vandalized Lake Front Porch table.
- Added fire extinguishers to outdoor fueling stations at 5 locations.

Mall Maintenance

- Downtown landscape lighting projects continued, with the 2 Bus Rapid Transit stations on State Street decorated with programmable lighting to join the already decorated Capitol Square BRT stations. The lights can be adjusted to current holiday themes, such as “green” and “red” lights for Juneteenth day, and “red” “white” and “blue” for the upcoming 4th of July holiday.
- Spring turf overseeding projects are coming to fruition. W. Washington turf islands were overseeded in the spring, and the grass seed has come in nicely this month, adding much needed color and grass to the unirrigated islands.
- Mall Maintenance worked with numerous other agencies regarding an unhoused encampment behind the Overture Center on Henry Street. The result producing a safer area downtown.

West Parks

- Supported Park events like Parks Alive and Summer Nights with table and trash/recycle receptacle delivery.
- Trained new seasonal staff on mowing, cleaning shelters, and other seasonal tasks.
- Attended training for Cemsites, the new cemetery management software system Forest Hill will be implementing this year.