

**COUNTY OF MILWAUKEE**  
Inter-Office Communication

Date: October 1, 2021

To: Marcelia Nicholson, Chairwoman, Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors

From: Guy Smith, Executive Director, Milwaukee County Parks

Subject: Authorization to Amend Chapter 47 of the Milwaukee County Code of General Ordinances to establish a policy and process to guide the re-naming of Milwaukee County Parks.

File Type: Action Report

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**REQUEST**

Amend Chapter 47 of the Milwaukee County Code of General Ordinances to establish a policy and process that guides the re-naming Milwaukee County Parks.

**POLICY**

Wisconsin State Statutes:	
Milwaukee County Code of General Ordinances:	Chapter 47
Specific Adopted Budget:	
Specific Adopted Budget Amendment:	
Specific Adopted Capital Project:	

**BACKGROUND**

The Milwaukee County Parks system is comprised of 157 parks and parkways and many other named facilities such as the Blatz Temple of Music or the Wehr Nature Center. The origin of the name of each facility is varied and specific to the history of each site, in many cases the name dates back to the beginning of the parks system in 1907 or the beginning of the modern parks system in 1937 when the City of Milwaukee merged with the regional parks system. Some parks bear the name of former US Presidents and national leaders (Washington, Lincoln) while others are named for former Milwaukee County government leaders (Doyle, Clinton and Bernice Rose), and others for the founders of the parks system (Whitnall, Greene). There are two pairs of parks sites that share the same name in Grobschmidt Park and Grobschmidt Pool as well as Pulaski-Milwaukee and Pulaski-Cudahy Parks.

The name of each site was likely intended to be permanent at the time of the naming, however we know from history that there is occasionally a compelling need to examine a parks name

and consider a new one. In recent years Milwaukee County approved the renaming of Columbus Park to Indigenous Peoples' Park, Wahl Park to Harriet Tubman Park, and Lindbergh Park to Lucille Berrien Park. The goals and outcomes of each renaming effort are valid and show the public whose legacy Milwaukee County chooses to honor with park names.

In response to the growing recognition of the importance of park names and their role in demonstrating the values of Milwaukee County, Parks proposes that a process be established to facilitate the review of any new park name changes. It is intended that this new process would allow for public engagement, be accountable to Milwaukee County government and its citizens, and embrace a cultural movement to examine our history and current values.

Parks proposes the following process be added to Chapter 47 of the Milwaukee County Ordinances.

#### 47.## - Park Re-Naming

Milwaukee County Parks, parkways, and park facilities (collectively a "Park" or "Parks") are public assets that foster dynamic connections within our community and their names contribute to the culture and identity of our community. The name of a Park reflects the unique location, geography, or community of where the Park is located or recognizes the exceptional contributions of individuals or organizations to the local community, Milwaukee County, the State of Wisconsin, the United States of America or Native lands.

This Policy establishes the criteria and process to rename an existing Milwaukee County Park, parkway, or park facility. This Policy applies to the re-naming of a County park property after an individual or organization. This Policy does not apply to names of County properties in return for financial or in-kind contributions, memorials or commemorative events, or sponsorships.

1. Renaming a Milwaukee County Park, parkway, or park facility
  - a. All proposals for renaming a Park must be made using the Milwaukee County Park Re-Naming Application made available through the Department of Parks, Recreation, and Culture. At minimum the application must include:
    - i. The existing and proposed new name of the Park, parkway or park facility;
    - ii. Rationale for changing the name and significance of the proposed new name including any significant contributions of the individual or organization associated with the new name to the community, Milwaukee County, State or Wisconsin, United States of America, or Native lands.
    - iii. Documented support from the local community, including but not limited to petitions and support letters;
    - iv. A map or illustration, including the address of the Park property; and

- v. Proposals to rename a Park property that has significance to Native American communities will follow the tribal consultation process outlined in Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act.
    - b. The Director of Parks, Recreation, and Culture will consult with the Chair of the Parks, Energy, and Environment Committee and the local County Supervisor where the Park is located and may conduct additional public engagement to determine public support for the proposed renaming if required.
    - c. The Director of Parks, Recreation, and Culture shall make recommendations to the County Board of Supervisors concerning the renaming of Parks.
    - d. The Director of Parks, Recreation, and Culture will seek comment from the Milwaukee County Historical Society concerning historical context and significance of an existing and proposed new name for a Park.
    - e. Milwaukee County will consider proposals to rename a Park property but is under no obligation to accept a proposed name.
    - f. The duration of the property name is at the sole discretion of Milwaukee County and may be revoked or the property may be renamed at any time.
  - 2. Criteria to Name or Rename a County Property
    - a. Names of Parks will align with the geographic, historical, cultural, or social significance of the location of the Park, and may recognize significant contributions made by individuals or organizations to the local community, Milwaukee County, the State of Wisconsin, the United States of America or Native lands.
    - b. Park properties that have been named or renamed in the previous ten years will not be renamed.
    - c. Names of Park properties shall not:
      - i. Result in, or be perceived to confer, any competitive advantage, benefit or preferential treatment or advertisement to the named party, or a development, product, service or a particular business;
      - ii. Be or be perceived to be discriminatory or derogatory of race, religion, ethnicity, gender identity or expression, sex, sexual orientation, political affiliation, disability or other social factors;
      - iii. Result in confusion related to the purpose or primary usage of the Park;
      - iv. Result in inappropriate abbreviations or acronyms;
      - v. Duplicate another named Park property;
      - vi. Unduly detract from the character, integrity of the community or aesthetic quality of the Park or unreasonable interference with its enjoyment or use;
      - vii. Place Milwaukee County in conflict with any agreements established in the acquisition or management of the property. The

- Department of Parks, Recreation, and Culture shall identify any potential conflicts; and
- viii. Make a direct or indirect reference to recent events or recently deceased individuals. Names of recent events or recently deceased individual may be considered after three years.
  - d. Naming or renaming a Park, on behalf of an individual or organization requires the written consent of the named party or the named party's representative.
    - i. In circumstances where consent has not been received, despite reasonable efforts, Milwaukee County, in absence of any refusal to provide consent or legal concerns, may approve the name if the applicant is able to demonstrate good faith efforts to obtain consent to the satisfaction of Milwaukee County.
  - e. The design, content, and the physical location of the signage for Park properties must be approved by the Director of Parks, Recreation, and Culture.

Related File No's:	19-101, 20-548, 21-526
Associated File No's (Including Transfer Packets):	
Previous Action Date(s):	

**ALIGNMENT TO STRATEGIC PLAN**

Describe how the item aligns to the objectives in the [strategic plan](#):

2C: Apply a racial equity lens to all decisions - tribal consultation process outlined in Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act.

3C: Dismantle barriers to diverse and inclusive communities - Create a process to assess the names of Parks in the context of being inclusive and representative of all of our constituents

**FISCAL EFFECT**

None

**TERMS**

None

**VIRTUAL MEETING INVITES**

None

**PREPARED BY:**

James Tarantino, Interim Deputy Director

**APPROVED BY:**

Guy Smith, Parks Executive Director *Guy Smith*

**ATTACHMENTS:**

- Resolution
- Fiscal Note

cc: Kelly Bablitch, Chief of Staff, Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors  
Janelle M. Jensen, Legislative Services Division Manager, Office of the County Clerk  
David Crowley, County Executive  
Mary Jo Meyers, Chief of Staff, County Executive's Office  
Sheldon Wasserman, Parks, Energy & Environment Chair, Supervisor District 3  
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Pamela Bryant, Capital Finance Manager, Comptroller's Office  
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Emily Peterson, Research & Policy Analyst, Office of the Comptroller  
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