

Milwaukee County Parks – COVID-19 Update

Supplemental Information to File# 20-421 submitted 6/9/2020

Milwaukee County Parks has experienced both operational and financial disruption due to COVID-19 and is providing this supplemental information to the Parks, Energy & Environment Committee and as an addendum to File #20-421. Because **this information has been rapidly changing over past months and weeks**, this snapshot was intentionally not provided with Parks' original submittal so that we could provide an update that spoke to current conditions at the time of the committee meeting.

Delayed Openings & Closures

- Golf Operations (April 24th and May 1st): Courses and clubhouses were opened to the public with restrictions on number of people in clubhouse, single rider golf carts, and rule modifications preventing removal of pins. Common touch points such as sand trap rakes and ball washers have been removed from course. Restaurants remained closed.
- McKinley Marina (May 8th): The marina was opened to public. Common spaces including bathrooms, showers, and laundry and most common touchpoints are on a two-hour cleaning schedule. The office and rental building remain closed to the public.
- Various Parks outdoor amenities (May 23rd): All playgrounds, outdoor fitness equipment stations, basketball and tennis courts, dog exercise areas, and disc golf courses opened to the public on a "Use at Your Own Risk" basis.
 - These areas have been signed as such with details on how to play safe.
 - Regular cleaning/sanitation does not occur in these locations and patrons are encouraged to wear masks, social distance, and bring their own hand sanitizer.
 - Tennis court nets have been installed on every other court to promote physical distancing.
 - Picnic tables that are already locked will remain stored until a plan is devised and approved by the Re-Opening Steering Committee.
- Beer Gardens: Whitnall Park Beer Garden and both tours of Traveling Beer Garden opened the week of 6/8/2020 with special operating parameters including visual aids to signify clean tables, additional service points to prevent crowding, no live music, and tables significantly spread apart.
- Indoor and outdoor aquatic facilities (deep well pools): closed for the season.
- Wading pools & splash pads: plan in development to equitably open facilities throughout system to provide relief from summer heat; dates and locations TBD.
- Horticultural Facilities
 - Boerner Botanical Gardens: reopening plans in development.
 - Mitchell Park Horticultural Conservatory (Domes): remains closed until fall.
 - Wehr Nature Center: building is closed, trails are open.
- Community Centers: remained closed until fall.
- Sports Complex/Wilson Recreation Center: remained closed until fall.

Special Event Cancellations

- Special Events: cancelled on a rolling 30-day basis. Organizers are required to provide an operating plan to comply with county health policy.
- Sport Leagues: cancelled through the end of July.
- Pavilion & Picnic Reservations: canceled through end of July; no new reservations are being considered until after August 15th.

- Domes: spring and summer shows cancelled.
- TBG: first legs of both tours cancelled and not rescheduled.
- Other cancellations...
 - July 3rd Lakefront Fireworks
 - Milwaukee Air ShowSymetra Tour
- China Lights pending, not likely (October)

Reopenings

All plans to reopen facilities are subject to local rules and regulations and approval through the Reopening Steering Committee authorized under Milwaukee County Administrative Order 20-13v1 *Phased Re-Opening Guidance for Milwaukee County Services and Facilities*. Approvals for expenditures and hiring authorizations are subject to Milwaukee County Administrative Order 20-9v1 *Fiscal Actions Administrative Order*.

Parks vendors (restaurants, leisure boating operations, etc.) and partners (camps, farmer's markets, etc.) must complete a rigorous review per the above Order prior to receiving county approval to open to the public. This review includes Parks and County review of vendor/partner safe operations plans and documents, with final approval by the County Executive. **Many of our vendors are up and running, and we are working in partnership with the County's Reopening Steering Committee to facilitate these openings as quickly as possible.**

Financial Impacts

The delayed openings and cancellation of special events have drastically impacted parks annual budget and ability to generate revenues. **Parks' projected 2020 revenue deficit is estimated at \$10 million, which is approximately ¼ of our total operating budget.** Potential savings may come from facility closure savings, hiring and spending freezes, staff furloughs, CARES reimbursement funds, and reduced encumbrances. With those items factored, we still anticipate a gap of between \$4-7 million and are working with the budget department on solutions.

Staffing Impacts

The financial impacts of COVID-19 Parks has severely restricted expenditures, including freezes on the hiring of our summer seasonal workforce. **Parks typically hires more than 900 seasonal staff each year. Currently, we have less than 200 working in the system,** and many of those staff are supporting revenue generating areas (ex. golf and the marina).

Additionally, **218 of our 240 full-time staff are participating in the state's Work-Share furlough program and working 36-hour weeks.**

Finally, **Parks has redeployed 92 full-time non-operational staff from their normal duties to assist in the field for 1-2 shifts per week.**

Parks' staff continue to telework where possible or work from the field. Use of the Parks Administration has been greatly reduced; this approach is anticipated to extend through the summer and into fall.

Level of Service

As a result of the budgetary impacts of COVID-19, Parks staffing levels are at an all-time low. As mentioned, Parks is being hit hard by county spending freezes implemented as a result of COVID-19, and

by the loss of revenues from the closure and delayed openings of the majority of our revenue-generating activities.

Parks staff have done a heroic job over the years to make it feel like our parks system was alive and well. Unfortunately, this season will be different because the department simply does not have the staff and resources needed to properly maintain the system. **Despite all best efforts, the community will notice changes to Parks' level of service including less frequent mowing, the accumulation of trash, slower responses to requests for graffiti removal, and limited access to certain amenities.**

Parks leadership has been proactively communicating constraints of this season with staff, the County Executive's team, members of PEEC, the Board of Supervisors, and the public – and will continue to do so. We are continuing to develop future collaborations and campaigns to bring more awareness to the state of our parks and will continue to enlist your support.