

Parks and Recreation Division Report

September 2023

PROGRAMMING

Programming updates will be provided at the Commission meeting on September 13, 2023.

PERMITS

PERMIT TYPE	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug
Park & Building Rentals	37	43	69	71	96	178	186	206
Commercial Operator Permits	3	1	3	7	8	6	2	1
Busker Permits	0	0	10	1	9	4	6	1
Alcohol Consumption Permits	2	8	3	9	6	12	18	7
TOTAL	42	52	85	88	119	200	212	215

PROJECT UPDATES

Barry Family Memorial Project at Chester Park Playground

Loved ones of the Barry family, in cooperation with City staff, have come together to coordinate a memorial project at the Chester Park playground. Family, friends, and community members raised \$22,000 to support adding a new spinner element and an accessible swing, converting the fall zone from sand to engineered wood fiber, incorporating an accessible pathway to the playground, and installing a bench in remembrance of the Barry family. A memorial dedication event for the playground improvements will be held at 3 PM on Friday, September 29 at Chester Park. Commissioners are invited to attend if they are able.



Hartley Park Trails

Four changes on trails to improve access and trail quality in Hartley Park:

- The Pines Trail is a 0.5-mile loop trail in the heart of Hartley Park’s mountain biking and hiking trail network and serves as a hub connecting to multiple other trails. Late last year, the Cyclists of Gitchee Gumee Shores (COGGS) proposed updating the Pines Trail to improve the overall, aged condition which would also adhere to universal design standards to accommodate access for adaptive cycling equipment, and provide a space for youth and beginner riders to build confidence and bike handling skills. With consultation with Hartley Nature Center, the City approved this project and in August COGGS contracted with a local trail builder to make this project a reality.
- On a pilot basis, a cross-country ski trail loop will be designated for summer use by adaptive and beginner cyclists. Signs are currently being installed along a short portion of a cross-country ski trail in Hartley that will designate the trail as being open to bicycles. Northland Adaptive Recreation (formerly Courage Kenny) proposed this as an option for use with their adaptive equipment programming, and it also expands programming options for Parks and Recreation’s Legacy-funded Youth on Trails mountain biking program and future track chair. For many participants, these programs may be the first time they’ve experienced cycling. Finding a low-traffic, low-pressure trail to facilitate introductory trail experiences was the primary motivator for this pilot change. The loop will be approximately 1-mile in length, connecting to the gravel surface Old Hartley Road at the north and south ends of the loop.
- Duluth Foot Trail Alliance (DuFTA) completed a trail reroute project leading to/from Gazebo Point and the Hunters Park neighborhood. The old trail alignment was once an access road for farm equipment and went straight up the hill, making for an unsustainable climb. The new, quarter-mile long trail now meanders through the woods, creating a much more enjoyable hiking experience, while addressing erosion concerns.
- COGGS completed a trail rehabilitation project on the Marshall Street connector into Hartley Park. Turf stone pavers were installed on the trail to reduce erosion and stabilize the trail.



Pines Trail



Pines Trail



Marshall St.

Hillside Sport Court Park

On August 21, 2023, City Council adopted the Hillside Sport Court Park Plan as proposed. Parks and Recreation staff are actively working to establish a funding package for park improvements. Based on conceptual-level planning documents, the project cost is estimated at \$2 million. Known funding sources include City revenue replacement funds and City Park Fund dollars. Staff have submitted an application for Community Development Block Grant funds and are evaluating other funding sources such as the Outdoor Recreation Legacy Partnership Program funds. The project implementation timeline will become clearer as the funding package is further confirmed.

Keene Creek Bike Park

The Keene Creek Mini-Master Plan included in the St. Louis River Corridor Parks Mini-Master Plans, which was adopted in June 2016, identified space to create a new bike park/pump track. The Keene Creek Bike Park is roughly 1-acre near, and partially underneath, Interstate-35.



The project is being constructed in collaboration with COGGS and is a volunteer-led project. The conceptual design (pictured above) guiding the project calls for a dirt jump plaza, pump track, and bicycle playground area with wooden features designed to increase rider handling skills and competency. To date, stormwater control measures have been implemented, and a dirt jump plaza is beginning to take shape.

Kitchi Gammi Park (Brighton Beach)

Shoreline construction has been progressing well and park improvements at Kitchi Gammi Park (Brighton Beach) are now underway. Access paths and engineered stone stairs have been installed. Construction of park amenities and landscape restoration is anticipated to be completed in fall 2023 and the road will be constructed in 2024.



Enger Golf Course Renovation

The creation of a new storage pond began in early September and is anticipated to be completed this year, with irrigation work scheduled to start in May of 2024. At least 18 holes at Enger Golf Course will remain open for play during the construction project the remainder of 2023 and through the 2024 season.

Lincoln Park

Construction is well underway at Lincoln Park. A celebration for the park's grand re-opening and the renaming of the stone pavilion in honor of Councilor Renee Van Nett will take place on October 17, 2023. Commissioners are invited to attend this event.



Superior Hiking Trail

The Superior Hiking Trail Association (SHTA) is undertaking a comprehensive planning process this year. Parks and Recreation is supporting this process with trail use counters along the 42-mile route through Duluth. The data will be valuable to help identify high-use areas, and determine where to focus resources. The comprehensive plan will help shape the focus of this invaluable non-profit partner for years to come.

The SHTA continues to improve upon trail quality with a number of improvement projects throughout Duluth. In July, SHTA partnered with the non-profit group Surly Gives a Damn (SGAD) to perform a reroute in Brewer Park to eliminate and rehabilitate a short but steep, fall-line segment of trail. SHTA has also coordinated volunteers for projects, including trail hardening and replacing old boardwalk (puncheon) along various segments within Duluth. Throughout the summer, the SHTA also provides weed-whipping along the entire corridor.

NATURAL RESOURCES

Hartley Pond and Tischer Creek Feasibility Study

The City is working with the Minnesota DNR on the Hartley Pond/Dam and Tischer Creek Feasibility Study. The purpose of the Study is assess the feasibility of proposed options to improve the aesthetic value and recreation opportunities in Hartley Park, while also mitigating the temperature and sediment impairments that are negatively impacting downstream trout. The Study is progressing and is expected to be complete later this year. Implementation costs and timelines associated with the proposed options vary. The consultant, GEI, will conduct two public informational meetings this fall.

The findings of the study will be used by the Parks and Recreation Commission, Natural Resources Commission, and City Council to determine future action. In the spring, there will be presentations to both commissions to describe the findings, provide opportunity for public comment, and identify a preferred action. After public comments are reviewed and a recommendation for a preferred action is passed by the commissions, the recommendation would then go before City Council for approval.

PARK MAINTENANCE

The summer season has been progressing well with a combination of daily operations and special projects, such as the Barry Family Memorial project at Chester mentioned above. The first seasonal mowing of cross-country ski trails has been completed and the second round of mowing will be completed this fall. Forestry staff watered trees that were planted this spring, and immunized 45 ash trees against emerald ash borer (EAB) infestation. Ash tree removals have resumed for trees damaged or dying from EAB. Throughout August, staff completed parking lot patching at parks throughout the City, including Morgan Park, Evergreen Senior Center, Woodland Community Recreation Center, Chester Park, Enger Park Golf Course, Wheeler Athletic Complex, Park Point Recreation Area, and Keene Creek Park.

Over time, the bricks in the circles at the Rose Garden had become dislodged and uneven from frost heave and ground movement. Staff have been resetting the bricks in the circles and, this summer, staff completed the final circle. The next maintenance improvement planned in the Rose Garden is to reset the edging for the rose beds, which will also likely be a multi-year process.

