

A new, reformed Parks and Public Infrastructure Department is just the way to preserve our parks - as well as care for our transportation systems and facilities. Last year, I asked county officials to look at merging services like plowing and mowing. After months of work, it is clear that there are many more jobs that overlap and the best way to maximize the use of our workforce is under one, combined department.

Parks have a distinctive place - along with divisions for highways, fleet, architecture and engineering, facilities maintenance - as well as the airport and the transit system. Workers in the Highways division will plow parkways and paths, along with freeways and county roads. Mechanics in Fleet division will fix large mowers - as well as trucks and equipment. Landscape Architects focused on the park system will work alongside architects working on projects throughout the county for the Architecture and Engineering division. Workers taking care of parks pavilions and public restrooms will work along with those taking care of the other county buildings in the Facilities Maintenance division.

All of the different employees working on budget and on human resource issues will be combined into one location for the new department. In the end, the real benefit is that the reformed department puts more resources at the front line of caring for our parks and our other public structures in Milwaukee County. Parks still have a distinctive place with clear areas for the upkeep of the parks and for recreation and conservation. It is the support staff that is combined in the new department.

Bottom-line: more of the resources of the department are moved to the front line to care for the park system and for operation of our transportation system.

The County Executive's 2004 Recommended Budget creates a new Department of Parks and Infrastructure by consolidating the services and administration of the previous Parks Department and Department of Public Works. The goal of the new Department of Parks and Infrastructure is to allow for greater flexibility in providing services, share maintenance and use of equipment, and improve response time. In addition to developing more cost effective ways to operate services, the new Department of Parks and Infrastructure eliminates duplication of services and functions, and reduces significant layers of management.

This consolidation is not simply a change of reporting lines and abolishment of management positions, but a proposed fundamental change in the way the two Departments have always conducted business.

### **Maximize resources by consolidating functions**

The new department consists of seven divisions including Parks, Facilities, Fleet, Architecture and Engineering, Highway, Transit, and Airport.

In the Parks Division, golf programming and public services are consolidated to provide a one-stop shop for all golf services. All horticultural services are merged into one section to maximize landscape management expertise. Horticulturalists from the greenhouses are deployed

to the Mitchell Park Domes to complete the cycle of growing and showing plants. The number of regions is increased from three to four to more effectively deploy services to individual parks.

Transferring landscape architects (LA) from Parks to Architecture, Engineering and Environmental Services recognizes that LA's have long worked along-side Civil Engineer staff on Parks capital projects, planning activities and the Parks Infrastructure Program. Combining the staffs will create greater coordination and allow LA's to work on non-park projects when appropriate.

Currently, mower and equipment mechanics staff the Park's small engine repair shop, which is the only engine-mechanic activity not performed by the Fleet Maintenance Division. Transferring mower and equipment mechanics to Fleet Management will allow the Department to maximize staff resources to address the variance in peak demand times for equipment repairs, i.e. snow removal equipment in the winter and lawn care equipment in the summer. Consolidating the shop inventory, equipment purchases and preventative/routine maintenance will result in more effective and efficient service.

The transfer of park maintenance workers to Highway Maintenance reflects the change of assigning the maintenance of major park roads to Highway Maintenance. This action will relieve the park system of road maintenance, and costly equipment and materials associated with this function. Greater coordination and efficiencies will be realized in countywide snow and ice removal operations, as well as routine/scheduled road maintenance. The benefits of some of these efficiencies will be realized almost immediately. Beginning this winter, Highway Maintenance will assume the responsibility of plowing operations along Lincoln Memorial Drive (from Kenwood Blvd. south to Wisconsin Ave.) along with the roads in the Milwaukee River Parkway, including roads in Kletzsch Park and Estabrook Park.

Finally, centralizing the skilled trades staffs into Facilities Management will maximize the use of equipment and personnel, consolidate inventories and allow for a combined work order system that will prioritize and schedule skilled trade's activities. Due to the frequent communication and collaboration between the two departments over the past several months, a current void in maintenance of the boiler system at the Mitchell Park Domes will be alleviated by deploying existing skilled trades staff in Facilities Management to maintain the boiler, providing yet another immediate example of one of the benefits of the new department.

### **New Management Structure**

The new Department of Parks and Infrastructures eliminates a net of 32 management positions, while creating greater accountability and more direct reporting lines. It is expected that this structural and cultural change will lead to greater communication and collaboration between front line workers and management—ultimately resulting in higher quality and more cost-effective services.