

# PARKS COMMITTEE MEETING AGENDA

## and Meeting of the Anoka County Board of Commissioners\*\*

Tuesday, September 1, 2020 - 9:00 a.m.  
Bunker Hills Activities Center, Maple Room

### Department Updates

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### Committee Action Items

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1. Position Conversion Request – Custodian to Parkkeeper

### Informational Items

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2. Fall/Winter Program Adjustments
3. Contracts Processed

### Public Comments

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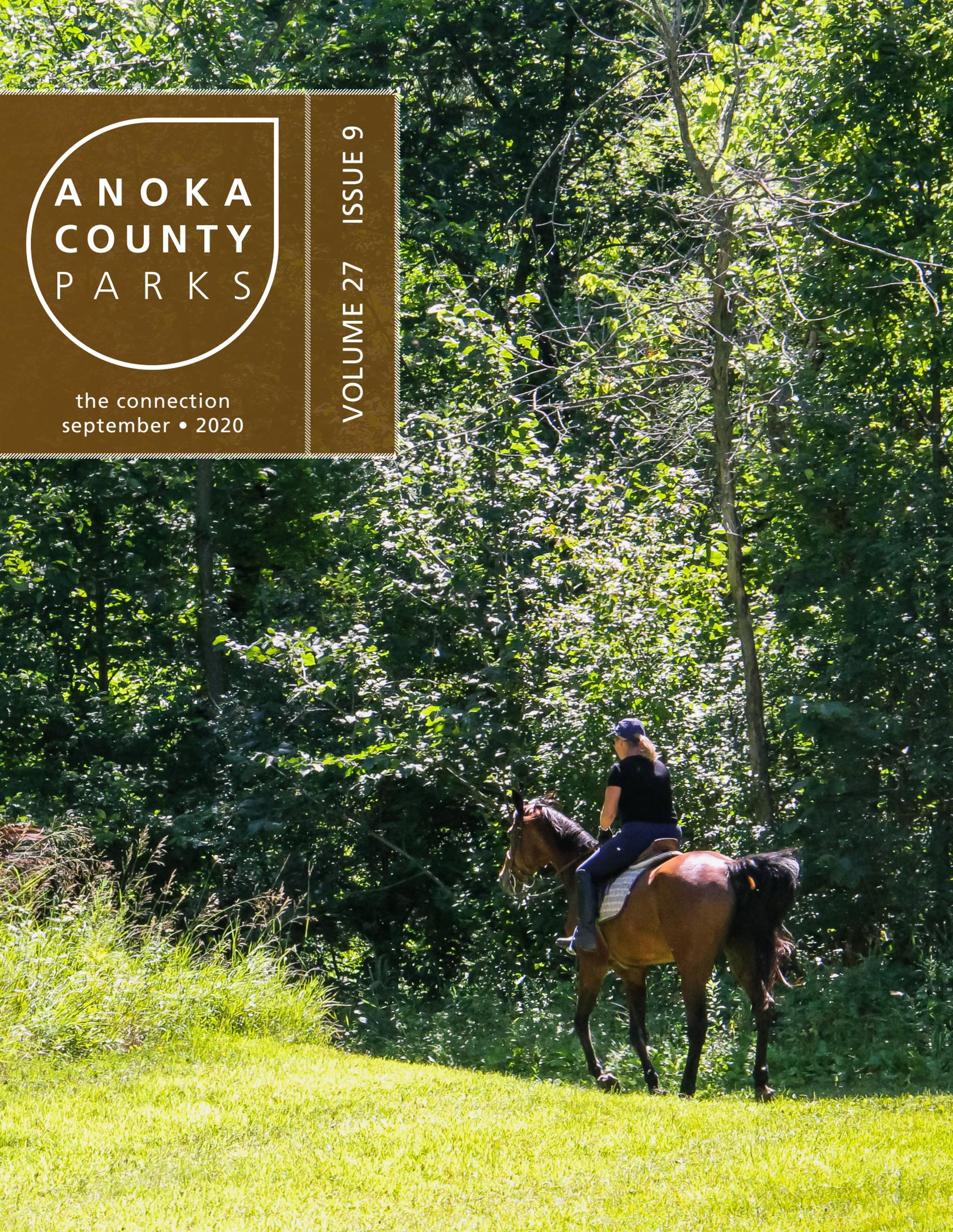
*Please Limit to Two Minutes*

*\*\* Actions taken by this Committee do not bind the County Board. In addition to the County Commissioners appointed to this committee, additional County Commissioners may attend. Non-committee Commissioners may choose to participate in the discussions and/or ask questions, but they will **not** vote on any item, nor will they agree to take a specific action on business conducted by the committee. If their attendance and limited participation in the committee meeting is considered a meeting of the County Board, this shall serve as notice of a County Board meeting. This shall also serve as notice of a County Board Meeting for any committee comprised of four or more members of the board.*

ANOKA  
COUNTY  
PARKS

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## EVENTS AND UPDATES

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## FROM THE DIRECTOR:

With the fall season on the near horizon, I would like to highlight two of Anoka County's unique land holdings known as Conservation Areas. For hunting and trapping enthusiasts, thanks to funding from Minnesota's Clean Water, Land and Legacy amendment (2008), the Anoka County Park System offers the unique opportunity to harvest furbearers, migratory waterfowl, small and large game at the Cedar Creek Conservation Area and the Columbus Lake Conservation Area.

The Cedar Creek Conservation Area, located in Oak Grove and Andover, features 550 acres of diverse native landscapes including wetlands, emergent marshes, woodlands, and prairie with more than two miles of shoreline on the Rum River and Cedar Creek. Approximately 200 acres of former agricultural fields have been reconstructed into native tallgrass prairie to increase biological diversity and improve wildlife habitat. Some of the most common species harvested include ducks, geese, pheasants, turkeys, raccoons, squirrels, rabbits, and white-tail deer. In addition, the conservation area borders the Rum River presenting ample opportunities to catch world-class smallmouth bass, northern, and walleye.

The Columbus Lake Conservation Area, located in the City of Columbus, harbors 260 acres of wildlife habitat near the headwaters of the Rice Creek that flows through the Rice Creek Chain of Lakes Park Reserve on its way to the confluence of the Mississippi River. The primary habitat includes marshes, hardwood forest, restored prairie, and borders Columbus Lake. Columbus Lake Conservation Area provides excellent hunting opportunities for waterfowl, pheasant, turkey and deer.

Since 2013, these conservation areas continue to serve the residents of Minnesota and the northern Metropolitan Area with excellent public hunting and fishing opportunities.

Outside of the hunting seasons, these conservation areas are wonderful places to enjoy hiking and wildlife viewing through some of Anoka County's finest prairies, forests, and wetland habitats. To access the conservation areas, there are designated parking lots located along the exterior perimeter along with an orientation map and hunting rules.

Jeff Perry



## MAINTENANCE FACILITY AT RICE CREEK CHAIN OF LAKES

The final phase of construction of the maintenance facility at Rice Creek Chain of Lakes Park Reserve was completed in late July and a positive impact has already been felt by the maintenance team. This building will serve the park itself and park facilities in the surrounding area year-round.

Along with the benefits of dedicated workspaces and proper equipment storage, the building also facilitates the ability to station additional staff in this area of the county increasing productivity and efficiency in maintenance operations.

Additionally, with an eye to the future and the impending impact of Emerald Ash Borer in the area, the maintenance and natural resources team will be able to utilize the building as a base of operations during the winter logging season. As a peripheral benefit, the ability to consolidate operations to this facility has allowed Wargo Nature Center to gain much-needed indoor storage space for trailers, kayaks, and other programming equipment.

The team is excited to have a new maintenance facility to strengthen park operations and efficiencies while upholding the high standards of service delivery.

# OAK WILT SURVEY

Over the past several weeks, the Natural Resource Unit has conducted its annual Oak Wilt Survey throughout the park system. Oak wilt disease is caused by a fungus, *Ceratocystis fagacearum*, which causes vascular tissues within the tree to become clogged, starving the tree of water and nutrients. The fungus is spread through two primary methods, via grafted roots from tree to tree and by sap sucking insects that are attracted to fresh wounds on trees. The disease is fatal to all members of the red oak group and, while members of the white oak group may initially fend off the disease, it often results in secondary stressors killing white oaks as well. The main sign of an infected tree is browning of the leaves in late July and August beginning at the crown of the tree and working inward toward the main stem. Each year staff conducts surveys locating, marking, and taking GPS coordinates of each oak wilt site throughout the park system. The trees that are found to have oak wilt will have their roots severed and be marked with blue paint to help the logging crew find them in the winter. The wood from this effort is processed into firewood for Anoka County Parks campgrounds and a firewood sale. Any brush generated is mulched on site and returned to the soil and trees trunks larger than 20 inches in diameter are hauled to a local processor where it's ground into mulch for the landscape industry.



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# PARK IMPROVEMENTS AND CONSTRUCTION



It's construction season, so please stay alert when you are out and about in the parks this Fall. The Department has several projects happening, starting with Bunker Beach. Not only will the wave pool be reconstructed, the parking lot will be reconstructed and will be ready for the 2021 season. Other projects include roof improvements and replacing the windows at the Coon Rapids Dam Visitor Center; Lake George restrooms and pavilions are being rehabilitated; trails at Islands of Peace are currently under construction; restroom rehab at Manomin Park; and lastly the entrance road will be reconstructed at Wargo Nature Center. It is anticipated these projects will all be substantially completed before winter so they will be ready for the 2021 park season. These projects are funded through the Metropolitan Council's Capital Improvement Program and the Parks and Trails Legacy Program.



## SAFETY FIRST WHEN RENTING CANOES AND KAYAKS

Boat rental is open! After Covid-19 and an amazing growing season of curly leaf pondweed, Wargo staff were finally able to open canoe and kayak rental over the 4th of July weekend. Safety of rental has been a top priority this year as the entire process is contactless and socially distanced. Thanks to the marketing department, boat reservations are now on-line. There, customers can see a picture and read a description of each boat to help them reserve the one that suits their needs. Rentals are available on weekends from 11 am - 4 pm, giving staff adequate time to sanitize the equipment before and after each use. Wargo staff call each renter the morning of their rental to go over final covid and weather-related procedures. When renters arrive, they are given a sanitized paddle, life jacket, and are directed to their boat on the dock. When renters return to Wargo, their boat is placed on the "used" side of the dock and used equipment is to be placed in the designated bin for sanitizing. Staff then disinfects all boats and equipment so it is ready for the next day. So far, rental has been very popular and people have been excited to get out on the water.

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## BUNKER BEACH WAVE POOL REPLACEMENT PROJECT

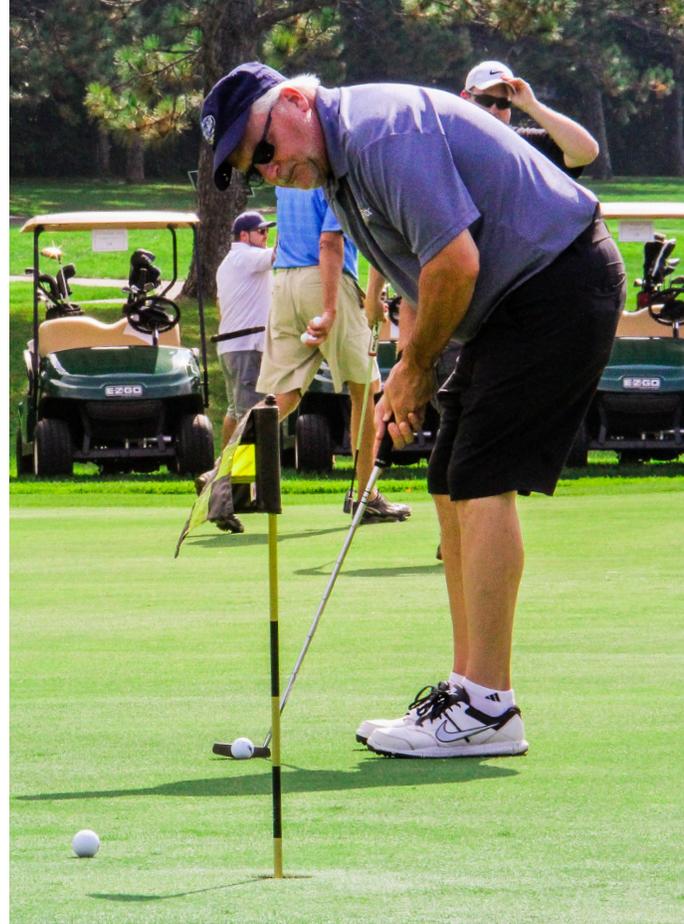


Demolition of the old wave pool is complete at Bunker Beach Water Park. The 30-year-old pool will be replaced by a new heated wave pool with a new 3,144 square foot lagoon. The lagoon will include play features including a spiral tunnel, fun-brella, splash blaster, bubblers, and much more! Contractors will now focus on constructing the new pool along with the new family restroom building and maintenance building. Footings for the new family restroom building will be installed later this month. All the new amenities will be ready for the 2021 Bunker Beach season!

# CHOMONIX GOLF COURSE WELCOMES TOURNAMENTS

Chomonix Golf Course has welcomed multiple tournaments in the past few weeks. The Moniker Open filled up fast and took place on Friday, July 31. The tournament consisted of 116 golfers rising above last year's number of participants. Participants golfed 18 holes and had the opportunity to meet The Common Man, Dan Cole, from KFAN radio station. The Big Red Wagon food truck was there to provide lunch to all participants. It was a great day!

Chomonix also welcomed the Centennial Youth Hockey Association and the Mounds View Youth Hockey Association for tournaments in the month of August. Both organizations brought in more than 100 golfers.



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## FALL CAMPING



Fall is a beautiful season in the Bunker Hills and Rice Creek Chain of Lakes Campgrounds. While guests have streamed in all summer (making more than 13,000 reservations), one of the best times of year to camp is still to come. When the chill returns to the air, the parks undergo a spectacular transition. They trade their lush green summer foliage for cascading reds and golds. Campers flock to the campground in the fall, scheduling more than 3,000 nights of camping reservations in September and October. They come to see the new colors, hike under the changing trees and listen to a whispering fall breeze. The chilling air calls out to campers to have a fire, to huddle close to its warmth, and whisper stories under a starry night sky. Little can compare to the cozy feeling of closing a sleeping bag up tight and listening to the crunch of freshly fallen leaves underfoot. Fall will be here before long, and campers everywhere are counting down the days to its arrival.

## COMMITTEE ACTION ITEM 1 - POSITION CONVERSION REQUEST

### Parks and Community Services Committee

Committee Date: September 1, 2020

County Board Date: September 8, 2020

**Action Requested**

To consider a request to convert the park maintenance custodian position (1 FTE) to a parkkeeper position (1 FTE).

**Previous Committee / County Board Action**

NA

**Background / Analysis**

The custodian position was recently vacated due to the retirement of a 30-year employee. The custodian maintains cleanliness and sanitization of indoor and outdoor facilities within Bunker Hills Regional Park, such as the Archery Building, Campground Visitor Center, campsites, and restrooms. The need for this individualized position has changed due to the expanded and changed use of facilities within the park system.

The Parks Department is recommending converting the custodian position to a parkkeeper position. This conversion would allow for another equipment operator that could be used in a wide variety of projects or assignments versus the current limitations of the custodial position. Existing responsibilities will be allocated within the new hire or within the parkkeeper pool. This conversion would also expand the pool of staff available to cover weekend rotations during summer operations and for snow removal in the winter months.

The conversion of this position would allow for a net savings due to the previous employee being top of scale at a grade 5 position. A new hire would result in an approximate \$6000 savings to the existing operations budget that would be reallocated to cover overtime costs related to increase snow removal required over the last several years.

**Conclusion / Recommendation**

To recommend the conversion of the park maintenance custodian position (1 FTE) to a parkkeeper position (1 FTE) and refer the request to the Management Committee for consideration.

**Supporting Documents**

N/A

**Lead Staff**

Andy Soltvedt, Operations and Visitor Services Manager

## COMMITTEE INFORMATIONAL ITEM 2 – FALL/WINTER PROGRAM ADJUSTMENTS

### Parks Committee

Committee Date: September 1, 2020

County Board Date: September 8, 2020

#### Action Requested

To update the Committee on Fall/Winter program adjustments due to COVID-19.

#### Previous Committee / County Board Action

June 2020 – Information Item - Summer Program Adjustments

#### Background / Analysis

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, Parks Department staff have been closely following industry trends, Center for Disease Youth Programs and Camps During the Covid-19 Pandemic Guidelines, Minnesota Department of Health Guidance for Social Distancing and return to school guidelines. Programming staff are recommending the implementation of a hybrid programming approach with a variety of in-person and continued virtual programming. With the anticipation that all school districts that Wargo Nature Center currently serves will have different methods to teaching in the fall/winter, programming staff will be able to adjust educational curriculums to meet the requests and schedules of the school districts within Anoka County. All on-site programming will be completely orchestrated outdoors at this time.

- Heritage Lab Hybrid Approach:
  - On-site programming offered for two weeks to accommodate home-schooled students and private schools.
  - Virtual recorded stations with robust activity packet with several Zoom sessions with costumed presenters that will be available to answer questions live from classrooms and students.
  
- Environmental Education Programming Hybrid Approach:
  - On-site programming at Wargo Nature Center for primarily home-schooled students and private schools.
  - On-site at schools for those who are interested.
  - Activity kits available for check out by teachers for students to utilize in classrooms with the option to live Zoom an interaction with programming staff.
  - Live virtual field trips facilitated by programming staff available for students.
  
- Public Recreation and Environmental Education Programs:
  - Small group programs with social distancing and implemented outdoors.
  
- Special Events:
  - The fall/winter special events (Little Goblins, Fall Festival and Snow Day) will be facilitated outdoors.
  - Activities at the events will be spread out across the Wargo Nature Center peninsula and will keep staff and attendees at a safe social distance. All equipment will be sanitized between uses.
  - The numbers of participants will be limited and controlled through a pre-registration process.

Parks Department staff are committed to carrying out the Anoka County's mission of serving citizens in a respectful, innovative, and fiscally responsible manner with the goal of Wargo Nature Center to continue to safely provide Heritage Lab, environmental education, recreation programs, and special events during the fall/winter of 2020 - 2021

#### Conclusion / Recommendation

This item is for informational purposes only - no action is required.

#### Supporting Documents

NA

#### Lead Staff

Cory Hinz, Recreation Services Manager

**COMMITTEE INFORMATIONAL ITEM 3 – CONTRACTS PROCESSED**

**Parks Committee**

**Committee Date: September 1, 2020**

**County Board Date: September 8, 2020**

<b>Action Requested</b> To provide information to the Committee regarding contracts executed by the Parks Department since the last Committee meeting.
<b>Previous Committee / County Board Action</b> Monthly Update
<b>Background / Analysis</b> C0008058 AIS Grant Agreement Martin Lakers Association C0008059 AIS Grant Agreement Ham Lake
<b>Conclusion / Recommendation</b> No action requested.
<b>Supporting Documents</b> N/A
<b>Lead Staff</b> Andy Soltvedt, Operations and Visitor Services Manager