

# MUNICIPALITY OF ANCHORAGE GIRDWOOD ROADS, FACILITIES, PARKS & RECREATION



**DATE:** March 20, 2024  
**TO:** Girdwood Board of Supervisors  
**FROM:** Kyle Kelley, Girdwood Service Area Manager & Margaret Tyler, Parks and Recreation  
**SUBJECT:** Parks and Rec 2023 Overview

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**Staffing:** In 2023 we hired 2 summer parks caretakers. Luke and John completed trails tasks, including brushing, trail maintenance, bridge construction and provided the foundation for volunteer projects through Girdwood Trails Committee, Friends of Girdwood Trails, the Girdwood Methodist Church and other independent volunteer groups. Our summer crew also assisted volunteers with constructing new ramps in the Skate Park, painting and other projects in the playground and park as well as weekly duties such as trash, watering, weeding, fertilizing and weed whacking.



In addition to our paid staff, our volunteer campground hosts, Kira and Jared, watched over the campground and pavilions.



Volunteers provide invaluable assistance in trail, park and playground maintenance. Winter trails are groomed almost entirely by volunteers; grooming machines are maintained by Shane Bowlin, who has moved from Girdwood but returns to help. Spring annuals were planted by volunteers. Summer trail work was largely achieved through volunteer work parties organized by Friends of Girdwood Trails. Most of the summer volunteer work on trails was used as match for a grant received from Kenai Mountains-Turnagain Arm National Heritage Area (KMTA).

Rob Hammel memorial bench installed overlooking the mouth of the valley. Plaque to be added in summer.

2024: We will recruit for 2 seasonal full-time parks/trail caretakers again in 2024 and for volunteer campground hosts as well. Both paid and volunteer positions start mid-May and end mid-September



### **Tennis Courts:**

Tennis Committee hung the nets and wind screens in May, took the windscreens down in the fall.

2024: Parks and Rec is plans pavement work which cracked and was repaired after the earthquake in 2018. We encourage a local adult and youth tennis program and/or encourage more diverse use, perhaps basketball, pickleball, etc.

### **Girdwood Park, Pavilions, Campground**

Park, Pavilions and Campground received maintenance only. Forest Fair 2023 was a great success. 2023 brought an increase of rentals of the Marlow Pavilion throughout the summer season from Chugach Adventures use for lunches.

Significant flooding impacted the park and campground July-October. There were even salmon swimming in the park.

2024: Evaluate the shift in California Creek to see if it will shift back within its banks in the spring and repair damage, particularly to tent site pads, or if we will need to adapt our use of the floodplain accordingly. Remove the artistic chimney at Nissman. Re-stain pavilions. Continue to assess and remove hazard trees in the park.

### **Disc Golf:**

Anchorage Disc Golf Association held two events at the disc golf course. Family rented the park for a day for a memorial event as well.

2024: Assist if Disc Golf Group applies/receives an Anchorage Park Foundation Challenge Grant to add material to the tees.

### **Ball Field:**

- Continued work on the turf and Sladen Mohl signage. Fundraiser held in April earned \$17,077 for a batting cage and ballfield improvements.

2024: Paint the dugouts (? Possible service project). Mohl family has been completing fundraising to purchase a batting cage for the field.



### **Little Bears Playground & park access:**

Little Bears Playground was heavily utilized throughout the summer. Unable to purchase wood chips of proper grade for the park due to closer of wood mill that provided them.

2024: Continue picnic area improvements, add sand and wood chips in spring.



**Girdwood Skate Park:** Friends of the Skate Park Throwdown Showdown event in March. Staff and volunteers continued work to rebuild ramps and place them for better flow in the park.

2024: Assist with projects to repair and resurface of asphalt and rebuild the battleship. Friends of Skate Park also hve designated a couple of ramps to build. Complete sign to acknowledge donors to the Skate Park.

### **Parking Areas:**

Homeless camping has become a large concern in parks and public parking lots in 2023. Over the winter this is complicating snow removal in the public lots. MOA is unable to abate homeless camps until there is a change to availability of housing and/or change in legal opinion regarding camping. Abandoned vehicles, some recreational vehicles and U hauls, and sometimes boats are left in community parking lots. Such vehicles must be tagged for 48 hours before towing can begin, which usually results in vehicles being pushed or otherwise moved to a different spot in the same lot. Unoccupied vehicles have been towed. Vehicles that are towed are towed at the community's expense.

2024: Clean-up of sites that have been used for camping will likely need to occur.

### **Soccer Field:**

Worked with Turf contractor on getting better grass growth.

2024: Continue effort for planning better layout and drainage of the park area, replace shed.

### **Lions Club Park:**

Blew leaves out in spring. Light brushing during summer. GVSA funding created construction documents for the pavilion, with that information, staff applied for Land and Water Conservation grant for pavilion to be added to the park,

2024: Continue seeking funding for pavilion construction; move forward when/if LWCF funding comes through.

### **Town Square Park:**

Continued rental bi-monthly for Girdwood farmers market by Girdwood Inc.

2024: Continue evaluating iris beds inside and surrounding Town Square Park. Assess trees that have been damaged by wildlife and weather. Consider adding lights to one of the live trees for Holiday tree lighting. Evaluate watering necessity for this park if the summer is hot and dry. Consider replacement/removal of the 3 flower bowls in the center of the park as they are broken but still intact.



### **Beautification:**

Incessant rain and cool temperatures in 2023 made some of our plants extremely happy. Fertilized, deadheaded, weeded as possible all summer.

2024: Coordinate beautification day in June.



### **Perennial Gardens:**

Perennial beds are located at Fire Hall, inside/perimeter of town square park, Community Room/Library, and Nina's Wall. They all need attention and maintenance.

Bulbs planted at the library garden bed worked out great and add a lot of color in April.

2024: Coordinate and plant donated perennials and bulbs.

### **Nina's Wall:**

Staff staked tall plants, cleaned out fountain and replaced water. Access to water on-site is very helpful at the beginning of the season and for adding to the fountain throughout summer.

2024: Similar maintenance required. Garden bed receives debris from winter sanding and requires maintenance early season. Likely need new pump in spring for fountain. Consider having AWWU turn on the spigot for summer if the season is hot and dry.

**Community Center/Community Room/Library:**

Maintenance included window washing and piano tuning. Handle rentals and coordination of groups. Update of A/V to allow public to hold hybrid meetings/project on screen.

2024: Work with MOA to have Community Room and Marlow Pavilion calendars available on line so public can check space availability. Coordinate tuning and window cleaning.

**Little Bears & Glacier City Hall:**

Used for storage for parks and warm storage area for contractor snow clearing equipment. Continue support for historic survey of this locations/structures/features and maintenance of those through various methods.

2024: Ongoing repair and maintenance anticipated. Researching options to replace garage for road service warm storage and park equipment. Preservation of oral history of the two existing buildings.



**Winter Grooming:**

Winter 2023 arrived in October and stayed solid through December with great snow and minimal coast affected warm up!

2024: Continue to support GNSC and other volunteer grooming efforts.

**Suspension Bridge to replace the Hand Tram:**

Design documents to 35% level by the end of 2023. Fundraising is now underway with federal, state, and private funding. Seeking additional project partners to complete the project.

2024: finalize design and put project out to bid, aiming for construction in 2025.

**Trails:**

Girdwood Trails Master Plan was completed in Girdwood in 2023. GTC and Friends of Girdwood Trails worked on a number of trail projects throughout the summer, emphasizing those projects within the scope of our grant with KMTA to match funds that paid for Alaska Trails to work on the Beaver Pond Trail early in the summer. Paid staff and volunteers began work on the Middle Iditarod National Historic Trail, which extends from behind the school to the USFS boundary up Crow Creek Road.

Paid crew and volunteers also replaced bridges on Abe’s Trail and California Creek Trail. Bench was installed at 5K parking with Stumpys sign. Trail locator signs installed on the Middle Iditarod National Historic Trail.

2024: The largest upcoming project is the suspension bridge to replace the hand tram. Master plan should be adopted by Assembly in February. Subcommittee work on Trail maps ongoing. Trail brushing and trail maintenance. Paid trail work on the Middle Iditarod NHT if awarded RTP grant. Beaver Pond Trail will need attention in 2024 to clear fallen trees from 2023 snow/storm cycle. Other trails may need additional maintenance but have been cleared well enough for regular winter



operations. Connector trail from Alyeska Highway Glacier Creek Bridge to Barren Ave is on the list soon. Trails Committee is working on updating trail maps for download, printing and for creation of trailhead trail maps signs.

### **Trash & Toilets:**

GVSA has been updating old smaller bear-resistant trash cans with a type that is easier for public to operate and don't freeze shut. 4 were replaced in 2022, 4 more are on order for 2023. GVSA purchased about a 3 year supply of mutt mitts in 2022 to save on shipping. Mutt mitt stands are being added to the trash can locations where possible. Girdwood Bear Aware continues public information and bear abatement work and is a great partner for the GVSA.

Rent-A-Can provides and services portable toilets. Year-round locations in 2023 were at the Nordic 5K, Little Bears parking, Moose Meadows parking and town square. During summer we add locations at the park, playground, campground, etc. Groups that plan large events are required to provide additional trash and toilets.

2024: Likely continue with purchase and replacement of trash cans. Recommend continue with Rent A Can for public toilet facilities.

### **Cemetery:**

2023: Effort stalled while MOA legal completed steps to clarify that cemeteries are an areawide responsibility. Project accepted by Assembly for bonding in 2024.

2024: Bonding effort in the spring election.

### **Other Items:**

Land Acknowledgments were completed by LUC and GBOS in 2023.

Anti-Racism: Alaska Humanities forum held 3 community conversations regarding this in 2023, sponsored by GVSA. These forums were not well-attended, however were well-received by those who attended.

2024: GVSA is hosting Foraker Group training on board service.



Wildlife: after a pretty quite summer for bear issues, fall brought a number of brown bear sightings, perhaps related to the lack of berries from the cold wet summer.

### **Social Media & Website:**

Ongoing contact and updates via website and social media. Shifted email communication to subscription service for meeting notifications.

### **Other Contracts:**

Invasive Weeds contract – Alien Species LLC contracted for handling spraying in 2023.

Volunteers also assisted in mitigation of weeds.

Turf Contract – Mowing contractor faced a difficult season with rain. New contractor has been able to achieve more consistent mowing and other options if weather prohibits mowing.

Window Washing – Hal LaPointe washed windows in 2023 and we will get him on the schedule for 2024.

Community Center Cleaning: carpets are cleaned quarterly, maintenance cleaning also under contract.

**GVSA Grants:**

GVSA grant cycle is application in Aug/Sept, fall review, spring contracting and disbursement. GBOS 2023 Grantee year end reports are included in the report. 2024 grants are currently in the queue for contracting and payment in summer 2024. 2025 Grant applications will be due Sept 13-sih, 2024.

**Other Grants:**

2023 grants:

Kenai Mountains/Turnagain Arm Heritage Area: GTC received grant for trail work in 2023, which has been closed out and reimbursed.

Anchorage Park Foundation: No grant in 2023 for this bi-annual funding.

TAP Grant: Applied in early 2023 for funding for rebuild/paving of pathway along Arlberg Road. Not awarded.

CTP Grant: Applied in early 2023 for funding for fish passage culverts in neighborhoods. Not awarded

RTP: Applied in late 2023 and prospects look good for Middle INHT funding.

LWCF: Applied in late 2023 and prospects look ok for pavilion in Lions Club Park funding.

2024 grants:

Watching for grant openings for a Federal Lands Access Program (FLAP) Grant, AARP

Community Grant:

Rasmuson Foundation: Likely funder for final push on the new bridge.

Anchorage Park Foundation: Determine which project/non-profit to apply for APF in Girdwood for the 2024 & 2025 cycle.

KMTA: Next grant cycle and type of projects to be considered is not currently known.

RTP and LWCF will likely also have fall grant cycles.

**Community Meeting Attendance:**

GBOS, GTC, LUC, PSAC, Cemetery, Friends of the Skate Park, Tennis Committee, Housing and Economic Stability Advisory Committee; various subcommittees as they arise.

As needed support for: Girdwood Bear Aware and other meetings

2024: Likely PSAC will shift to staff management of contract; Cemetery Committee status TBA following election and bonding for cemetery construction funding.

Kyle attends Library Boosters, Rotary and Lions Clubs meetings as needed

Margaret attends KMTA meeting and sits on the board of this organization.

Imagine! Girdwood (Girdwood Comprehensive Plan) has become independent of GBOS, staff has not attended in an official capacity. Girdwood review and approval of the project is expected to conclude in 2024 as the plan moves forward for MOA and Assembly review and approval.