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Subject: The E: March 2026
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THE E.

A newsletter for the Engineering Division

March 2026 Issue

A message from your City Engineer, Jim Wolfe:

Greetings Engineering!
I am now officially back full time after my parental leave. I'm very grateful to have had that time with our son, and so thankful to everyone that helped fill in for me while I was out. It's nice to be back, but I do have a lot of catching up to do!
Hopefully you all had a chance to read the email on March 10 from the Mayor, so this may be old news now, but the City will have a new Director of Public Works, Charlie Romines, and he'll officially be starting in that role later this spring, following approval by the Common Council. While the City has not had a Public Works Director for quite some time, we have had a Public Works Team Leader to help coordinate work amongst all of the Public Works Divisions (Engineering, Water, Parks, Fleet, and Streets), and Charlie has been serving as our team leader since Rob Phillips retired. Congrats to Charlie, and I'm excited to get to work with him in his new role.
A lot of us in Engineering have worked with Charlie on various issues over the years, but there is a lot of work done in Engineering that he is less familiar with. So, as a first step, he will likely start reaching out to a number of us to start to learn a bit more about the broad types of work that we do within Engineering.

-Jim

Romines, Darken take new leadership roles at City

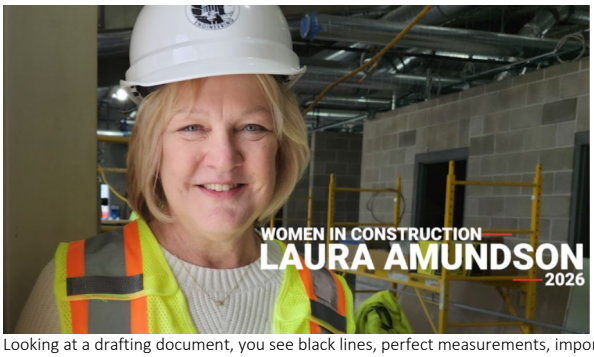
New Public Works Department Director

Mayor Satya Rhodes-Conway announced the appointment of Charlie Romines — currently the Team Lead for Public Works and the Street Superintendent — to the position of Public Works Director. This move is part of an ongoing effort to create operational efficiencies within the City's five Public Works Divisions. Romines will oversee the Engineering Division, Fleet Service Division, Parks Division, Streets & Urban Forestry Division, and the Water Utility. Read more in the full press release.

New Fleet Superintendent

Mayor Satya Rhodes-Conway appointed Rachel Darken as the City of Madison's new Fleet Service Superintendent within the Public Works Department. Darken has served as interim Assistant Superintendent for the past 18 months and was selected after a competitive, nationwide hiring process. Read more in the full press release.

Engineering's 2026 Women in Construction: Laura Amundson



Looking at a drafting document, you see black lines, perfect measurements, important proportions and a lot of detail for a new project or space. What you don't see is the person doing the drawing, or the journey to become the person in charge of drafting, designing, or even completing the project. Someone like Engineering's Project Manager and Architect Laura Amundson.
"We take projects for all of the city agencies. They [city agencies] come to us, and it could be a large project, could be a small project that is paint and recarpet, all the way up to a new fire station," Amundson said. "We project manage those from the beginning of design, and we'll take it depending on our capabilities and size of project, all the way through construction."
Amundson works in the Facilities Management section of the Engineering Division. One of her current projects is converting Engineering's existing locker room including a temporary space to a new locker room, shower and bathroom space for operations employees.

"With this project, I did the drafting to create the construction documents that go out to bid," Amundson said.

Amundson's journey to the City and the architectural world began in the 7th grade growing up in Rice Lake, Wis.
"The middle school I went to did not allow girls to take shop classes. Yet, the boys were required to take a home education class," Amundson said. "A small group of us felt very slighted. We went to the principal, didn't get anywhere, so we took our notebooks and we created a petition to take to the school board to ask for the ability to take shop classes."
Open configuration options

Amundson said their petition did not immediately benefit her group, but eventually created change for classes after her. The hurdle didn't keep her from continuing to create opportunities for women in high school.

"I had a friend say so—you really wanted to take a shop class in middle school, would you like to do it in high school, you should do it. And it became a dare, so in my sophomore year I signed up for a general shop class that rotated between electronics, wood working, metal shop and drafting," Amundson said. "I loved the drafting class—the nine weeks of drafting. I signed up the next year for the one and only drafting class that was available, and after that, in my senior year, I talked my instructor into letting me do an independent study."

Amundson worked at a drafting firm that did mechanical drafting for Caterpillar Tractors and John Deere and then worked for an architect office helping with blue printing and bid documents, before attending Northwoods Technical College to earn her associate's degree in architectural commercial design.

"When I was in technical school, there were only five of us [girls] and 27 guys," Amundson said. "So there were five girls and 27 guys, we knew we were outnumbered."

Being the one of few or only woman in a space continued into her early career, working for a pre-cast concrete company doing structural drafting work. There, she was the only woman at the plant that was in a "non-stereotypical position."

"Going into a plant, it was more like when you're working a construction site. There's a difference in how, there was a difference with how some people will treat you as a woman," Amundson said. "You need to learn to pick your battles. It was a learning experience."

More challenges, but nothing Amundson couldn't handle, especially when she had support and mentorship from great bosses

creating space and helping her sharpen skills to deal with difficult situations, not just on site.

"Probably the person who helped me get used to working in a male dominated field, my very first boss after I graduated," Amundson said. "He did a lot of advising on how to handle certain situations when I was frustrated with being talked over or hollered at. He was very ahead of his time with women in the construction business."

Amundson said her first boss was direct and his guidance helped her gain confidence.

"He told me one time, walk away. Tell them I'm hanging up on you now, call me back when you want to talk professionally. And I was like, 'I don't think I can do that!' And he was like, 'do it—they will call you back.'" Amundson said. "And they did."

A move to Manitowoc, Wis., a wedding, telework for a company for 20 years, three daughters and a move to Madison preceded her landing a job at the City of Madison Engineering Division, where she's been for the last 10 years, now reflecting on her past and continuing enthusiasm for what opportunities are available in construction for women today.

"I think everyone wants to think first of all the different trades in construction, but there are many different places that women can go along with the trades. It's the architecture. It's the engineering. It's streets. It's not just building," Amundson said. "There are a lot of different fields and opportunities."

There are a lot of ways to draw, design or think of drafting a new project, building or career. But for Amundson, paying attention to the details, the hurdles and overcoming them creates more room for growth and space for more women in the construction industry.

"I would like to suggest to any person interested in construction, ask to shadow. Reach out, people are happy to share their jobs with those who are curious," Amundson said. "…Because sometimes you think you want to head this direction, and life sends you in a different direction and it's for the best! Just keep an open mind."

Not everyone has to draft the perfect design, or have a perfect journey to the dream job, but paying attention to each detail and learning with each challenge is what makes the building, or life, great in the long run.
Watch the video highlight on the City's social media platforms.

Women in Construction Week Success!

If you didn't have a chance to catch the Women in Construction Week profiles and videos as they went live all last week, please take a moment and read, watch and feel inspired. This year's honorees were each unique in their own way, and wow were they impressive! From field, office and more, they shared what has made them successful in their respective careers, who inspired them most, moments of reflection and importance, and hopes for future generations going into the construction field of work.
The focus of Women in Construction (WIC) Week is to highlight women in the construction industry. WIC Week also provides an occasion for NAWIC's thousands of members across the country to raise awareness of the careers available for women in the construction industry and to emphasize the growing role of women in the industry. The Engineering Division posts written profiles on the City website and social media channels to lift the stories and journeys of each year's selected employees.

2026

- Shelley Johnson, Leadworker, Parks Division
- Jamie Nichols, Operator 3, Streets Division
- Karime Grajales-Patton, Code Enforcement Officer, Building Inspection Division
- Liz Callin, Principal Transportation Planner, Transportation Department
- Laura Amundson, Architect, Engineering Division

Equity Blurb

Engineering Equity Team will be looking for a few new members in 2026 to fill slots vacated by staff that have completed their terms and are rotating out. Please email Danielle and Stephen if you're interested or if you have questions.

Invasive Plant Awareness: Knotweed Species

Written by: Maddie Dumas, Ecological Land Manager, City of Madison Engineering

If it's growing like a weed...maybe it is a weed! And if it's knotweed, then you will *not* want to underestimate this plant. Japanese knotweed (*Reynoutria japonica*), Bohemian knotweed (*Fallopia x bohemica*) and other knotweed species (*Reynoutria spp.*) are highly invasive, ecologically disruptive plants. Knotweed forms dense stands, displaces native species, exacerbates erosion along waterways, and can even damage infrastructure. I've seen knotweed grow up through the cement slab of a garage floor using only the pale light from a small window…and its enormous root system. The plant's reputation for damaging building foundations, sidewalks, sewer pipes and the like have made it particularly feared in urban areas. Listed as a noxious weed in the City of Madison, and also regulated by the state under WI Admin Code NR 40, you must control this plant if growing on your property. To identify, look for broad, spade-shaped leaves, and tough, segmented bamboo-like stem that can range in color from red to pale green with a white waxy overlay. Knotweed produces small, lacy cream-colored flowers along the tall, arching stems in late summer or early fall. More noticeable is the rapid growth habit. If you're wondering what plant obscured the view of your back fence in under a month, it could be knotweed. UW Extension and WI DNR are good places to start for more information on identification and control. You may report observations of the plant to City of Madison via the "Report a Problem" section of the website: cityofmadison.com/reportaproblem.

Engineering's Phil Gaebler Advocates for Snow and Ice Contractors, Managers, Owners Liability Protections at Senate Hearing 1019

Phil Gaebler was part of a team of people who spoke at a public hearing for WI SB 1019, which would create a pathway for Snow and Ice Contractors and the Property Managers and Owners they work for to have liability protections. This is an important step for our industry to keep the discussion moving around creating some liability protection that would allow us to use the correct amount of de-icer, therefore protecting our environment and infrastructure as much as possible.
Phil spoke on the impact of salt on our infrastructure, drinking water and aquatic life and how difficult it is to remove salt once it is spread. He also touched on the Madison certification program and the time requirements to become certified.

If passed, the bill would create a statewide certification program and certified applicators that document snow and ice removal in line with the recommended procedures would have limited liability in the event of a slip and fall incident.

The bill did not leave committee this session but the team is hopeful that it will be voted on next session.

Engineering Locker Room Update

The Engineering Emil Street Locker Room renovation is making progress. The project is a renovation of the current locker rooms to create a larger locker room space that surrounds a grouping of individual restrooms and changing/bathing rooms. The latest: Above ceiling mechanical, electrical and plumbing rough-ins continue. Metal stud installation complete. Drywall installation and finishing continues. The project team continues to work through submittal and shop drawing reviews. Please bring any concerns to your supervisor.

Latest photo updates: https://www.flickr.com/photos/cityofmadison/albums/72177720330141906/

Media Roundup

Press Releases

- Madison Public Market Achieves LEED Gold Certification *posted February 5, 2026*
- Share your thoughts on Public Art for the Far West Operations Facility *posted February 10, 2026*
- Finalist designs for State Street Campus Garage/Hawthorne Court public art released *posted February 19, 2026*
- Street Closure – E Main Street and S Hancock Street *posted February 20, 2026*
- Temporary Closure of Midland Street for Equipment Removal *posted February 24, 2026*
- Lane Reduction on University Avenue Starting Monday, March 2 *posted February 25, 2026*
- Women in Construction Week 2026 Stories Ahead *posted February 27, 2026*
- Meet 2026 Women in Construction Week Profile: Jamie Nichols *posted March 2, 2026*
- Meet 2026 Women in Construction Week Profile: Shelley Johnson *posted March 3, 2026*
- Meet Women in Construction 2026 Profile: Karime Grajales-Patton *posted March 4, 2026*
- Meet 2026 Women in Construction Week Profile: Liz Callin *posted March 5, 2026*
- Rainy Friday, Urban Flash Flooding Possible Thanks to Frost *posted March 6, 2026*
- Women in Construction Profile 2026: Laura Amundson *posted March 6, 2026*

Blog

- #ICYMI: Women in Construction Week 2026 Success *posted March 9, 2026*
- Less Salty 2026: Bonus: Too Much Salt *posted February 5, 2026*

City Press Conferences

- News Conference: Absentee Ballot Printing with City & County Clerks March 6, 2026

Upcoming Public Information Meetings

MAR 11 — **Moorland Rd Shared-Use Path**
Virtual event

MAR 16 — **Sherman Ave, N. Sherman Ave, and McGuire Street Reconstruction**
Virtual event

MAR 25 — **Resurfacing Program 2026**
Virtual event

APR 09 — **West Towne Shared-Use Path – Phase 2b**
Virtual event

Section Updates

Each month, Engineering Division City Engineer Jim Wolfe leads a section head meeting. Each month in The E, we will share main points for employees to know what was discussed on important topics that impact employees division-wide. This is to improve better internal communication between leadership and staff. This is separate from official meeting minutes.

Division Communications

Hannah Mohelnitzky, Engineering Division Public Information Officer

Women in Construction Week always is one of my favorite times of year because it's so special to share the journeys of our coworkers, here in Engineering and across City agencies. Next up is Alder Onboarding orientation materials, multiple public information meetings and will be pushing through web accessibly by the end of the month.

Public Works and Private Development

Chris Petykowski, Deputy City Engineer, Public Works and Private Development

Public works engineers are working on design and approvals for 2026 projects. Private development Engineers and Managers continue to service contracts and issue plan sets. Plans issued this month include 2012 Winnebago & Orchard Charter Alley. Public Meetings for 2026 projects were held regarding E Rusk, Sugar Maple & Lake Forest. Rimrock Resurfacing went to Transportation Commission for input. A presentation on the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) is scheduled for March to the Transportation Commission.

Facilities Management

Bryan Cooper, Deputy City Engineer, Facilities Services and Management

- Construction Phase > CDA Truax Apartments Solar PV, State Street Campus Garage Mixed Use Development, Bartillon Shelter, Olin Waste Transfer Waste Drop-off Site, South Madison Demolitions & Site Restorations, East Streets Maintenance Facility Fire Sprinkler Replacement, Imagination Center at Reindahl Park, Fire Station 8 Lighting Retrofit, Dairy Dr Campground Demolition and Site Restoration, Engineering Services Building Locker Room Renovation
- Design Phase > Streets Division - Far West Operations Building, Central Library Lighting Retrofit, Parks Yahara Golf Maintenance Facility, Utility Materials Handling Site
- Planning Phase > Madison Police Department – South District and Police Evidence Operations,

Operations – Sewer and Stormwater Utilities

John Toso, Public Works General Foreperson

Vactor Crews – Continue working on AC's and PM's. With warmer weather just around the corner Mr. Brown will have crews stating Spring catch basin cleaning soon.

CCTV Crews – Mr. Kelley has his crews busy with CMOM, Post Repairs, New Construction and Pre Construction.

Construction Crews – Busy with sanitary point repairs, dredging projects and pin type casting replacements. OP-2's have been busy clearing areas with both forestry mulchers and hopefully be switching gears from snow removal to mowing for the 2026 season!

Stormwater

Janet Schmidt, Principal Engineer, Section Manager

The Manitou Box Culvert Extension project is out for bids! This will finish the last section of box between Manitou Way and the Arboretum Pond. Castle Creek at Warner Park is starting to pick up speed – lots of prep work to do before diving into the design. We are hoping to bid that this fall or next winter. We will be planning a Public Input Meeting for West Towne Pond in the next month. That will be a substantial project for the Stormwater Group. Staff is busy lining up the Prescribed Burn schedules and getting the mowing schedules all put into place. Budget season is back with the official capital budget kickoff in mid-March. We will have a lot of big dollar projects in the next few years! The Lake Forest area will be havinghad a Public Meeting to introduce the scope of work and improvements to this neighborhood, which will include some major underground work. Our watershed studies are getting closer to the finish line. We still have several to go yet but we are finalizing East Isthmus soon andJohn Nolen Drive soon. Thanks to

everyone on the Team for work well done!

Sanitary Sewer
Mark Moder, Principal Engineer, Section Manager
The 2026 street projects are now assigned or are now being actively being designed ad bid. Design staff are reminded to stay focused on getting sewer extension permits from projects. We cannot install sewer without sewer extension permit from the WDNR. Our next infill private apartment development where we have sewer infrastructure impacts (new offsite sewer) is 1617 Sherman Ave. This continues a priority project given that the apartment on Sherman Ave. will be occupied this summer. The railroad continues to be the final holdup for the project for both pre-bid work(borings) and construction permitting. Lift Stations Projects: Truax L.S.: Modifications were made to lift station to address power problems to the lift station. We do not know if the modifications completed to date worked but will know in spring when lift station experiences higher flows with the spring thaw/ heavy rain events. The Badger Lift Station Replacement plans are now nearing completion, but we need to obtain easements prior to bidding. Mayflower L.S. design has progressed and will be bidding in March-April. Citywide sanitary sewer model: Carollo has been hired for the City-wide sanitary sewer model, and the kickoff is in March. The City-wide sewer model will be a great tool for our department to provide an up-to-date status on how our collection system is operating and where we need to make improvements to keep our high level of service for our customers. Impact Fees- South High Point Road Impact Fee needs assessment is being put together. Pumpkin Hollow Impact Fee project design revised because the WNDR does not want to accept sewers located in the wetlands where we currently have our easements. We will be surveying, acquiring new easements, putting together the new design and bidding.

Land Information/Official Map
Jeff Quamme, Section Manager
- Always providing support for multiple engineering projects with research, easements, title and solutions regarding needs to accomplish many City projects.
- Real Estate projects, vacations, research and relocation orders for several engineering, planning, transportation and water projects
- 911 Address Point population is ongoing along with all other addressing demands with development at a high pace. 911 is still a priority.
- Private development related reviews continue at a high pace. (Addressing, reviews, storm water, official mapping, real estate projects, eminent domain projects, coordination of utility rights and agreements, etc)
- Research and mapping has begun of the areas of Blooming Grove to attach in the fall of 2027. This will continue and additional work identifying the parcels and confirming addresses as well will be ongoing.
- Updating of areas in need of adjustment spatially that are not accurately mapped as they are discovered with new land divisions.
- Continued of with Attorney's office for wrapping up Town of Madison properties owned by the City of Madison
- Research for many DOT, Dane County and City Related projects.

Engineering Technology
Candice Kasprzak, Engineering Technology Manager
No new blurb submitted.
Administration Staff
Johanna Johnson, Heidi Zigler, Jenna Webb
The March deadlines for Common Council resolutions was 8 a.m. Tuesday, March 3 (CC meeting 3/10) and is March 17 (CC meeting 3/24). There is just one BPW meeting this month on 3/11.

Finance
Steve Danner-Rivers, Financial Manager
The Finance Section is hard at work with closing out 2025 in order to get ready for the arrival of the financial auditors in April. Please understand that things may take a little longer during the first few months of the year as staff juggle the heavy workload required to both close out the prior year and still keep the current year moving along.
Construction Inspection
Kyle Frank, Principal Engineer Section
Construction inspection staff continue to work through 2025 project finalization. This includes closing contracts and getting assessment quantities to designers. Pre-cons for 2026 projects have begun to be scheduled and held for projects scheduled to begin in March and April, weather permitting. Inspectors are beginning to work on prep work for those early scheduled projects. Surveyors continue to work on preliminary surveys for 2026 projects and preparing for staking of early scheduled public works projects.
Coming and Going
New Hires
- Brendan Pittman (Engineer 3) (Public Works and Private Development) (he/him)

Promotion
- Seth Bauer (Facilities Maintenance Worker) (Facilities) (he/him)

Departures
- None

GEAR: The Engineering Division Intranet Site
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https://www.cityofmadison.com/employeenet/engineering

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City of Madison Engineering Division
210 Martin Luther King Jr Blvd
Madison, WI 53703
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Instagram: @MadisonEngr
Apple iTunes Podcast: Everyday Engineering
YouTube: @CityofMadisonEngineering

Hannah Mohelnitzky
(she/her)
Engineering Division
Communications
608-669-3560
hmohelnitzky@cityofmadison.com