



NEWS LOCAL

# Duluth's director of parks, libraries checks out

Jim Filby Williams leaves with pride in the city's progress but also says it's time to "recharge my batteries."



Jim Filby Williams, Duluth's director of parks, city properties and libraries, gestures toward Hartley Pond at Hartley Nature Center in Duluth on Nov. 7, 2023. Dan Williamson / File / Duluth Media Group



By **Peter Passi**

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DULUTH — After 12 years on the job under three different mayors, Jim Filby Williams has resigned from his latest post as director of the city's parks, libraries and other municipal properties.

Filby Williams says he leaves the job with pride for his team's accomplishments, gratitude for the opportunity to serve the

community, and a deep appreciation for all with whom he has had the privilege of working during his tenure.

He explained that it felt like time to move along, nevertheless, and “recharge my batteries” as he considers the next step in his career.

Filby Williams said he feels “really hopeful” about the departments and projects he leaves behind.

He noted that the city has been successful in seeking outside support for much of its work, leveraging local tax dollars with federal and state funding as well as support from other organizations.

“We keep kind of rough track. But I think in the past 12 years, we’ve brought in more than \$180 million of competitive funds and community donations, mostly to improve community infrastructure.

“And there’s much more of that coming down the pike, with \$6 to \$7 million in grant funds to renew and extend the Marten Trail, the national water trail, \$10 million next year to dramatically enhance the remainder of the downtown Lakewalk, which still has much of its early 1990s infrastructure. It will be more safe and accessible and resilient and beautiful,” he said.

Mayor Roger Reinert and Jim Filby Williams celebrate a ribbon-cutting ceremony for the newly reopened Brighton Beach Park on Oct. 28. 2024 Peter Passi / File / Duluth Media Group

At Spirit Mountain, Filby Williams also pointed to “unprecedented public/private investments” that he said promise to improve the recreation area, boost business and potentially lessen the city’s ongoing financial risk associated with its operation.

“There are a lot of good things happening, and I’m confident with the leadership of Mayor (Roger) Reinert and Council President (Terese) Tomanek, that work will continue,” he said.

Filby Williams said he remains concerned about the city’s park funding, however, noting that for 12 of the past 14 years “the parks budget has been cut automatically, administratively, largely out of public and council view or awareness, without meaningful opportunity for the community to express their feelings about these recurrent cuts.”

Since Mayor Reinert took office earlier this year, there has been significant turnover in the city’s administrative team. In addition to

Filby Williams' departure, Duluth also has a new city administrator, city attorney, finance director and city clerk.

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