



## **DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SERVICES MONTHLY ACTIVITIES REPORT NOVEMBER 3, 2015**

The following items are designed to present information on work items recently completed, those expected to occur during the upcoming month, and other items of potential interest to the public. Information is subject to change at any time due to staff availability, weather events or other emergency situations, or numerous other factors. Items are not necessarily in order of importance, and may not be repeated in their entirety from month to month unless there is a need for continued reporting.

1. Action Line items – In total, 113 requests for service (out of a total of 149 for the entire City organization – for 76%) were logged into the Action Line requiring service from the Public Services Department during the month of October. The largest number of requests in a single category is 57 forestry issues, followed by 24 high grass complaints, which brings the total to 1163 for the year (compared with 829 for all of 2014). There were 14 pothole concerns, 8 signs concerns, 2 street sweeping complaints, 2 vandalism issues, 2 shopping cart collections from Kroger, and 4 others in 4 categories.

As per the Department operations manual, all code enforcement items (particularly high grass) where property owners will eventually be billed are entered by staff and tracked within the Action Line system for record-keeping purposes, and other non-emergency requests for service received via phone call are logged into the system as well.

2. Soldiers and Sailors Electrical / Lighting Project – the 2014-15 Capital Improvements Program included some funding to install lighting for the Civil War monument off a permanent feed, and to install an electrical service for the park in general that could be used for future events. Since the Operations Supervisor is a Master Electrician, DPS will be handling this project internally as time allows this fall before frost penetrates the ground. It is expected that work will be completed by the end of this month, weather and any other high-priority tasks permitting.
3. Veterans Park Restroom - the 2012-13 Capital Improvements Program included funding for some exterior renovations in the amount of \$10,000. We are still planning to perform this work internally, and are finalizing the design. At this point it appears this will likely be a later fall or early winter project, once Soldiers and Sailors Park electrical work is completed. Since we could use tents and portable heat for temperature-critical items, this item was deferred in favor of the Soldiers and Sailors work, where digging should be completed before frost is an issue.

4. Overall Parks Maintenance Transition – per Council budget direction, a Parks Supervisor was hired effective August 24, and the new Maintenance Worker (a transfer from Water) began work in May, bringing the Teamster work force from 15 to 16 full time positions. From September 8 through October 31, two existing DPS Maintenance Workers plus one remaining seasonal staff were assigned to parks, under the supervision of the Parks Supervisor and Recreation Manager. For the off-season, DPS will again assume any necessary routine maintenance (particularly trash can collection) through the end of March, with any non-routine items or special projects coordinated with Recreation staff.
5. Forestry Activities – unfortunately, due to a number of emergency call-outs and numerous storm events, most of the regular forestry crew staff time in the month of June and early July was spent simply responding to emergency cleanup of large downed trees, and we are still trying to get caught up on the backlog, which of course includes new requests (57 for the month of October alone). At this point, all but the most critical removal requests are still running between 30 and 60 days out, though we have been doing our best to shorten this time frame. Exacerbating this situation is the fact that our primary “hi-ranger” aerial vehicle has been out for service for over two weeks while we wait for delivery of a needed part, so we have had to use the smaller reach electrical bucket truck instead, which in turn impacts scheduling of other work and limits the height of trees that can be trimmed. We are expecting to have the unit back within a week or so. Being fully caught up on removals and trimming will likely require the assignment of additional personnel this winter to handle trimming items, which can only be reasonably done if winter is not as harsh as the last two have been.

The fall tree planting program is underway and should be completed within the next 2-3 weeks. This year we elected to plant the majority of our new trees in the fall to minimize heat stress, and we will be planting just under 100 trees in total. The City’s tree layer is now available on the Geographic Information System (GIS), and this will serve us as an effective tool to better plan our proactive work activities, particularly species diversification and infill of new trees. However, it has also highlighted the difficulty in keeping up with maintenance and planting needs with our current 3-person work crew. With 11,164 total trees, even a five-year rotating trimming program would require 2,200 per year, or more than one for every crew working hour. As this does not even include roughly 150 to 200 full removals per year (some of which can take an entire day each), planting time, and the need to assist in winter operations and staff leave time, it is clear we do presently have adequate personnel assigned for the long term. Options will be presented to the City Council as a part of next year’s budget process.

6. Corridor Landscaping Projects – as a part of the 2014-15 Capital Improvements Program, \$20,000 was set aside in each location for landscaping improvements along North Dixie Highway and South Monroe Street. A consulting firm, the Johnson Hill Land Ethics Studio, has prepared landscaping plans for both of these locations, as well as Worrell Park, and these are being circulated to staff and Council. Since the cost estimates greatly exceed the available funds for the total of the three locations, we will be preparing submissions for this year’s Capital Improvements Program to fund them all, with plantings likely performed by a contractor due to staff backlog in other work activities.
7. Leaf Bag Distribution – the City began distributing leaf bags on Monday, October 12 at the Engineering and Public Services counters from 8:00 A.M. to 4:30 P.M. Monday through Friday, and at the Police Department from 6:00 A.M. to 5:30 P.M. Monday through Friday and 6:00 A.M. to 1:30 P.M. on Saturdays. As of right now, it appears

likely that the supply will be exhausted by the end of this week, which is still longer than last year's distribution, which only lasted three weeks.

8. Yard Waste – while we have not set the final end date for yard waste collection, it will end with the regular refuse collection day for residents either the week of November 30 or December 7, and will resume the first week of April 2016. We will gauge this final date for a decision sometime in the next week based on the leaves that remain on the trees and after consultation with staff. While some residents from year to year express concern that we should continue collection later in December, by eliminating each week of collection, we save over \$4,500, and we normally do not see the kind of volume in December to justify extending the collection time at this cost. Residents may place yard waste in biodegradable bags (such as the City distributes) or re-usable cans with yard waste stickers (distributed for free at the DPS counter) until the end of the collection period.
9. Fleet Financial Analysis – proposals were due September 9 for a consultant study of the Stores and Equipment Fund, with respect to its long-term capital replacement needs and appropriate setting of monthly rates to outside departments. No proposals were submitted at the due date, but we have had subsequent conversations with the City's financial audit firm, and we believe they will submit a proposal for a slightly modified scope. This should still be ready in time for the 2016-17 budget process and will be forwarded for Council approval as soon as it is ready.
10. SMCC State Championship signs – after a fairly lengthy review process with the school and researching of MDOT requirements, staff has now installed the updated state championship signs at the City limits on M-125 and US-24 to reflect the 2014-15 school year state titles for football, volleyball, and softball, as well as retaining the previous state titles in volleyball. Our policy moving forward will be to recognize titles earned in the previous decade, with a change to the signs made the next time a title is earned by a local school.
11. Leaf Collection – around mid-October, DPS begins to intensify our on-street leaf collection activities, as even those leaves that fall directly into the street from City trees and those that blow around from adjacent property terraces can easily become excessive. For a period of about four weeks, we run two or three (if all of our older units are operable) sweepers along with two to four dump trucks in a rotating convoy to avoid having to continuously return the sweepers to dump leaves themselves each time the hopper unit is full. We have found this is the most efficient method, but residents should be advised that it does slow down the regular sweeping schedule from a normal 2-week cycle to closer to a 4-week cycle, and all work is often not completed until the end of November, depending on weather conditions. This also unfortunately can tie up nearly half of our available personnel during this time, so our ability to respond to discretionary tasks is very limited. Obviously, removal of as many leaves as possible before the first major snowfall is a high priority to avoid plowing these back into the terrace, which makes for a larger mess in the spring depending on the quantity. We will be delivering our composted leaves to Snow's Nursery, who has agreed to process roughly 1,600 cubic yards for under \$5,000 on our behalf. Leaf collection, like regular street sweeping activities, is charged to the City's Refuse Fund millage.

12. Winter Operations Policy – shortly, the Department will be issuing our official winter operations policy document, which will likely be similar to, if not identical to, last year’s policy. We typically strive for this document to be available by November 15 each year. Also, the Clerk-Treasurer’s office advertised the ordinance requiring sidewalk clearance in October as required by the ordinance, so that the City’s legal notification is now met.
13. Holiday Parade / Banners – DPS staff will be partnering with volunteers from the Downtown Development Authority (DDA) to install decorations for the Holiday Parade, which is scheduled for Saturday, November 21. As with last year, the DDA volunteers will be decorating any poles and locations that can be reached with ladders, and our staff will be installing the overhead decorations at the three (3) banner locations, the lights on the large tree in front of the courthouse, and the light poles on the Monroe Street Bridge. This year, we have been asked by the DDA to mount brackets for the installation of some additional new lit snowflakes and other decorative lighting arrangements in some areas where pole receptacles exist (the first wave was installed last year), so that DPS crews can then easily snap them into place each year. Over the next few years, the numbers of these will be increased as more are purchased.

***Prepared by: Patrick M. Lewis, P.E., Director of Engineering and Public Services***