



## **DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SERVICES MONTHLY ACTIVITIES REPORT OCTOBER 3, 2016**

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, 167 requests for service (out of a total of 199 for the entire City organization – for 84%) were logged into the Action Line requiring service from the Public Services Department during the month of September. There were 116 high grass complaints, followed by the next largest categories of forestry items (38) and pothole requests (8). In addition to these, there were 3 signs requests, 1 flag item, and 1 vandalism issue requiring DPS action.

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. Parks staffing – Two (2) Maintenance Workers have been transferred under the Parks Maintenance Supervisor from April 4 through October 29 this year as per the adopted budget and approved organizational structure. Should the Parks Supervisor require additional assistance or for heavy projects, DPS staff will assist as able at their request, otherwise full responsibility for parks items will fall under the Parks and Recreation Department. Exceptions include any forestry issues, the grass cutting contract, and contracted capital projects.
3. Forestry Activities – through consistent and targeted assignments, we are trying to stay even with routine trimming and removal requests. Our two sweeper operators were assigned this past winter to assist in “low limbing”, which consists of work that can be performed from the ground but is of a more proactive nature than that which is usually assigned to the full-time 3-person forestry crew, and we intend to make these assignments when possible during the coming winter. We also worked some targeted overtime this spring and summer to address some large-scale trimming requests and to address all stump grinding to allow residents to begin to maintain their lawns properly. Full removals are still running approximately 30-60 days out, but we are continuing to make headway in addressing latent backlogs.

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 not presently have adequate personnel assigned for the long term. Administrative staff is continuing to review options to address these issues long-term. We have completed testing for a Forestry and Grounds Supervisor position and have made a conditional offer, with the hopes that the individual can begin work by the end of the month. We are hopeful that providing greater focus to this important service area by a professional staffer will assist in better advance planning and more efficient operations.

4. Yard Waste – yard waste collection began the week of March 28 and will continue through the first week of December (likely end date December 9). Guidelines for yard waste collection are listed on the City's Refuse Reference document on the City's web page.
5. Street Sweeping – we are continuing our regular maintenance schedule, and our typical frequency results in sweeping most areas every two weeks or so with two sweepers. While we have one new sweeper, the newest of our other units is from 2001, so we continue to need to make extensive repairs on a regular basis to these high-maintenance sweepers, which does set us behind from time to time. Beginning usually later this month, we typically need to begin following the sweepers with dump trucks due to the start of on-street leaf pickup, which is much more intense than regular pickup.
6. Mowing Contract – we are in the third year of a five-year mowing contract, and the contractors will be continuing their activities through November. The regular contract work was divided into 5 groups this contract, with US Lawns of Southgate handling mowing in Woodland Cemetery and Memorial Place, along with monthly weed trimming along more than a mile of riverbank, and Ron Noel Lawn Service of Monroe handling all other City properties. In total, the City contracts for mowing 613 gross acres (nearly 1 square mile), which is roughly 9% of the entire area of the City.
7. High Grass Enforcement – US Lawns of Southgate is again performing our ordinance mowing, also in the third year of a five-year contract. Lot sizes have been grouped, so that the pricing will be the same for all lots of the same size (for example, under 0.25 acres, 0.25-0.50 acres, 0.50-1.00 acres, and per acre for 1 acre or more). As with 2015, the Property Maintenance and Zoning Officer in the Building Department will handle review and enforcement, whereas the Public Services and Engineering clerical staff will handle tracking and billing. Last year, 1166 complaints were received and logged into the Action Line for high grass with the vast majority turned over for enforcement, so this is no small time commitment for either department. The City's overall policy statement on high grass and weed enforcement can be found on the City's web page. This year to date, there are 859 such items, only a small drop-off despite a generally dry summer.
8. Cold Patching – this continues to be a major work activity, as we are still addressing complaints as they come in, though we have generally addressed all issues on major streets and previous complaints from the spring. Citizens should feel free to contact

Public Services staff via the Action line, phone, or email to report potholes, and we will do our best to handle complaints within 48 hours.

9. Alley Grading – one of the major maintenance items for which staff receives a number of requests is for grading of stone alleys. We typically complete one thorough grading of each alley sometime in June and July, though we do address acute hazards such as deep potholes as complaints are raised. We are completed with this comprehensive work for the season, but are addressing spot complaints as needed.
10. Vactor Truck / Storm Cleaning – our vactor truck has continued running as much as the schedule allows and based upon specific complaints. While this is an operation that we would ideally like to undertake year-round (in non-freezing weather) for proactivity, staffing levels do not allow for this and vactor work must be scheduled with other priority items as needed, particularly since this work is a 2-person operation.
11. Special Events – The Labor Day Bar-B-Q (September 3), Labor Day Parade (September 3), and Monroe High School (September 23) and SMCC (October 7) Homecoming Parades have occurred in September, with one to come in early October as well. While these events do not require quite as intense a level of staff involvement as the July and August major events, nonetheless significant overtime costs will be expended in total. While these events serve an important cultural and recreational purpose for our residents and visitors, nevertheless our activities can displace other potential projects and proactive maintenance activities in other areas, and are often the source of significant overtime costs.
12. Leaf Bag Distribution – the City will begin distributing leaf bags on Monday, October 10 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. Last year, we began distribution on October 12 and the supply lasted approximately four weeks, so we would expect similar results this year. Due to concerns raised by the Fire Department about the amount of combustible material stored at one time in City Hall, we will likely store pallets in the garage of the City-owned home at 207 East Second to allow Engineering staff to bring in a pallet or two at a time as needed. To ensure all residents have a fair opportunity to receive bags, we are limiting residents to no more than 50 bags each.
13. Street Condition Rating – as is typically done each September, the Director and Superintendent of Public Services have reviewed each block of roadway to begin assembling this year's street inventory. This report is used to develop priorities for the 2017 street program, and cost estimates are prepared in time for the 2017-18 Capital Improvements Program adoption in February. The report should be available in the next week or so.
14. Winter preparatory work activities – during the month of October, there are a number of items that are handled in anticipation of winter. The Lotus Fountain in Loranger Square is normally shut off for the season before leaves begin falling and clog the pump, and this has already occurred. The aeration fountain in the Munson Park pond, however, is far enough from trees that this is not an issue, but due to a recent maintenance issue, this has been turned off and will be removed shortly rather than expend the effort to return it to operation for a short time window. While this is a parks item, as it requires heavier equipment and a little more specialized expertise, DPS crews will continue to handle directly. The same is true with the boat docks at Hellenberg Field, which are

required under the terms of the original MDNR grant to remain in service through October 15. These will be removed sometime around this date, though we may leave them in place through the following weekend or two depending on the expected weather conditions. The Parks staff will be closing the restroom facilities in the parks sometime the last week of the month, as we have historically chosen this week based on typical weather conditions and to prevent vandalism over the Halloween period. Lastly, the floral display at Memorial Place will likely be removed in the next two weeks due to frost concerns.

15. 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, 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.
16. Refuse Collection Contract Extension – as was previously reported to the City Council via the City Manager’s weekly report and discussed at a work session, the City’s curbside refuse collection contract is set to expire on February 28, 2017. Due to the desire to research the current state of the refuse collection industry and potential service enhancements and new technologies, the City asked Waste Management to propose terms for a one-year extension. This request for a contract extension is planned to be placed on the October 17 City Council agenda for approval.

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