

July 3, 2019

Department of Public Services

The following items are designed to present information on Public Services Department 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. Citizen Request Module (CRM) items – The City uses the “My Monroe on the Go” application to track citizen requests. During the month of June, a total of 95 service requests were entered requiring action from this department, up from 82 the previous month. The largest two (2) categories by far were 49 forestry concerns and 27 pothole or road hazard complaints. The remaining categories were ten (10) street light outages, five (5) garbage concerns, and one (1) each of signs, street sweeping, bike rack request, and a general construction project inquiry.
2. Forestry Activities – in the month of June, the Forestry work group completed 17 tree removals, trimmed 68 trees, removed 65 stumps, and planted 23 trees. Additionally, landscaping improvements were made at the City Hall Visitor Parking Lot and at the Riverfront Parking Lot.
3. Street Sweeping – We are running only one sweeper throughout the City in maintenance mode through September. Again for the 2019 season, we are focusing less on street sweeping and more on vector operations, both of which will be charged to the Refuse Fund, as we feel that this change may have an overall more favorable effect on storm system maintenance and street flooding prevention.
4. Vector Truck / Storm Cleaning – staff has now begun utilizing the vector truck on a regular basis to begin to address the latent backlog in storm sewer cleaning activities. It is hoped that this will yield long-term benefits in storm sewer and street maintenance versus a more intense sweeping program. As always, we will respond to any acute issues that are brought to our attention.
5. Cold Patching – this continues to be a primary work activity throughout the year. Citizens should feel free to contact Public Services staff via the citizen request module, phone, or email to report potholes, and we will do our best to handle complaints as quickly as possible. We try to address any complaints within 48 hours, except during late winter and early spring when requests can overwhelm the system due to frost leaving the ground.
6. Yard Waste Collection – yard waste collection is underway and is scheduled to continue through the first week of December this year.

7. Grass Contract – Ron Noel Lawn Service is continuing as the City’s grass contractor through the 2021 season, and work activities for Woodland Cemetery, Memorial Place, and the Ordinance Mowing that were held by a previous vendor from 2014–18 were added to Noel’s contract at the April 1 City Council meeting. Weekly mowing activities will continue through the end of October, with the month of November generally designated for leaf clean-up and final cutting as needed under the contract. Due to extremely wet weather in May and early June, the contractor is just now on a regular schedule, so there are still some areas that will require a few weeks to regain “normal” appearance for the season.
8. High Grass Enforcement – Ron Noel will be providing this year’s ordinance enforcement mowing per City Council approval on April 1, and our annual policy statement and procedures is posted on the City’s web site. 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). The Building Department will handle review and enforcement, whereas the Public Services and Engineering clerical staff will handle tracking and billing. Changes made in the administrative cost structure last year to increase the administrative fee to one commensurate with the City’s actual costs did seem to discourage violators and reduce the number of complaints in general, though the wet spring did not help matters.
9. Parks staffing – As with past seasons, one (1) DPS Maintenance Worker was transferred under the Parks Maintenance Supervisor again this year. The temporary assignment began March 31 and will run through October 26 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 all parks items other than forestry issues, the grass cutting contract, and contracted capital projects will again fall under the Parks and Recreation Department.
10. Memorial Place Floral Display – we have worked again with Ruhlig Farms in Carleton to supply flowers that were placed in the traditional “MONROE” display by our staff as in past years, in time for the Memorial Day parade. The display is maintained through late September, when the threat of frost requires staff to remove the plantings.
11. Munson Park Fountain – staff installed the decorative aeration fountain in the Munson Park pond in early June, and this is usually left in place until mid-autumn.
12. Lotus Fountain start-up – start-up of the Lotus Fountain in Loranger Square was delayed while staff rebuilt the pumps. At present, staff is working on installing a new vertical pump system and re-working the control panel, and it is hoped that this can be completed this Friday. The Lotus Fountain pump is a perpetual problem, as the fountain is not of sufficient depth for a standard pump configuration, so we are continually trying new configurations in hopes of extending the time lag between rebuilds. We will likely be soliciting a maintenance contract from an outside vendor for future years due to difficulty in scheduling start-up in a timely fashion given other staff priorities.
13. Alley Grading – one of the major maintenance items for which staff receives a number of requests this time of year is for grading of stone alleys. While this work could be done immediately after the spring thaw, these do need to dry out as much as possible to maximize our ability to grade them properly. It is the goal of staff to complete one thorough grading of each alley sometime in June, though we do address acute hazards such as deep potholes as complaints are raised. Many alleys have been completed, but it appears work will continue through most of July for completion.

14. Mosquito Control – as in previous years, Public Services staff has purchased approximately 3300 briquettes that can be placed into catch basins for up to 180 days of larvae control City-wide, along with granular insecticide that can be placed into detention areas throughout the year for up to 30 days of protection. The City no longer performs adult spraying, as we feel we get a much greater return on investment by treating mosquitoes at the larval stage, and spraying must be done in specific weather conditions and generally on overtime. Staff has completed tablet application and will continue to treat detention areas monthly. It is expected that even with the application of the tablets, this will be a bad mosquito season due to excess spring rainfall.
15. Portable Stage Repairs – during the winter months, staff was working on performing rehabilitation to the electric service and numerous panels for the portable stage. Completion of this work is going to require a significant investment, so guidance will be sought as to whether or not repairs should be made or the stage should be sold.
16. Property Maintenance Assistance – the City has recently been acquiring a number of residential dwellings for eventual incorporation into the River Raisin National Battlefield, and in some cases, for general blight remediation. Public Services staff has been assisting other City departments as needed on a number of tasks, including securing / boarding up, gaining entry, re-keying locks, remediating residual blight issues, and some lawn maintenance, depending on the property. It is expected that this assistance will ramp up again this year, as additional grant funding has become available for additional acquisitions.
17. Roadway Flooding – Monroe County in general continues to experience some of the worst flooding in the last several decades, as higher lake levels coupled with easterly winds have been repeatedly pushing the elevation of Lake Erie several feet higher than normal for 24-48 hours at a time on multiple occasions this past spring. In fact, both May and, in turn, June set records for the monthly average mean lake level for any month since recording began in 1918. While the City is fortunate in that our effects are limited to backwaters from both the River Raisin and Plum Creek Bay rather than wave action and significant damage to homes and structure, nonetheless there are impacts on our residents. Even the standing water elevation of the lake is at present higher than a number of roadway catch basin rims, resulting in constant standing water, and this is expected to be the case for at least the next few months, according to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

The most common locations of heavy roadway flooding and street closures are Front Street from I-75 to DTE and the Orchard East neighborhood. The flooding in front of the Wastewater Plant can impact the ability of the industries east of I-75 to access their facilities when it occurs. The most acute flooding area in Orchard East is Bayview and Glenwood, where standing water now covers the roadway continuously for 100-150 feet on Bayview, often up to 12 inches deep.

The storm system around the Wastewater Plant where flooding has been most acute drains to the river through a flood control structure that was installed in 1985. Fortunately, DPS staff worked with Solomon Diving of Monroe during the past week to determine that the flap gate within this structure had fallen off its hinges and was inoperable, and was able to re-mount the gate, which appears for now to be holding back the high water. We expect to be able to drain down the portions of the roadway draining into this system shortly, though extensive pumping is required first due to the fact that this system also serves the port property to the south, where the lagoons have been back-charged for several months by the high lake waters.

While none of the effects in the City are catastrophic in nature, nonetheless the highest lake levels are forecast at least through the end of the year. Engineering staff will be working to review potential long-term options (if any are feasible) for within the next few months.

18. Special Events – during this past month the Public Services staff assisted with street closures and electrical connections for the Downtown Monroe Business Network (DMBN) car show and outdoor market event June 8. On July 28 we will be assisting with the Monroe County Fair Parade by providing traffic control and staging at the DPS yard on Jones Avenue. Upcoming events for the month of August also include the one-day River Raisin Jazz Festival on August 10, the River Raisin cleanup event on August 10, and the “Ducky Dash” on August 15, which requires the use of the forestry aerial truck to drop rubber ducks into the water downtown. Staff will be assisting with hauling away of debris for the river cleanup project, and our Jazz Festival preparations typically include a comprehensive cleanup of the downtown area, as well as the usual traffic control and electrical assistance.

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