



Monthly Activities Report

Department of Engineering and Public Services

April 1, 2018 **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 items – In total, 63 requests for service (out of a total of 92 for the entire City organization – for 68%) were logged into the City's new online citizen request module (My Civic) requiring service from the Engineering and Public Services Department during the month of March. Requests included 47 pothole referrals, 6 street light outages, 8 garbage collection concerns, and 2 street sign concerns.

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 this system for record-keeping purposes, and other non-emergency requests for service received via phone call are logged into the system as well. Since the new web site launch on February 1, we have been using a new program associated with our web site upgrade, though City Council has directed a change to a different platform for better citizen interaction, and this occur later in 2018.

2. Forestry Activities – Forestry Activities – During the month of March, the Forestry work group has focused mainly on stump removals and restorations. Approximately 60 stumps have been removed and restored. Additionally, the work crew completed trimming of 17 trees, and removal of 9 trees. The City Forester has issued 5 notices to private property owners for trees found to be in hazardous conditions. The property owners typically have 30 days to eliminate the hazard. Furthermore, the City has formed partnerships with the Monroe Rotary Club and ITC Holdings, Inc. for the purpose of planting 62 trees on Maple Avenue. The planting date is Saturday, May 19 starting at 10AM, and volunteers are being sought by contacting the Forestry Division at 734-241-2024. Finally, plans are being made for this year's Arbor Day Celebration at Manor Elementary. The tentative date is Friday, April 27, and more information will follow when it becomes available.
3. Yard Waste – yard waste collection has now resumed for the season as of this week's collection, and will run through the first full week in December.
4. Vactor Truck / Storm Cleaning – At present, the tank on our unit has deteriorated severely and thus the equipment is presently unusable, and a decision is pending on repair of the tank or replacement of the unit, which hopefully will be made within the next month or so once the director and superintendent review some available new and refurbished units.

5. Cold Patching – this continues to be a primary work activity throughout the year, but the month of March is normally especially hard on the City’s roadways, due to the extremely variable weather conditions and multiple freeze / thaw cycles. 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. While ordinarily we try to address any complaints within 48 hours, during this time of the year, it is virtually impossible to do so even with all available personnel and equipment tasked with this work due to the sheer volume of necessary locations. Crews have already performed 3–4 runs of our worst roadways, including North Custer Road, Ternes Drive, and Telb Street in particular.
6. Refuse Contract – City Council awarded a contract to Waste Management for the next 5-year curbside refuse collection at their September 18 meeting. The new contract technically began March 1 and will include unlimited refuse collection and “opt in” for 64-gallon recycling carts, but new terms will be phased in over the next month. Staff and Waste Management determined the most efficient way to distribute the new 64-gallon carts was to drop them off at homes presently recycling rather than force residents to call to request them, though they can still be returned later if residents instead choose to remain with smaller bins. This primary drop-off occurred the week of March 26, followed by the first collection with the new carts the week of April 2. Unfortunately, this initial drop-off had some issues, as the cart supplier was unable to keep up with the recycling pick-up truck as was promised and expected and delivery to numerous homes was skipped on the initial pass due to confusion over which homes were presently recycling. Despite the delivery contractor working both Friday and Saturday last week, resolution of this is now expected to take another week or two to sort through. New requests for larger carts from new homeowners or those wishing to begin recycling will go through the DPS clerical staff throughout the duration of the contract. Unlimited collection will officially begin the week of May 7, but since Waste Management is now unable by the terms of the contract to supply us with any more excess refuse tags for sale to the public, staff has been advising residents to simply put the overage out, and the contractor is obligated to collect it.
7. Winter Operations (specific to previous month) – the month of March was fairly typical, in that the crews responded to multiple smaller events, none of which required declaration of a snow emergency. However, the combination of multiple freeze / thaw cycles was somewhat problematic from a maintenance standpoint, as on multiple occasions early in the month crews had to cold patch pothole areas followed closely behind by necessary plowing operations, undoing some of the work.
8. Monroe Multi-Sports Complex assistance – Public Services staff have been assisting with numerous tasks for the eventual repurposing of the Monroe Multi-Sports complex, particularly within the past few months. Staff will also be coordinating an online auction for the various items designated for sale that were not already sold through sealed bids, and this auction is planned for May 21 through Brad Neuhart and Rollo Juckette, Auctionneers.
9. 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 continue and likely ramp up for the foreseeable future.

10. Street Sweeping – we are planning to begin street sweeping later this week or early next week with both primary sweepers. Typically, we will run a truck along with the sweepers on their first pass, which usually takes 2-4 weeks to catch all areas. The first sweeping of the year is charged to Winter Maintenance in the street funds as opposed to the Refuse Fund (consistent with MDOT practices). Due to the intensity of our cold patching activities and the excessive debris from the winter, our first pass is likely to take most of the month of April again this year. Again for the 2018 season, once the early season sweeping is completed, we will be focusing less on street sweeping and more on vector operations (provided suitable repairs can be made in time), 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.
11. Parks staffing – As with past seasons, one (1) DPS Maintenance Worker will be transferred under the Parks Maintenance Supervisor again this year. The temporary assignment begins April 2 and will run through October 27 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.
12. Spring Banners – as requested by the Downtown Development Authority, the downtown banners were replaced with spring seasonal banners two weeks ago and will remain installed until summer when they are replaced with the jazz banners.
13. Hellenberg Boat Ramps – our previous MDNR grant funding at this location obligates us to maintain the boat launch from mid-April to mid-October. The ramps will be installed sometime within the next two (2) weeks as required.
14. Mowing Contract – we are in the fifth year of a five-year mowing contract, and the projected start date is the week of April 16. 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.
15. High Grass Enforcement – US Lawns of Southgate will again be performing our ordinance mowing, also in the fifth year of a five-year contract. Within the next few weeks, I will be providing Council and the public with our full policy statement via email and web posting, respectively. 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 authorized start date of ordinance mowing is May 1. As with 2017, the Building Department will handle review and enforcement, whereas the Public Services and Engineering clerical staff will handle tracking and billing. Last year, 653 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, despite ordinance changes that were made in 2017, such as increasing the administrative fee to one commensurate with the City's actual costs, that did seem to discourage violators and reduce the number of complaints by roughly 300 over the prior year.

16. Riverwalk – typically, we will open the Riverwalk for the season when it appears that any early spring / snow melt flooding has passed, though consistent rains like are predicted for this week can always cause subsequent closures depending on the water elevation. The Riverwalk was opened by DPS staff in March, and the Parks and Recreation Department will be collecting refuse containers and performing other routine maintenance throughout the season.
17. Memorial Place Floral Display – we again plan to work with Ruhlig Farms in Carleton to supply flowers that can be placed in the traditional “MONROE” display by our staff as in past years, typically in time for the Memorial Day parade, provided that threat of frost has ceased.
18. 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 pellets 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. We usually start applying tablets sometime in May, though this is usually governed somewhat by weather conditions.
19. Lotus Fountain and Munson Park Fountain – staff is planning to install the decorative aeration fountain in the Munson Park pond sometime this month and start up the Lotus Fountain in Loranger Square sometime in late May or June, after the trees have dropped most of their spring debris that often clogs the pumps.
20. 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.
21. Crosswalk signs – the warning signs that had been installed in the roadway itself at various mid-block crosswalk locations in the downtown area, particularly on Front Street between Harrison and Macomb, Macomb Street between Second and Front, and Washington Street between First and Front, were removed for potential snow plowing operations. These will be replaced as time allows sometime this month. While in a few locations placing these signs in the crosswalks themselves can make maneuvering a little more difficult, they have proven very popular with downtown patrons. Casual observations made by City Hall staff indicate a drastic difference in vehicles stopping for pedestrians when these are present.

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