

October 5, 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 – The City launched the new “My Monroe on the Go” application in August that is now being used to track citizen requests, and will now automatically generate work orders for service. During the month of September, a total of 64 service requests were entered requiring action from this department. The largest category, as in most months, was Forestry with 47 requests, followed by 9 pothole issues, 5 garbage complaints, 5 street light outages, and 4 each in the categories of road hazard and signs.
2. Forestry Activities – in the month of September the Forestry work group completed the removal of 13 trees, trimmed 32 trees, and planted 45 new trees. An additional 134 trees are scheduled to be planted within the next month or so to complete this year’s fall planting.
3. Vactor Truck / Storm Cleaning – the City Council approved the purchase of a new vactor truck to be used in cleaning catch basins and storm sewers at the August 6 meeting, and we accepted delivery a few weeks ago. We will attempt to complete as much work as possible before heavy leaf drop requires the re-assignment of vactor personnel.
4. Cold Patching – this continues to be a primary work activity throughout the year, even now that the weather conditions have stabilized. 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 typically try to address any complaints within 48 hours most of the year.
5. 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 though more sporadically in the future, though the current group of 30 homes have now been demolished.

6. Street Sweeping – we are presently running one sweeper for our maintenance level until later this month, when multiple units are used for the heavy leaf season. Again for the 2018 season, after the early season sweeping was completed, we have been focusing less on street sweeping and more on other operations. For the remainder of the season, now that our new vacator has been delivered, we will focus on vacator operations, which are also 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.
7. Parks staffing – As with past seasons, one (1) DPS Maintenance Worker has been transferred under the Parks Maintenance Supervisor again this year. The temporary assignment began 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.
8. Mowing Contract – we are in the fifth year of a five-year mowing contract, and mowing activities started in late April and will run through the end of 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. The City Council has approved extending the contract with Ron Noel Lawn Service for their activities for an additional three (3) seasons through 2021, and we will be exploring options for the riverbank mowing with our own staff starting in 2019, depending on equipment purchases. We will also be looking at changes to the delivery package for the cemeteries as well starting in 2019.
9. Fountains – staff has turned off the Lotus Fountain in Loranger Square for the season, as leaf drop frequently clogs the pumps. The decorative fountain in Munson Park will also be removed shortly as well.
10. Special Events – Public Services staffed or provided assistance to numerous events during the month of September, including the Labor Day Bar-B-Q (September 1), Labor Day Parade (September 1), the Rally by the River (September 15), the SMCC Homecoming Parade (September 21), and the DMBN Craft Beer Festival (September 22). While these events do not require quite as intense a level of staff involvement as our signature Jazz Festival / Art Fair event, nonetheless significant overtime costs will be expended in total. While the smaller 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.
11. Leaf Bag Distribution – the City will begin distributing leaf bags on Saturday, October 6 at the Department of Public Services facility at 222 Jones Avenue. Bags will be distributed Saturdays in October from 8 A.M. to 1 P.M., and Mondays and Wednesdays from 3 P.M. to 6 P.M. for at least the first two weeks of distribution. We may also schedule distribution for the remaining Saturdays, Mondays and Wednesdays in October based on the traffic the first two weeks and the remaining supply. Bags will be limited to 50 per person for City residents only, and staff will load them directly into vehicles for the citizens.

12. Banners – the downtown summer seasonal jazz banners were replaced with the fall banners earlier this month, and these remain up until near Thanksgiving.
13. Fountain Removals – the Lotus Fountain in Loranger Square has been shut off for the season, in anticipation that the trees immediately adjacent will begin dropping leaves and clogging the pumps shortly. Typically, the Munson Park pond fountain is removed near the end of October for the season by DPS staff as well.
14. Hellenberg Boat Dock Removal – Public Services staff will remove the boat docks at Hellenberg Field sometime later this month. By the terms of the original MDNR Trust Fund grant, these must remain open through at least October 15 each year.
15. Memorial Place Floral Display – due to expected frost conditions, the floral display at Memorial Place (Seventh and Monroe Streets) is normally removed in October. Toward the end of the season, we received some complaints that the border flowers had grown too tall and obscured the word “MONROE” in the center of the display. As these were substitute flowers used for the first time this year, other alternatives will be considered for future seasons.
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17. Enterprise Fleet Management Program – the City Council approved of entering into a contract with Enterprise to lease vehicles to the City in lieu of cash purchases, and said vehicles are then replaced on a five-year cycle to minimize maintenance costs. City staff will continue to perform the maintenance, and staff is finalizing the vehicle specifications for the first 18 vehicles. As a part of the program, we will also be switching to a different fueling program that should afford more widespread fueling options.

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