

September 6, 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 August, a total of 75 service requests were entered requiring action from this department, down from 126 the previous month. The largest two (2) categories by far were 51 forestry concerns and 13 pothole or road hazard complaints. The remaining categories were four (4) garbage concerns, three (3) street light outages, and one (1) each of street signs, pavement markings, impassable sidewalk due to construction, and a hornet's nest in a City tree.
2. Forestry Activities - in the month of August, the Forestry work group completed 87 tree removals, trimmed 125 trees, and trimmed 45 shrubs, plus the removal of 12 shrubs in the medians on North Dixie Highway. Bids will be received on September 10 for the fall tree planting program, which will be forwarded to the City Council for approval at their September 16 meeting.
3. Street Sweeping - We are running only one sweeper throughout the City in maintenance mode through this month. Again for the 2019 season, we are focusing less on street sweeping and more on vactor 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. Starting with the beginning of major leaf drop, usually in early October, we will begin utilizing a second sweeper with dump trucks following for maximum efficiency due to the quantity of leaves that need to be collected.
4. Vactor Truck / Storm Cleaning - staff is continuing to utilize the vactor 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. We typically will operate the vactor regularly until freezing temperatures preclude its operation, though with increased sweeper and truck operation it is difficult to keep a regular crew on full-time during October and November until leaves are collected.
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 continues 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.
8. High Grass Enforcement – Ron Noel is 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.
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. Lotus Fountain – the Lotus Fountain has been running now without incident since the second week of July, and staff completely re-worked the electrical system and pump configuration into one less prone to clogging. It is hoped that if this can continue operation without incident, not only can the fountain operate later in the year but also be simpler to start up in the springtime. This year's pumps cost significantly less than the special order pumps that were required for the old horizontal configuration. Normally we would pull the pumps around the end of September, but given the late start and re-working of the design, we will leave this running as long as possible this fall.
11. 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. 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. All alleys in the City have now received their comprehensive grading, and we will continue to respond to acute hazards for the remainder of the year.
12. Mosquito Control – as in previous years, Public Services staff purchased approximately 3300 briquettes that were placed into catch basins for up to 180 days of larvae control City-wide, along with granular insecticide that are 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 through the end of September.

13. Portable Stage Repairs – during the winter months last year, 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.
14. 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 coming fall and winter, as additional grant funding has become available for additional acquisitions.
15. Roadway Flooding – earlier in the spring and summer, Monroe County was dealing with some of the most severe flooding in the last several decades, as higher lake levels coupled with easterly winds repeatedly pushed 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. At various times this year, even the standing water elevation of the lake was higher than a number of roadway catch basin rims, resulting in constant standing water.

Fortunately, according to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, lake levels have receded roughly one (1) foot since their high in June, with a forecasted drop of another six (6) inches through the end of September. Heavy rain events, of course, could alter this forecast to some degree, and it should be noted that the present elevation is still 11 inches above August 2018, and 27 inches above the long-term average for August.

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 can cover the roadway continuously for 100–150 feet on Bayview, often up to 12 inches deep, depending on the strength of the east winds.

The storm system around the Wastewater Plant where flooding had been most acute this spring drains to the river through a flood control structure that was installed in 1985. Fortunately, DPS staff worked with Solomon Diving of Monroe in early July 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 most of the high water, though it is leaking to a small degree. Staff has been pumping down the system daily for most of the summer, and we believe it is now below a level that can accommodate several large rain events without roadway flooding since it also includes the lagoons on the port property to the south, which now have significant available storage.

While none of the effects in the City are catastrophic in nature, nonetheless Engineering staff is working with the Spicer Group to review potential long-term options, and expects to have a report from them by the end of the month.

16. Special Events - the month of August typically brings a fair amount of staff effort toward special events, highlighted by the River Raisin Jazz Festival (this year a one-way festival on August 10) and the Downtown Art Fair on August 10-11. The majority of our staff typically takes the opportunity to spend the two weeks leading up to the festival performing some "once a year" tasks in addressing aesthetic deficiencies in downtown parking lots, the Riverwalk, and downtown Monroe in general. All told, staff efforts are substantial in this regard, as is the City's overtime contribution during the event, which can be as high as \$10,000 from the Public Services Department alone, depending on which work items are considered. Staff assisted with the "Ducky Dash" on August 15, which requires the use of the forestry aerial truck to drop rubber ducks into the water downtown, and assisted with hauling away of debris for the river cleanup project on August 10 as well. Lastly, crews provided street closures and electrical and other support for the Labor Day parade and Bar-B-Q on August 31. For the coming month of September, events involving Public Services involvement include the SMCC homecoming parade on September 20, and the DMBN Craft Beer festival on September 21. 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.
17. Memorial Place Floral Display - we again have worked with Ruhlig Farms in Carleton to supply flowers that have been placed in the traditional "MONROE" display by our staff as in past years. This work was completed in time for the Memorial Day parade, and staff will continue to maintain the display through the end of this month, when we usually remove it due to the threat of frost and not wishing to leave the display out when looking poor.
18. Banners - the downtown summer seasonal jazz banners will be replaced with the fall banners sometime this month.
19. Leaf Bag Distribution - the City will begin distributing leaf bags on Saturday, October 5 at the Department of Public Services facility at 222 Jones Avenue. Details will be provided shortly in a separate press release, but distribution will be occurring on multiple Saturdays, and Tuesday through Thursday afternoons.

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