

October 4, 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 September, a total of 68 service requests were entered requiring action from this department, down from 75 the previous month. The largest two (2) categories by far were 45 forestry concerns and 12 pothole or road hazard complaints. The remaining categories were three (3) street light outages, three (3) construction concerns, two (2) garbage complaints, two (2) signs concerns, and an inquiry about improving Spaulding Road.
2. Forestry Activities - in the month of September, the Forestry work group completed 29 tree removals, trimmed 82 trees, and removed 9 stumps. Staff plans to begin tree planting this month, and continuing until frost precludes planting. Approximately 250 trees will be planted in our fall program, with particular emphasis on 25 trees on Maywood Avenue between Macomb and Hollywood that are replacing 17 trees that were in decline and / or had been damaged heavily by power line clearance.
3. Street Sweeping - We are running only one sweeper throughout the City in maintenance mode for right now, though shortly we will be adding a second sweeper to deal with the beginning of major leaf drop. Typically we utilize two (2) sweepers with dump trucks following for maximum efficiency due to the quantity of leaves that need to be collected. Normally, we will run both sweepers through the end of November or the pickup of most leaves, whichever is later.
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. 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. Bags will be distributed the first two Saturdays in October from 8 A.M. to noon (10/5 and 10/12), and on most Tuesdays through Thursdays from October 8 through October 24 from 2:30 to 5:30 P.M. Bags will be limited to 50 per person for City residents only, and staff will load them directly into vehicles for the citizens.
8. 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.
9. 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. Typically, complaints decrease significantly in October and are usually nonexistent for most of November.
10. 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.
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. 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.

13. 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.
14. 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 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. 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 lake has entered into its seasonal decline such that we do not expect major impacts save for strong east winds, but nonetheless flooding impacts could still occur and the situation could recur in 2020 as well. Engineering staff is working with the Spicer Group to review potential long-term options, met with them last week, and expects a formal report with options and cost estimates by the end of October, which will then be presented to the City Council.

15. Special Events – Public Services staffed or provided assistance to a few events during the month of September including the SMCC homecoming parade on September 20, the DMBN Craft Beer festival on September 21, and will staff the Monroe High Homecoming Parade on October 4. 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.
16. Fountain Removals – the Lotus Fountain in Loranger Square will be shut off for the season sometime in October, in anticipation that the trees immediately adjacent will begin dropping leaves and clogging the pumps shortly. Fortunately, the re-design of the pumps seems to have worked well, as no major incidents in operation have been reported since early July when it was activated. Typically, the Munson Park pond fountain is removed near the end of October for the season by DPS staff as well.
17. 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.

18. Memorial Place Floral Display – due to expected frost conditions, the floral display at Memorial Place (Seventh and Monroe Streets) is normally removed in October to avoid it looking poor to our visitors and residents.
19. Custer Airport Management – our longtime Airport Manager is leaving City employment at the end of October. While City Administration and City Council review long-term options, the Engineering staff will be supervising the front line staff and performing his duties on a regular basis. Public Services staff will assist, as always, with a variety of maintenance tasks.
20. Roadway Conversion – West Seventh and West Eighth Streets – City Council approved of the conversion of West Seventh and West Eighth Streets from one-way to two-way traffic in July. The Public Services Department will be installing new signs and reversing direction or removing numerous others. This conversion is likely to take place in early November, as the Engineering Department would like to complete resurfacing work on West Front Street first so as to avoid additional displaced traffic from potential detour routes complicating the new traffic pattern, as motorists will require some time to properly adjust to the new bi-directional flow.
21. New Ditch / Boom Attachment – we have purchased a new mower attachment that can be mounted on one of our existing tractors and can more easily access riverbanks, ditch banks, and other hard to reach areas. Staff will be utilizing this extensively to address these areas before cold weather sets in.

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