

December 2, 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 November, a total of 43 service requests were entered requiring action from this department, down from 61 the previous month. The largest two (2) categories by far were 15 forestry concerns and 10 pothole or road hazard complaints. The remaining categories were eight (8) street light outages, four (4) garbage concerns, four (4) signs items, one (1) snow removal concern and one (1) concern from a sanitary sewer backup related to the West Front Street water main project.
2. Forestry Activities - in the month of November, the Forestry work group completed 14 tree removals, trimmed 15 trees, and removed 3 stumps. Staff has planted an additional 43 trees for our fall program, to go with 175 from October, for a total planting of 218 for the season. Winter activities tend to focus more on preventative maintenance low-level trimming and stump removal, as these are less weather dependent than other operations. We will also be focusing and work within the downtown area this winter.
3. Street Sweeping - we generally have been running one sweeper for our maintenance level from late May through early October. However, normally around late October, DPS begins to intensify our on-street leaf collection activities, as even those leaves that fall directly into the street from City trees and those that blow around from adjacent property terraces can easily become excessive. For a period of about four to six weeks (depending on the weather), we run two or three (if all of our older units are operable) sweepers along with two to four dump trucks in a rotating convoy to avoid having to continuously return the sweepers to dump leaves themselves each time the hopper unit is full. We have found this is the most efficient method, but residents should be advised that it does still normally take a full month to make a City-wide cycle, and all work is often not completed until the end of November or early December, depending on weather conditions and final leaf drop. This also unfortunately can tie up nearly half of our available personnel during this time, so our ability to respond to discretionary tasks is very limited. Obviously, removal of as many leaves as possible before the first major snowfall is a high priority to avoid plowing these back into the terrace, which makes for a larger mess in the spring depending on the quantity. We will be delivering our composted leaves to Snow's Nursery, who has agreed to process roughly 1,600 cubic yards for \$6 per cubic yard on our behalf. Leaf collection, like regular street sweeping activities, is charged to the City's Refuse Fund millage. Due to the snowfall that occurred on Veterans' Day and late drop of some leaves, we are expecting to continue these operations for at least another two (2) weeks.

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, so it is likely that its use from now through March will be largely limited to emergency situations only, though we may be able to run the unit for another week or two based on forecasted temperatures.
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 / Leaf Bag Distribution – the City completed its distribution of 70,000 leaf bags on November 5. Bags were 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 November 5 from 2:30 to 5:30 P.M. Bags were limited to 50 per person for City residents only, and staff loaded them directly into vehicles for the citizens, which seemed to be well received again this year. Yard waste ends for the season at the end of this week’s collection, and will resume on April 6, 2020.
7. Grass Contract – Ron Noel Lawn Service is continuing as the City’s grass contractor through the 2021 season. The month of November generally designated for leaf clean-up and final cutting as needed under the contract. It is believed that for the most part, all major activities are now complete for the season.
8. 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 spring 2020 as well. Engineering staff is working with the Spicer Group to review potential long-term options, met with them last month, and expects a formal report with options and cost estimates soon, which will then be presented to the City Council.

9. Custer Airport Management – our longtime Airport Manager left City employment at the end of October. While City Administration and City Council continue to review long-term options, the Director of Engineering and Public Services is filling the Airport Manager role and will be working on formalizing several commercial operations permits and supervising the line staff with the assistance of the Assistant City Engineer. Public Services staff will assist, as always, with a variety of maintenance tasks.
10. 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 installed new signs and reversed direction or removed numerous others. This conversion occurred on November 20, and we have not received any major reports of additional signage that is needed, though we are continuing to tweak a few minor signage items such as “no parking here to corner” signage upon request. The Council will be allowing for a one-year trial to determine whether or not the changes are to be permanent.
11. North Custer Road Pedestrian Signage – the Engineering Department intended to install a variety of new signage related to the new marked crosswalks and to draw attention to the new on-street bicycle lanes on North Custer Road following project completion in June. Due to other project time commitments, the Director of Engineering and Public Services only recently provided the complete life of required signage to the Public Services staff. It is hoped that these signs can be delivered and installed prior to frost difficulties, but if not, they will be installed in early spring.
12. Holiday Events / Decorations – DPS staff is again partnering with volunteers from the Downtown Development Authority (DDA) to install decorations ahead of the downtown tree lighting, which was held on November 22. As with last year, the DDA volunteers decorated any poles and locations that can be reached with ladders, and our staff installed the overhead decorations at the three (3) banner locations, the lights on the large tree in front of the courthouse, the light poles on the Monroe Street Bridge, and the lit decorations mounted on various light poles. As per normal, we also switched out the vertical fall banners with winter banners, and these remain up until March. Staff usually leaves these decorations in place at least through Epiphany, though the removal is often affected heavily by weather and staff availability. Staff is also responsible for traffic control, electrical connections, and other logistics related to the downtown Christmas Magic parade on December 14. As might be expected, significant staff time is spent preparing and removing each year’s decorations, and staffing the events on behalf of the City.
13. Election Set-up and Tear-Down – as with all elections, Public Services staff assisted the Clerk-Treasurer’s office with setup on the Monday prior and teardown on the Wednesday following the election November 5. Our crews do work in the evening hours as well on Monday due to some facilities being unable to accommodate setup during the daytime hours as they are in use.
14. Winter Operations Policy / Staffing – the Department issued our official winter operations policy document on November 14, which is essentially identical to last year’s policy in substance. The Parks and Recreation Department will again handle snow removal activities at the various park facilities, including Munson Park and Mark Worrell Trail in particular for more targeted attention to our facilities that remain most heavily-used during winter and snowy conditions. At present, all 14 Teamster personnel are currently budgeted to remain under the supervision of the Public Services Department during winter operations, with Parks retaining one (1) Teamster assigned to their operations and available for winter activities. We all solicited a voluntary backup list from Water, Wastewater, and Parks Teamsters, so an additional four (4) employees are available in large events.

15. Winter Events – winter operations started a bit prematurely this season with a winter storm on Veterans’ Day, though a snow emergency was not called for this roughly 3-inch snow event. We generally performed only salting operations, and temperatures moderated by the end of the week. This storm did, however, greatly set back our leaf collection activities, though the early snow did seem to facilitate some additional leaf drop that may have waited longer without heavy wet snow on tree branches.

16. Miscellaneous Winter Projects – as with every winter, the Department keeps a list of potential projects that can either be accomplished inside, or could be addressed appropriately in a year without bitterly cold temperatures and / or excessive snow. Additional low-limb-ing of trees is always a major priority as it is probably the single most consistent departmental activity where proactivity will yield long-term dividends in the form of fewer emergency call-outs. We typically like to also make headway on sign replacement during the winter, specifically those stop and street name signs necessary to meet Federal retro-reflectivity guidelines and that may not require new channels to be driven into the ground. This year’s focus will be on parking and miscellaneous signs on the south side of the River. We are also considering replacement of most of the overhead lights in the main Custer Airport hangar with LED fixtures for energy efficiency, and we will likely be working on the replacement of approximately 40 downtown street lamps with LED bulbs as funded by the Downtown Development Authority (DDA) board.

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