



Monthly Activities Report

Department of Engineering and Public Services

March 6, 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, 65 requests for service (out of a total of 35 for the entire City organization – for 70%) 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 February. Requests included 48 pothole referrals, 5 street light outages, 5 garbage collection concerns, 4 snow plowing items, and 3 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 February, the Forestry work group has focused mainly on direct citizen requests and low-limbing. Much of the tree trimming was concentrated in Lavender/Roessler neighborhood. Forestry staff also assisted with snow removal operations during some of the winter events in February. The work crew was able to accomplish the grinding of 10 stumps, trimming of 54 trees, and removal of 35 trees. Additionally, DPS staff teamed up with DTE tree trimmers for the removal of 17 trees located in power lines at Hellenberg Park. Furthermore DPS staff teamed up with Parks staff for the removal of several arborvitae at Boyd Park. Currently, the Forestry Division is recruiting volunteers to assist in an ITC funded tree planting project.
3. Yard Waste – yard waste collection will be resuming on April 2, 2018 for the season.
4. Vactor Truck / Storm Cleaning – Due to generally freezing temperatures, our vactor operations in winter are typically limited to emergencies only, unless the weather is favorable for long periods of time. At present, the tank on our unit has collapsed 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 February was especially hard on the City’s roadways, due to the extremely variable weather conditions and especially heavy rains concurrent with frost leaving the ground. 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. For example, pothole filling on North Custer Road alone often requires multiple days of one work crew to address. Obviously, during inclement weather, resolution of potholes tends to be more problematic but we do attempt to handle these as soon as the weather stabilizes after receiving the complaint. In the month of February alone, more than \$5,000 was spent on cold patching material.
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 two (2) months. Public outreach efforts and notification begin last week, with a new service flyer and insert mailed to every home in the City. We have determined the most efficient way to distribute the new 64-gallon carts is 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 drop-off will occur the week of March 26, followed by the first collection with the new carts the week of April 2. 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. Hundreds of citizens have already contacted the department to state their intentions for new carts and to seek clarification on the new service terms. Unlimited collection will begin the week of May 7.
7. Winter Operations (specific to previous month) – the month of February was fairly typical for our area in terms of overall winter events, though conditions were highly variable from week to week and even day to day some weeks. The first snow emergency in three (3) years was declared on February 9, and the storm over that weekend brought a total of nine (9) inches to the City, with another three (3) inches or so having been deposited in various events earlier that week. There were other smaller storms the following week, followed by a week of temperatures well above average the week of February 19. As might be expected, as in January, a large portion of our department’s attention this month has been focused in one way or another on snow removal activities. The department also performed its first overnight “haul out” of downtown overnight February 12–13, as the piles had accumulated to a few feet in height along the curb lines, and the Downtown Development Authority (DDA) had not allocated funding for this work through an outside contract as was done for the 2015–16 and 2016–17 winters. While DPS has had to clear a few sidewalks at the cost of the property owner where they were not done in a timely fashion, thus far we have fortunately achieved a high level of cooperation as the Engineering Department has been providing a 24-hour “courtesy” notice upon inspection of complaints.
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 auction for the various items designated for sale that were not already sold through sealed bids, and we are meeting with the auctioneer on March 7 to review options for an online auction soon.

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 for the foreseeable future.
10. River Flooding – winter storms from February 5-11 totaling roughly a foot of snow, followed by rapidly warming temperatures shortly thereafter coupled with heavy rainfall and still-frozen ground resulted in rapid river ice melting and an eventual rise above flood stage on February 20. Public Services staff continued to monitor the situation, sand bagging strategic catch basins and other drainage structures to minimize roadway flooding. The only full roadway closure that was required was West Elm Avenue from Custer / Bentley Drive to the YMCA and Huber Drive near Elm Avenue. Fortunately, due to the strategic sand bagging efforts, the West Elm Avenue underpass at Telegraph Road did not need to be closed.

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