



Monthly Activities Report

Department of Engineering and Public Services

May 1, 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, 72 requests for service (out of a total of 95 for the entire City organization – for 76%) 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 April. Requests included 26 pothole referrals, 18 forestry referrals, 17 garbage concerns (including recycling container distribution items this month), 6 street light outages, 2 high grass complaints, 1 vacant building board-up, 1 signs request, and pickup of one dead deer.

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 April, the Forestry work group has focused mainly on tree trimming and tree removals. Forestry staff completed trimming of six (6) trees, and removal of 13 trees. Additional tree clearing work was completed along the River Raisin in the scenic vista easement on property owned by the SSIHM. Forestry staff also assisted in the planting of a Kwazan cherry tree at C.D. "Al" Cappuccilli Park on April 24 at an event with our guests from our sister City of Hofu, Japan, as a representation of continuing friendship between the cities of Hofu and Monroe. A plaque will mark the tree's location in the very near future. Finally, the City received notification from the Arbor Day Foundation that it has met the qualifications to again be designated, "Tree City USA." The City will be hosting this year's Arbor Day Celebration on Saturday, May 19 beginning at 10 A.M., and this is required to maintain our Tree City certification. This event is open to the public and will include a tree planting demonstration, tree plantings on Maple Avenue to replace those removed for power line clearance and a question and answer session with the City's Forester.
3. Vactor Truck / Storm Cleaning – At present, the tank on our unit has deteriorated severely 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. Rental of a unit is also an option, particularly if the decision is made to order a new unit, which will require several months of lead time.

4. Cold Patching – this continues to be a primary work activity throughout the year, but the month of March is normally especially hard on the City's roadways, due to the extremely variable weather conditions and multiple freeze / thaw cycles. Unfortunately, the month of April was nearly as bad as March this season, so we are still responding to some of the backlog from the freeze / thaw cycles earlier in the month. 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. 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 have been phased in over the past month, with the "official" start date of unlimited collection the week of May 7, though since Waste Management had no longer been able to sell extra bag tags, staff has been advising residents to simply put the overage out, and the contractor is obligated to collect it, so the last two (2) months have taken on the form of a soft roll-out instead. Despite some challenges with the rollout of the new recycling carts the week of March 26, it is believed that all original requests have now been serviced. 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. Yard waste collection began the week of April 2, and will continue through early December.
6. Winter Operations (specific to previous month) – the month of April did actually bring some winter operations due to its unusually cold temperatures, though none required a snow emergency declaration nor required plowing, only salting operations.
7. 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 online auction for the various items designated for sale that were not already sold through sealed bids, and this auction is planned for May 21 through Brad Neuhart and Rollo Juckette, Auctionneers.
8. 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 and likely ramp up for the foreseeable future, at least until demolition activities begin later this spring.
9. Street Sweeping – we have begun street sweeping with both primary sweepers, and we are nearing completion of our first City-wide pass. Typically, we will run a truck along with the sweepers on their first pass, which usually takes 2-4 weeks to catch all areas. The first sweeping of the year is charged to Winter Maintenance in the street funds as opposed to the Refuse Fund (consistent with MDOT practices). Again for the 2018 season, once the early season sweeping is completed, we will be focusing less on street sweeping and more on vector operations (provided suitable repairs can be made in time or we can secure a rental unit), 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.

10. Parks staffing – As with past seasons, one (1) DPS Maintenance Worker will be 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.
11. Hellenberg Boat Ramps / Buoy – our previous MDNR grant funding at this location obligates us to maintain the boat launch from mid-April to mid-October. The ramps were installed April 12 as required. DPS crews also installed the navigational assistance buoy west of Sterling Island at the same time, and subsequently had to “rescue” it from being nearly buried, having been pushed out into the center of the river channel by strong northeasterly winds on April 15.
12. Roadway Flooding – Monroe County in general experienced some of the worst flooding in the last several decades on April 15, as sustained northeasterly winds of over 25 miles per hour pushed the elevation of Lake Erie several feet higher than normal for a period of roughly 24 hours. Fortunately for the City, while flooding in the outlying townships resulted in evacuations from numerous homes, our impacts were limited to backwaters from both the River Raisin and Plum Creek Bay, which backed up through the City’s storm sewer system and required some isolated street closures. The most pronounced was the complete closure of Front Street under I-75, which impacted the ability of the industries east of I-75 to access their facilities. Additionally, the lowest-lying street intersections in the portion of the Orchard East neighborhood east of Conant Avenue had standing water and were impassable for a portion of this time, but no homes required evacuations. By the following morning winds had shifted and all water had receded. There was no damage to our infrastructure, and the affected areas were swept thoroughly.
13. Mowing Contract – we are in the fifth year of a five-year mowing contract, with the contracted start date of the week of April 16. 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. Due to the very cold April, mowing did not occur prior to this week, but will be commencing this week and continuing through the end of November.
14. High Grass Enforcement – US Lawns of Southgate will again be performing our ordinance mowing, also in the fifth year of a five-year contract. The annual policy statement on Noxious Weed and Grass Procedures was issued April 24 and posted on the City’s web page. 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 authorized start date of ordinance mowing is May 1. As with 2017, the Building Department will handle review and enforcement, whereas the Public Services and Engineering clerical staff will handle billing. Last year, 653 complaints were received and logged into the Action Line for high grass with the vast majority turned over for enforcement, so this is no small time commitment for either department, despite ordinance changes that were made in 2017, such as increasing the administrative fee to one commensurate with the City’s actual costs, that did seem to discourage violators and reduce the number of complaints by roughly 300 over the prior year.

15. Memorial Place Floral Display – we again plan to work with Ruhlig Farms in Carleton to supply flowers that can be placed in the traditional “MONROE” display by our staff as in past years, typically in time for the Memorial Day parade, provided that threat of frost has ceased.
16. Mosquito Control – as in previous years, Public Services staff has purchased approximately 3300 briquettes that can be placed into catch basins for up to 180 days of larvae control City-wide, along with pellets that can be 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. We usually start applying tablets sometime in May, though this is usually governed somewhat by weather conditions.
17. Lotus Fountain and Munson Park Fountain – staff is planning to install the decorative aeration fountain in the Munson Park pond sometime this month and start up the Lotus Fountain in Loranger Square sometime in late May or June, after the trees have dropped most of their spring debris that often clogs the pumps.
18. 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. While this work could be done immediately after the spring thaw, these do need to dry out as much as possible to maximize our ability to grade them properly. 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.
19. Crosswalk signs – the warning signs that had been installed in the roadway itself at various mid-block crosswalk locations in the downtown area, particularly on Front Street between Harrison and Macomb, Macomb Street between Second and Front, and Washington Street between First and Front, were removed for potential snow plowing operations. These will be replaced as time allows sometime this month, as we are waiting for a few replacements for damaged signs. While in a few locations placing these signs in the crosswalks themselves can make maneuvering a little more difficult, they have proven very popular with downtown patrons. Casual observations made by City Hall staff indicate a drastic difference in vehicles stopping for pedestrians when these are present.
20. Arthur Lesow Community Center Assistance – Public Services crews have been assisting the ALCC with installation of new basketball hoops that they had ordered. This task proved to be a bit more involved than originally believed, as the support frames also needed to be replaced, but work is now completed. We have also been asked to clean the gutters and replace some downspout sections apparently lost to vandalism, and this work will be scheduled as time allows.
21. Stop sign Re-Facing – in past winters it had been reported that the Department has been replacing or re-facing all stop signs within the City, to conform with the mandate from the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) to meet retro-reflectivity guidelines by 2018. All stop signs on the south side of the river were completed in 2016, and we have now completed all work on the north side of the river as of last week.
22. Election Assistance – as with other elections, the Department is assisting with the set-up and tear-down of the election on May 8, which consists of a Monroe Public Schools ballot question. However, the effort associated with this election is no different than other larger elections.

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