

DEPARTMENTAL WEEKLY REPORTS

March 15, 2013

City Manager's Office

Personnel

- Completed new employee orientations for new Laborer Dan Zebley, City Secretary Renee Bensley, CID Clerk Typist Jackie Ambrosi and Director of Finance Lou Vitola.
- Working with Parks & Recreation to interview and hire seasonal summer staff.
- Developing Personnel Manual amendments with the management staff to reflect current operations and/or update for efficiencies.
- Starting to complete the data inventory for insurance broker (Mercer) and healthcare provide (Highmark Blue Cross) for mid-year assessments and projections on 2014 renewals.
- Providing and completing data base information for actuary (Milliman) for their 2013 valuation assessment on the defined benefit pension plan. \
- I was appointed to the DELPELRA Board (Delaware chapter of the National Public Employer Labor Relations Association).

Community Affairs Officer

This week I have spent some time working on advertising for the Wine and Dine event and working with sponsors that are interested in volunteering for the event.

Ricky Nietubicz, Planning and Development, and I met with Delaware Today regarding the Downtown Newark supplement in the June issue. It will focus on economic development downtown and all that has been going on. A professional photographer will be out and about during Wine and Dine, weather dependent, to get some streetscape shots of Main Street and of people enjoying downtown.

I spent some time updating the website and TV 22 with the municipal election information for District 4.

I worked on the text for the small section we have been given in University of Delaware's New Student Orientation handbook regarding city services and information. It is still in draft review at this point.

I have reviewed and edited several documents for Parks and Recreation that are to be sent out to vendors and sponsors for community events.

Department heads had their photos taken for the website.

Planning & Development

Planning

On Wednesday afternoon Development Supervisor Mike Fortner and I met with Dave Gula of WILMAPCO to discuss the Newark Regional Transportation Center. Then on Friday morning, I attend the Newark Regional Transportation Center Steering Committee meeting at WILMAPCO. Progress to date and timeframes as they relate to the TIGER IV grant were discussed, as well as issues to future deliberations.

Follow up work was performed this week to get projects reviewed by the Planning Commission at their March 5th meeting ready for Council review. These projects include: the Newark Shopping Center, the Cottages at the Plaza and Campus Walk.

Considerable time was spent this week preparing development projects for April Planning Commission review. Tentatively scheduled for review are:

- St. Thomas Episcopal Church minor subdivision
- 65-67 E. Cleveland Avenue minor subdivision
- Kershaw Commons minor subdivision
- 63 W. Cleveland Avenue Comprehensive Plan amendment, rezoning and major subdivision.
- A parking waiver request for 46 E. Main Street.

The department had also hoped to add amendments to the Zoning Code regarding home based occupations and building height limitations at this meeting, and has done some research for those amendments, but is concerned about overwhelming the Planning Commission, particularly after the 5 hour meeting last month.

On Thursday afternoon, I met with a property owner to discuss potential development plans on Barksdale Road.

On Friday afternoon I met with Glenn Schmalhoffer to discuss the City's development review process.

On Tuesday morning Mike and I attended a meeting with staff and Pennoni Associates to discuss the Curtis Mill Park project as it relates to the floodplain in the area.

On Tuesday afternoon I met with a Main Street property owner to discuss a potential redevelopment project.

This morning CEO Brian Sargeni, Mike and I met with the owner of the Newark Newsstand property and his architect to discuss development issues. The owner began renovations after the Newsstand closed at the end of the year. This work was done without a permit, and as a result, bearing walls were removed and the building had to be condemned. Demolition will begin on Monday, March 18, 2013. At this time, the owner would like to rebuild the one story commercial building on the same footprint, and details of what would need to be submitted and reviewed before a building permit could be issued were discussed.

Considerable time was spent working on the Comprehensive Development Plan update.

Economic Development

This week DNP Administrator Ricky Nietubicz finalized the new Downtown Map & Guide proof and sent it to the printer (thanks to Planning and Development Aide Brian Laws for extra attention to detail checking over proofs throughout the process) – the new stock of the Map & Guides should be delivered Tuesday or Wednesday, perfectly timed to get the most accurate and complete information out during the NCAA basketball tournament and Wine & Dine.

Ricky began working with Delaware Today on editorial content for the annual Newark supplement in the June issue. He and Delaware Today representatives discussed several new and long-standing restaurants, retail and service businesses and arts institutions that could be highlighted during the issue, as well as the renaming of South Main Street.

On Wednesday, Ricky and Parking Administrator Marvin Howard staffed the Main Street Mile Committee meeting to begin organization of the 2013 Main Street Mile events. The Committee is very interested in increasing the participation in the event among business owners, and raising additional funds to assist the Police Department and Downtown Newark Partnership.

Ricky secured bids for remediation of code violations and home improvement work via our CDBG Home Improvement Loan Program for 710 S. College Avenue, gathered necessary documentation for loan application. Anticipate getting final signature on loan/lien documents tomorrow so that the selected contractor can begin immediately.

This evening, Ricky will staff the DNP Board meeting, which I will attend.

Community Development

On Tuesday, Mike completed the 5th Financial Draw of the fiscal year for the Federal Community Development Block Grant Program.

Parking

This morning, Parking Administrator Marvin Howard and Ricky staffed the DNP Parking Committee meeting.

This week additional meters and associated equipment were ordered to complete the parking meters in loading zones project and to add additional metered parking spaces downtown.

Code Enforcement

This week, Code Enforcement Supervisor Steve Wilson attended a meeting on the Municipal Building security system with Honeywell representative.

Also this week, Steve attended a meeting with the HVAC company for a new HVAC system in the police evidence room.

This week plans were reviewed for the new Curtis Paper Mill Park and comments were sent to Charlie Emerson.

Steve attended a meeting at Bloom for the water line issue.

Fraternity and Sorority spring life safety inspections begin on Monday the 18th.

Code Enforcement will be working this weekend for St. Patrick's Day. Two inspectors will be working both Saturday and Sunday, 12 p.m. – 12 a.m.

Public Works & Water Resources

Brian Leffet completed an inspection of the state roadways in the city limits for defects that need to be corrected. I have noticed that while we have done this in the past that there are items that the state never seems to get around to. I will be working with our state counterparts to see if we can't prioritize these items so that we can work the list down in size.

We met with the contractor that will be doing the work at the Hunt at Louviers storm water ponds to walk the site and discuss project particulars.

We have met with Merit Construction on the lagoon dredging project. They will be starting the week of the 18th.

We have received the State and Corps of Engineer permits for the Water Line Crossing of the White Clay Creek. We will be putting the finishing touches on that project so that we can advertise.

We have set a project review meeting for the Northwest Booster Station renovation project.

We met this week with the trash and recycling crews to discuss the work we have been doing to evaluate the refuse program. The crew was very appreciative of the work that we have done so far and our inclusion of them in the process. From observation and anecdotally based on operator comments it would appear that the majority of our Green Wednesday pickups are repeat customers week after week in quantities that would seem to be in excess of what one could generate on a single lawn. We have also identified that standard containers are weighing in excess of 40 pounds. We will be gathering more objective data to see what we can determine of the collection particulars. My goal is to fully automate the collection, exclude to the maximum extent possible yard waste not generated in the city, establish a collection date more convenient to doing yard work on the weekend, and encourage residents to mulch their leaves and grass clippings back onto the lawn.

I am preparing a memo back to the University regarding the restoration of Academy Street in light of all the construction projects that are yet to take place and the need to repair the street surface.

Tom and Tim met with a representative of the large yard waste recycling concern in Wilmington to discuss what we can do to better manage the yard waste that we collect in the City and trash in general that we deliver to the landfill. They received a significant amount of information that we will be working to implement in our operation.

Work continues on the roll out of the 2013 sidewalk inspection program as well as various survey projects within the city.

Public Works and Water Resources staff have been attending various seminars and workshops on the various rules and regulations that we operate within.

Electric

The line crews have installed 58 of 220 devices needed for a citywide network. This is one of the preliminary steps needed before the smart meters can be installed. It will be used to bring back meter readings and for digital communications with City workers and police.

The electricians have been busy working on various maintenance items for Public Works & Water Resources and Parks Departments, while the meter and engineering technician continued the phase analysis field work needed for the GIS system.

Engineering has been busy with the smart meter project. The meter programs were finalized after several iterations and an agreement with the meter manufacturer was reached concerning the installation of the gatekeepers - devices which collect and send data from water and electric meters. Engineering also analyzed capacitor bank placement and operation in order to tweak the distribution system in preparation for summer loads. Several capacitor controllers are being evaluated for proper operation and repair.

Parks & Recreation

Administration & Planning

We completed a review of the preliminary plans for the Curtis Park project. Comments will be submitted to Pennoni by week's end.

There is interest in designating the utility maintenance road from Fremont Road (Fairfield Crest) to Creek Road a trail as well. We're working to get a cost estimate for long-term improvements. In the meantime, we will place signs and improve access at the east and west end of the road/trail for hiking and biking use.

I met with Steve Wilson at the Curtis Mill Park site to complete a final inspection of the smoke stack demolition.

On Friday I met with representatives of DeIDOT and State Parks at the north end of the Redd Park trail network to discuss options for getting trail user to Possum Park Road and from Possum Park Road to the trail.

Joe and I met with a representative of Travelers Insurance to review park operations and facilities and recreation programming.

Tom conducted park inspections and prepared related maintenance work orders.

Tom met with a representative from Christina School District about the trail improvement project behind Downes School. We plan to resurface the trail from the footbridge to City/School District property line.

A contract has been prepared for the next and perhaps final phase of the Main Street Tree Pit rehab project.

Tom and Rich have chosen applicants to interview for the 2013 seasonal parks and landscaping crew.

Rich submitted the safety permit request with DeIDOT for Main Street tree pit project.

Parks Maintenance

We began cutting back lirioppe plantings throughout park system and performed maintenance of interior planting in Alderman's Court area.

The crew continued raking and mulching leaves at several park sites, replaced a washed out bridge along trail in Rittenhouse Park, refilled paper supplies at City Hall, and started cutting back meadow areas.

Two crew members attended an irrigation workshop in New Castle.

We completed several routine maintenance tasks at various park sites and City facilities.

Recreation Services

Paula and Sharon delivered 2013 Camp Guides to local elementary schools and the Newark Library.

Paula added an additional Basic Introduction to Archery class on the schedule. Those from the waiting list along with a few new registrants were added into the class.

Paula and Joe attended a meeting with the Delaware Special Olympics regarding coordinating a Challenger Football Game this fall in conjunction with the Special Olympics Fall Sports Festival.

Sharon has prepared, emailed and mailed Memorial Day Parade information and Egg Hunt basket donation letters. She also created and gave flyers about Newark Day to Ricky for downtown businesses.

Tyler held a George Wilson Center attendants staff meeting.

Joe conducted a recreation supervisors meeting in preparation for the Summer Camp and Program Fair scheduled at the George Wilson Center on March 16.

Tyler is finalizing orders for dance costumes for the end of year dance recital in May.

Joe is organizing for the skate spot public meeting that will be held at the George Wilson Center on Wednesday, March 13.

Joe continues to solicit sponsorship for the Newark skate spots in an effort to enhance the project.

Joe awarded 2013 portable toilet bid and is working on the recreation equipment and supply awards.

Finance

Customer Service

In lieu of Mailroom Systems losing the State Contract, we have changed over to Print and Mail to host our presorted mail. The rates are comparable, we will save a few cents on each flat mail. There will also be some savings on labels as Print and Mail will process these pieces of mail. This change is effective March 18th. Larissa Jones will be sending more detail on this change.

The sewer bill restructuring is progressing. Accounting, Planning, Water and Customer Service staff met on March 7 regarding sewer bill classes. Among the items discussed were the plan of action and communication options. Since the meeting, Larissa has compiled a process for updating new sewer classes. Roy Simonson is working on a reference guide for types of businesses assigned specific sewer classes. Debi Keeley is working intermittently in reviewing current rate classes and will update the current sewer customers list for Roy Simonson's review. Ricky Nietubicz provided a copy of the current downtown businesses by type.

Harris will be onsite between March 18-20th for the next Honeywell phase. They will interview and observe various functions in the billing, meter reading and customer service process.

Larissa Jones is working on an agenda for the Harris training to be provided in May. The training will include both Harris 6.4 highlights in addition to basic "Harris 101" training that the majority of the current Harris users have not had. Accounting and Customer Service staff will be attending the training.

Accounting

Met with our insurance broker, Willis, on Tuesday. Received quotes and waiting on another quote from Travelers for the Property Liability coverage (a Travelers Risk Specialist met with Charlie Emerson, Chief Tiernan, Roy Simonson, and Andrew Haines

for a site visit on Monday). Reviewing renewal quotes and continuing to work with Willis on better options than those received. We should have the final numbers on Friday.

Communications with the auditors are underway for the financial statements audit which starts March 25th. Majority of some accounting staff's time is dedicated to completing all requirements for the audit, including completion of various reports and schedules.

Working on the Pension and OPEB Investment Reports for the year-ended December 31, 2012.

Accounting staff is also working on the February 28 Financial Statements with updated numbers for final year-end carry forward balances.

Scheduled an April Munis demo for their Human Resources and Document Management modules. Accounting staff, Andrew Haines and Renee Bensley will be attending.

Alderman's Court

This past week we held three full Court sessions. This resulted in 76 Arraignments, 68 Trials processed and 8 Case reviews.

We also had 11 bail reviews on videos from the various prisons and had one towed vehicle trial.

Police

The department has continued to prepare for the upcoming Saint Patrick's Day weekend. On Saturday, March 16th, in addition to the regularly assigned patrol officers we will be bringing in additional officers to work grant funded overtime. At 10:00 a.m., the Street Crime Unit officers, Special Operations officers, and nine (9) additional patrol officers will begin work. These officers will concentrate on Main Street and the surrounding area where numerous house parties are expected. On Sunday, March 17th, beginning at 10:00 a.m. ten (10) officers will work grant funded overtime. Patrol Lt. Kevin Feeney will be the officer in charge. Lt. Feeney is also coordinating activities with University of Delaware Public Safety.

The Newark Police Department continues to clear street robberies with arrests. The following are the most recent robbery arrests:

Newark Police have arrested four Maryland teens for their involvement in two separate, but related robberies which occurred on February 15th and 18th, 2013. During the first incident on February 15th, at approximately 11:30 p.m., a 19-year-old from Newark, was walking on South Chapel Street at Scholar Drive, when he was approached by three black male suspects who engaged in conversation with him. While talking to the suspects, the victim was struck from behind and knocked to the ground. The suspects removed the victim's wallet from his pants pocket before fleeing. The victim did not report the incident to police until February 19th after reading local news reports of the February 18th robbery (described below). The victim's credit card was used later that night and the next morning at several locations in Elkton, Havre de Grace and Baltimore, MD. Using

video surveillance obtained from multiple locations, detectives positively identified Brandon Gatewood of Elkton for his involvement in this robbery. Detectives continue to investigate the identity of the other two suspects in this incident.

Further investigation into the February 15th robbery determined that Brandon Gatewood was also involved in a February 18th robbery which occurred at approximately 1:35 a.m. During that incident, a 24-year-old male victim was walking on East Delaware Avenue when he was approached from behind by three suspects, one of whom, later identified as Brandon Gatewood, placed what appeared to be a gun to his face. The victim was then knocked to the ground and was kicked and punched repeatedly in the head and face by two additional suspects, identified as Lawrence Ray and Anthony Gatewood, both of Elkton, MD. The suspects fled with the victim's wallet and cell phone to a waiting vehicle which was determined to be operated by Yannick Gray of Perryville, Maryland. All suspects have been arrested and charged.

CSH/mp