

Mayor's Corner June 7, 2022

We've received a few questions recently regarding some spray/brush control in Wennerberg Park. I'll talk about that, then I want to discuss what's happening in Public Works where we've had some dramatic staffing changes recently.

First, the spraying: Public Works has a policy of minimal spraying for weed or pest control. And if any spraying is to be done, it is posted; if it's an extensive area, the park will be closed while the spraying is being done and allowed to dry.

This year the annual spraying of the blackberry thicket near the riverbank on the north side of the park was sprayed on May 10. It takes awhile for the effects of the herbicide to show, so folks are just now noticing the die-off & wondering why no warning was given. The park was closed on the day it was sprayed, and notices posted (I think it might have been a little cold and wet and maybe few visitors that day so a lot of folks didn't realize this had taken place.) Now the die-off is showing.

With Lyn's retirement we're all noticing activity in the parks that we normally have taken for granted because we've seen him doing it year after year. Some things he did are still being done, and in some cases the procedures are changing – it's good that the questions are being asked because that means folks care and are paying attention. Thank you!!

Part 2: Public Works Changes

For the last few years, our Public Works staff has consisted of Director Bryan Burnham, a Parks Maintenance Worker, 2 Utility staff, and the Water and Sewer Operations manager.

With Lyn's retirement, the decision was made to restructure staff duties and that was in the planning stages when the Water and Sewer Operations manager was offered a position with another city. So at the end of May, Public works was down from 5 to 3 staff, which was tight but manageable while they were in the process of filling the two empty positions. But unexpected things happen and another staff member had to take an extended emergency leave, so within a month and a half our Public Works Department has gone from 5 to 2.

Now, that doesn't mean the workload has reduced – in fact given the projects scheduled for this year, it has increased. The notices of job openings have gone out, Director Burnham and Jerome are multitasking vigorously, and office staff is pitching in to help where they can with paperwork and administrative needs which in true “domino” fashion means office staff is also absorbing more workload.

So if you're noticing things maybe aren't being done as you're used to seeing them done -- or maybe not getting done as quickly -- please have some patience and know that it's because everyone on staff – from Public Works to the folks in the office – is picking up the slack and in many cases doing jobs they have not done before.

Your support and understanding is greatly appreciated; and we're hoping it won't be too long before we're back to full staffing levels.