



Department of Public Works
Administration

Jeffrey S. Polenske, P.E.
Commissioner of Public Works

May 5, 2020

Alderman Michael Murphy
Chair, Finance and Personnel Committee
City of Milwaukee Common Council
200 E. Wells
Milwaukee, WI 53202

Subject: Department of Public Works Furlough & Work Hour Reduction Plan

Dear Alderman Murphy:

The Department of Public Works has prepared a combined furlough and work hour reduction plan to help mitigate the City's growing loss in revenue resulting from the COVID-19 health emergency. As a part of DPW's plan, we are also recommending holding numerous vacancies that would have otherwise been filled heading into the spring and summer months.

Since the Health Emergency was declared and the Safer at Home orders were issued, DPW has experienced many challenges and has transitioned staffing, operations, and service delivery to comply with new guidance and policies that minimize the risk of COVID-19 exposure. In part, all DPW staff that can work from home are currently doing so. However, much of what DPW provides involves field services, facility operations, and infrastructure operations that require staff to report to work. The dedication of the City employees who have continued to report during this time has been extraordinary and they have contributed to the successful delivery of some of the City's most essential services:

- Distribution of clean safe drinking water
- Daily garbage pick-up
- Drop-off Centers operations
- Fleet & Equipment repairs
- Emergency repairs to area-wide street lighting outage
- Emergency repairs to traffic control



- Weather related emergency responses (street ponding, basement back-ups, wind damaged trees, etc.)
- Construction administration and oversight

In order to maintain these important services, the department has closely monitored daily absences and shifted staff to account for fluctuating staffing levels while also modifying service delivery protocol in order to promote a safe work environment and social distancing practices. Staffing levels have shown some consistent improvement since the first several weeks and while we continue to closely monitor daily absences and remain focused on the delivery of our most essential services we have been able to deploy some crews to other important City and seasonal needs such as:

- Street sweeping
- Pot hole repairs
- Litter pick-up along boulevards and freeway right of ways
- Hazardous tree mitigation
- Boulevard and Freeway ROW Mowing with pre litter pick-up (beginning soon)
- Planting of Signature Landscape Beds (beginning soon). While this may not be seen as an essential service it is important to note that the City's Forestry Section has approximately \$250k in plants already grown and ready for planting. There would also be a cost to maintaining and reestablishing beds if we didn't plant this year.

As the department continues to operate under the uncertainty of this health emergency and now attempt to respond to the resulting financial challenges, DPW is recommending that we continue to focus on the delivery of the City's most essential services and delay, suspend, or when possible modify the delivery of less essential services as we have done over the last couple months.

DPW Operations Divisions service impacts would include:

- Drop-off Centers would continue to be open from 7am – 3pm, Tuesday – Saturday with fees suspended through the end of May.
- In lieu of the Spring Clean & Green Program, encourage residents to use Drop-off Centers while fees are suspended and offer Bulky Waste Collection (up to 6 cubic yards) with fees suspended through the end of May.
- Substitute the Weekend Box Program with a scheduled neighborhood clean-up collection service of bagged debris during weekday work hours and eliminate overtime costs.



- Street Sweeping would continue during daytime hours only. Nighttime sweeping would be suspended until alternate side parking regulations resume and staffing levels permit. Response to accident debris and paved island debris would also experience some delays.
- Brush Collection (up to 2 cubic yards) would resume but fluctuations in staff levels could delay collections.
- Leaf and Yard Waste Collection is a seasonal service during the Fall months and cannot be accommodated during the spring and summer months. Residents are encouraged to use drop-off centers as yard waste and brush (up to 6 cubic yards) is accepted for free.
- Recommend saving the \$170,000 that was added to the 2020 budget for the deployment of a contracted Rapid Response Collections Service and for the deployment of additional litter cans in select commercial corridors.
- Code enforcement of garbage cart complaints, contaminated carts, E-waste, etc. would likely be delayed.
- Tree pruning and removals, including trunk and stump removals, would be delayed until Fall. Spring and summer mitigation of hazardous trees only.
- Spring tree planting would be limited to Grant Funded plantings.
- City owned vacant lot maintenance inspections, tall weed & grass complaints, dead & hazardous tree inspections and encroachment inspections code enforcement would likely be delayed with the reduction of 10 seasonal temp staff.
- Tow Lot hours would be further reduced from 9am – 1pm, Monday-Saturday until parking regulation enforcement resumes.

Milwaukee Water Works service level impacts would include:

- In an effort to respond to the needs for social distancing and workplace safety, MWW Customer Service Center will remain closed to walk in payments and service. Call wait times may be increased. Plan will likely need modification when the Safer at Home order is lifted as call volumes are expected to increase substantially at that time.
- Appointments for high water consumption and other investigations will be limited. The meter exchange program to update to Automated Meter Reading (AMR) is on hold.
- While limited work is required at the Meter Shop, meters staff will be assisting Distribution with hydrant maintenance and painting which is typically performed by temp workers. Meter Supervisors will assist in management, scheduling, and are able to fill in with work load if needed.



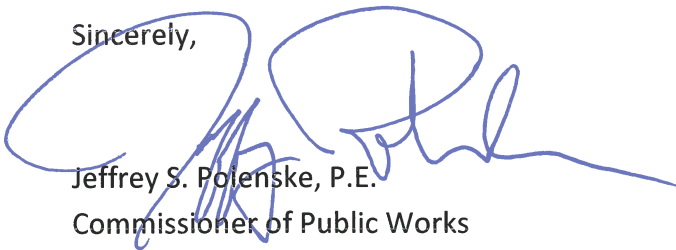
DPW Infrastructure Services Division service level impacts would include:

- Many of the units within ISD are currently operating with some level of vacancies and holding such will maintain the current level of response to service requests. Most notably, Electrical Services has had difficulty filling vacancies resulting in delayed repairs to street lighting outages and traffic signal issues. At this time, there is no expectation that this challenge to fill ES vacancies will improve in the immediate future and holding the vacancies would result in a savings.
- Furlough and Workshare plans for the office personnel will likely delay the project development process and impact construction starts of future projects.

I understand delaying, suspending or modifying any of the services DPW provides are not favorable actions to take but I also understand the fiscal challenge the City is facing and the department is trying to be a part of the solution while still delivering our most essential services. Lastly, it is important to state that this plan should not be interpreted as reflection of the value the department has for any of its employees. DPW's staff have risen to the occasion and maintained many of our City's most important services at a time of heightened health concerns, safer at home orders, and child care issues. I commend and thank each of our employees for their contributions and dedication to our community over these past few months and for their proven commitment to face any challenges ahead of us.

Please feel free to contact me if you would like to discuss any of the impacts this COVID-19 health emergency has had on the department or if you would like to discuss our furlough and work hour reduction plan in greater detail.

Sincerely,



Jeffrey S. Polenske, P.E.
Commissioner of Public Works

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