



CITY Manager

May Update

It is pretty hard to beat May in southwest Michigan! Everything has turned green and just about anything that you put in the ground will grow with ease; even that part of your backyard that your dog peed on all winter long. Around the middle of the month, we will be planting our flowers throughout town and in the hanging baskets downtown. May is also the unofficial kick off of the Otsego event season. Otsego hosts multiple events starting in May and something is going on every month all the way through Hometown Christmas in December. Everything gets kicked off with the upstart Otsego Art Contest held throughout the month at the library. The event is hosted by Otsego Arts which is a subdivision of TOPS. Feel free to stop by City Hall or check out our website and/or the sign along M89 for any upcoming events in Otsego.

Tornado Pick-up- The aftermath from the April 14th tornadoes will stick with us for quite some time. We definitely lost a lot of trees but I think many of us feel incredibly fortunate to not have any catastrophic losses. When you look at the amount of the trees that fell and their locations it is pretty remarkable that no buildings were totally destroyed. Only a few roofs and windows in need of replacement.

- **Brush-** The downed trees made for the most work for our DPW. The brush was dropped off at our transfer station along with collected by our DPW. We continue to try and catch up on the endless amount of brush. Keep bringing it out if you have it, we will continue to pick it up. When the transfer station pile grew too big we had a contractor come in with a tub grinder. The tub grinder may be the scariest thing you could ever imagine! It is capable of cutting and chipping any and all sorts of brush. This cleanup would not be possible if we did not have a transfer station to drop off for brush. I know I have said it before but it is an incredible asset for a city of our size.
- **Employees-** You may have noticed that when the storm came rolling through, our employees were already hard at work. Even when the conditions are dangerous outside they are required to come in. Not just the firefighters either. When the tornado came through we needed DPW employees to come in and clear the trees from the roadways and Water and Sewer employees to come in to make sure that the backup generators turned on as planned. This is not an uncommon occurrence. In most cases it goes without notice. Another example of the sacrifice city employees must make to serve us.

TOP Otsego Art Competition- Throughout May 2nd to 9th you can stop by the library to enjoy some local artist's work. It is an art competition that has evolved year after year. It started as an addition at the Creative Arts Festival, which was a natural fit. However, they found that it would be better served for them to have a stand-alone event for an extended period of time to allow the entire community the opportunity to attend and see the talented artists we offer. There is an adult and youth category. Feel free to stop by the Otsego District Library to check out all the pieces and you can even vote for your favorite. If you are a budding artist; keep this in mind for next

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year. TOP's Otsego Arts are always looking for additional artists to submit new pieces each year. For further details monitor our Facebook page and website.

Memorial Day Changes- Memorial Day is always a very important and solemn day in our great country. In Otsego we are trying to make Memorial Day an even larger celebration in 2026. We have been planning with other agencies on starting a few new traditions and elaborating on the longstanding staples of the holiday. Those plans for May 25th include:

- **Memorial Day Parade-** While we all love the Memorial Day Parade and it provides the perfect slice of "Americana" for all of us. We are hoping to expand the size of the parade from previous years. I have been told that in years past the parade consisted of many different types of floats and entries including a long line of kids on bicycles. We are seeking to get to that level of interest once again. We have coordinated some additional volunteers to focus on growing the parade in entries. If you represent a group or agency and would be interested in joining the parade (or if you have a kid with a bike); reach out to the VFW or the Otsego-Plainwell Chamber of Commerce. We will get you in the parade!
- **Light Pole Banners-** The VFW has been working hard to coordinate the purchase and placement of banners to hang from downtown light poles that detail local veterans and their service to our country. They were hoping to get 40 for this new idea and ended up with 73! Those will be delivered and hung before Memorial Day. They will be available and presented for future patriotic holidays. Good job VFW! It is a perfect opportunity to celebrate our "Hometown Heroes".
- **Veteran Headstone Cleaning-** The week before Memorial Day some students from Otsego Public Schools' National Honor Society will partner with the Otsego Area Historical Society to clean local veteran's headstones located in Mountain Home Cemetery. The goal of this exercise is for the students to fully understand what sacrifice is and what Memorial Day is all about. I am certain this experience will stick with the students for many years. It is the least we can do for those who have served.

Long Grass Enforcement- As we move into the warmer months the grass begins to take off! It is pretty remarkable how well everything grows in the spring time when the rain is paired with warm sunny days. At times it is hard to keep up with. However, we have to find a way. There is an ordinance that requires grass to stay manageable. The problem with long grass is not only the aesthetics but also its promotion of mosquitoes and we have even found that feral cats are more likely to make a home on a property with long grass. Nobody wants any of that. I know it can be difficult to find time, but for what it is worth it is a lot easier to manage the yard if you stay up on it. Trying to cut grass that is too long takes much more time to cut than a normal cut. If you receive a ticket and we need to bring the property into compliance, we will cut it and charge you the cost of manpower and equipment. Any debts not paid will be applied to the following year's taxes as a single-premise assessment.

TOP Otsego Summer Fun Nights- Starting on June 9th we will be once again hosting the popular "Otsego Summer Fun Nights" event series at the downtown Community Pavilion. It will mimic previous years with free food and family entertainment to follow every Tuesday night throughout the summer. Otsego Public Schools make the meals possible by a grant through the State of Michigan and the entertainment is made possible by local businesses who sponsor the

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series. If you have kids and have never gone; you are missing out! The highlight from last year was the final night that was a “Beach Night”. We brought in a bunch of sand while the fire department sprayed everyone down in addition to some kiddie pools and even a large slip-n-slide going down the hill. Everyone had a good time. Every week has a different theme and the meals are 100% free for kids. Watch our Facebook page and website for further details.

TOP Otsego Summer Fun Days- On Wednesday afternoons this summer, you will find a free lunch and an educational program at Northside Park for you and your kids to enjoy. That will begin on June 10th. It is a great way for you to get the kids out of the house and break up the summer months. You will most likely find some other families you know there as well. The program has grown in popularity in previous years. The programs include speakers or performers that are dedicated to an early elementary age group. The final Wednesday program hands out backpacks and school supplies for all of the kids. That is one of the best days of the year in Otsego! Thank you, TOP and OPS for bringing this program back. Please monitor our Facebook page and website for further details.

Lead Service Line Replacement Loan Application- If you have seen recent City Commission agendas or read anything about our water department recently you would have heard the phrase “lead service line replacement”. The replacement of all lead service lines is an unfunded mandate that has been an albatross around our water department’s neck for multiple years now. We are attempting to finally get rid of this unparalleled requirement from EGLE. We are attempting to do that with a possible low interest loan to complete all of these replacements at one time instead of completing portions every year until replacements are due in 8 years. It is a highly competitive application, so nothing is guaranteed. We will get word in October if the project was selected or not. If we are not successful, we do have a couple of other options to bundle all of the services to save time and money in getting them replaced.

4th Full-time Firefighter- In May the Otsego Fire Department (OFD) will be starting a new scheduled rotation with the addition of the new 4th full-time firefighter. Since we made the switch to a 24/7 staffed station we have been working with a 3-firefighter rotation, who have been working with a Kelly Rotation schedule. While this has worked for the last 3 years, we have found that the call volume has made a 4th full-time firefighter a practical solution to a burn out problem that was not going to get any better. What is difficult with a rotation of 3 is that it puts a lot of stress on those 3. Whenever a firefighter takes a day off for vacation, sick or even training; 1 of the other 2 needs to cover that 24-hour shift. The additional firefighter will help relieve that while also creating some cost savings to avoid paying out nearly as much overtime as we currently do. Each step that OFD takes we all should be proud of the service they provide for a city of our size. The ability to produce a department that runs on the amount of calls that we do is quite a feat. The 4th firefighter is the next natural step in continuing to provide quality emergency services even as call volume continues to rise.

Lawn Restoration- Last fall and winter Surf Internet came through and laid a lot of fiber throughout our town. I am certain you did not miss it. When those projects take place, they do have a responsibility to come back and restore any damage done on your lawn and City Right-Of-Way. This can sometimes be a chore to get them out there. It often requires the City to follow up multiple times as well. So, we want to know if they have not been back to restore and

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seed any damaged areas. If they have not, please let city hall know and we will work on getting their contractors or our DPW out there before the end of the growing season. Also let us know if you find any sink holes that form within the ROW. That is often a sign that a sewer line has been damaged. We can investigate and get that repaired as well.

Street Sweepers- Every year we have a contractor coming into town multiple times to literally clean the streets! They are street sweepers that go down every street and pick up any dirt and debris found within the street to the curb pan. The finished product is just as you would imagine; a beautiful clean street. This occurs a couple of times every year during the spring/summer seasons. Usually they are immediately before a major event or parade. The 1st one in the spring is following the water department's hydrant flushing. It takes a little bit of coordination to make sure that we are not wasting services and end up with the desired clean streets. This year needed the initial cleaning more than ever before with all of the sand applied over the winter months and the storm cleanup debris. Not only does the street sweeping make the city look beautiful but it also prevents storm drains from being covered with leaves (preventing flooding) and leaching basins from becoming full of sand and grit (which would damage the basins and make them ineffective). So, they are also helping our infrastructure.

Aaron Mitchell
City Manager

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