



CITY OF LINCOLN PARK

City Manager's Report On DPS Staffing

July 8, 2022

As a city of approximately 40,000 residents, Lincoln Park provides a great variety of services to residents. Many of the public interactions with these services are provided by the Department Public Services (DPS). The following report will discuss the current duties of the DPS, historical duties of the DPS, current and historic staff conditions and levels, examples of staffing from other communities, and finally some recommendations.

Duties of Lincoln Park DPS

The Lincoln Park DPS provides many different services. These services fall into a few broad categories, roads, water, sewer, motor pool, and building maintenance. Each one has specific staff that are dedicated to them, though the staff do at times help with other divisions. The following descriptions are some examples of the work done by the DPS.

DPS services fall into a few broad categories, roads, water, sewer, motor pool, and building maintenance.

The roads department is mainly responsible for the maintenance of the city's 116 miles of roadway. This includes street sweeping, pothole patching, painting of street lines, traffic control, trash removal at parks, and sign replacement. This division also handles many other nonroutine items such as emergency branch removals during storm events and responding to various code enforcement needs.

The water department is responsible for the maintenance of the water distribution system in the city. The system is made up of approximately 120 miles of watermains (which vary in size from six-inch diameter pipes to twenty-four-inch diameter pipes), approximately 15,800 water services, 2,073 fire hydrants, and approximately 2,500 gate valves.

The water department is responsible for the maintenance of the various components in the system. This includes repairing watermain breaks hydrant flushing and winter preparation, water service shutoffs, as well as other component repair and replacement.

The sewer department is responsible for the maintenance of the city's sewer collection system. This includes pump houses and lift stations as well as various sewer pipes. The city also operates a retention basin. The retention basin collects excess flow during storm events and other surcharges with the goal of eliminating illicit discharges and basement backups.

Routine maintenance and monitoring on the various lift stations and retention basin is the job of the sewer division. The sewer division also performs cleaning of sewer lines through a process called "jetting." The sewer division investigates claims of basement backups and sinkholes throughout the city.

The city has approximately fifteen different buildings. These buildings are maintained by the DPS building and grounds maintenance division. The building and grounds maintenance division addresses many minor repairs at these buildings. They also coordinate with various trade contractors for larger scale repairs.

The city operates approximately 130 pieces of equipment. This equipment is mostly maintained by the fleet maintenance (or motor pool) division of the DPS. Most routine maintenance including oil changes, brake repair, and other various issues are handled by the city's mechanic. Larger repairs or warranty repairs are usually handled by a dealership.

There are a significant number of duties that are performed by the staff of the DPS. Over the past few decades, the department has also turned to the assistance of various contractors to help with duties that might have in the past been done by departmental personnel.

The City of Lincoln Park has turned to using contractors to assist with many duties that previously would have been part of the regular duties of the department. The most obvious examples of these duties are the grounds maintenance and the tree trimming and removal services.

Grounds maintenance includes the maintenance of grass and vegetation at city owned properties. These include parks, buildings, and city-owned lots. The current contract calls for lawn services at eighty-four various properties. This list includes nineteen parks, eighteen municipal properties, twenty-seven vacant residential lots, and twenty other rights-of-way. The current fiscal year budget (FY 2022-23) has \$254,000 budgeted for this service.

The city is responsible for the trimming and removal of trees on city property. This mostly incorporates areas within road rights-of-way (the area between the sidewalk and a road). These trees are typically referred to as street trees. Street trees line the approximately 116 miles of city roadway. For the current fiscal year, the city has budgeted \$268,000 for tree removals and trimmings.

There are also services that are provided in a hybrid model. In this case, the DPS provides the service most of the time, but will utilize an outside contractor for assistance when needed. The most prevalent example in the city for this is with watermain breaks. There are times when DPS utilizes an outside contractor due to either the amount of available crew or the complexity of the project.

DPS Staffing Levels

The Lincoln Park DPS staffing levels have ebbed and flowed throughout the years. This is typically related to the level of services provided versus contracted as well as financial conditions of the city. It also is related to the way in which services are provided.

As technology has become more prevalent in the provision of public services it can create efficiencies and thus reduce some staffing needs. An example of this would be with meter reading. The city used to employ two people who worked as meter readers, with automatic reading technology this is a position that has become obsolete.

Budgeted Staffing Levels FY2006, FY2010-FY2015

Division	FY06	FY2010	FY2011	FY2012	FY2013	FY2014	FY2015
Director	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Supervisors	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Admin. Assistant	2	1	1	1	1	1 PT	2 PT
Bldgs/Grounds	2	2	1	1	1	1	1
Parks and Forestry	5	2	0	0	0	0	0
Roads	9	9	8	8	8	8	3
Water/Sewer	9	14	10	10	10	8**	5
Motor Pool	4	2	1	1	1	1	1
Part-time	*		3	3	3	3	9
Total Full Time	33	32	26	26	26	20	12

*The FY2006 Budget document does not list the actual number of part-time positions, only a budget for part-time salaries.

**Beginning in FY2014 the Meter Reader positions were eliminated in favor of automatic read meters.

As the table on the previous page shows, there was a continuing trend of budgeting fewer positions in the DPS beginning in about FY 2011. As financial conditions worsen, more services became contracted including most of the water department.

By FY 2015 the city, during emergency management, cut the DPS staff significantly. By FY 2015 the department had as few as twelve budgeted fulltime employees and nine part-time laborers. The trend began to reverse in FY2016 as the department began taking on new positions. The following table illustrates budgeted staffing levels between FY2015 and the current fiscal year.

Division	FY16	FY17	FY18	FY19	FY20	FY21	FY22	FY23 (Current)
Director	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Supervisors	1	1	1	1	2	2	2	2
Admin. Assistant	2 PT	2 PT	2 PT	3 PT	3 PT	2 PT **	2 PT	1 ****
Laborers	12	16	16	20	22	22	22	22
Motor Pool	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Part-time	8	8*	9*	9*	4*	4*	5***	5
Total Full Time	16	20	20	24	27	27	27	28

*Beginning in FY17 the city budgeted for three seasonal workers. These are not reflected in the part time numbers.

**For FY 21, the third part-time clerical position was removed at the request of the DPS Director

***In FY 22, the seasonal positions were no longer budgeted.

****During FY 2022, the two part-time clerical positions were combined to become a single full-time position.

The table above indicates that the department is currently operating with more full-time staff overall than prior to emergency management. The department has been restructured since before emergency management. There are now two supervisors instead of a single supervisor. There are also more laborers assigned to water and sewer than previously, even while there are no longer the meter reader positions in the department which accounted for two positions.

The following table indicates the current full-time staffing situation within the divisions.

Division	Total Positions	Filled Positions	Notes
Roads	6	6	There are currently no vacancies or injuries.
Water	8	7	Currently there is one vacancy. The position is posted, and recruitment is ongoing.
Sewer	6	4	Currently there are two vacancies. The position is posted, and recruitment is ongoing.
Building Maintenance	2	2	While the positions are currently filled, one employee has been off on a long-term medical leave. This has caused shuffling with other employees.
Motor Pool	2	1	There is currently a vacancy that has been open for a very long time. Also, the current employee was recently injured in a nonwork related incident and is expected to be out for at least twelve weeks.
Administration	4	4	While all positions are filled, one supervisor is currently off on medical leave and is expected to be out for some time creating strain on other divisions.
Total	28	24	

Currently, the laborers are assigned to either the water division, sewer division, roads division, or buildings maintenance division. There are currently six positions assigned to the roads division, six positions assigned to the sewer division, eight positions assigned to the water division and two positions assigned to the building maintenance division.

Current Conditions at Lincoln Park DPS

Currently, the Lincoln Park DPS is short based on their budgeted numbers. As the table on the previous page indicates, the department is allocated twenty-eight full-time positions but currently only has twenty-four full-time positions filled. Essentially, the department is operating at 2019 levels.

Understaffed describes an intentional policy decision to provide fewer employees than required.

Short staffed is a temporary condition that is often caused by turnover, injuries, vacations, or other temporary conditions that cause fewer than allocated staff to be onsite for a period.

There are a few terms that can be used to describe the condition that exists when there are less employees required to complete tasks. One term is understaffed. This term describes an intentional policy decision to provide fewer employees than required. This situation occurs when staffing budgets are decreased or hiring freezes are implemented.

A second term that can be used is short-staffed. Short staffing is a temporary condition that is often caused by turnover, injuries, vacations, or other temporary conditions that cause fewer than allocated staff to be onsite for a period. The condition of being short staffed is typically caused by more than one factor.

The Lincoln Park DPS has been experiencing a shortage of staff over the past three years. This much is clear. But to understand whether this condition can be identified as understaffed or short-staffed we need to look at a few factors. These include budgeted number of staff, any policy decisions regarding hiring, injuries (both duty and nonduty), paid time off, and turnover.

Budgeted Staffing and Hiring Policies

Since FY2015-16, the DPS has seen a steady increase in the number of budgeted full-time staff positions. Over these years, the budgeted full-time staff of the DPS has grown from sixteen to twenty-eight. This is an increase of twelve full-time positions. While part-time positions have decreased from ten to five.

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Various hiring policies can result in understaffing conditions. The most obvious example of these types of policies would be a hiring freeze. A hiring freeze typically occurs during times of significant financial stress. In these situations, it becomes necessary to not recruit or fill vacancies for budgeted positions. This however has not been the case in the city. The city continues to attempt to fill all budgeted vacancies.

Days Lost to Injury

Working in public services can inherently carry risk of injury. Employees routinely are placed in high stress situations in sometime adverse environmental conditions. It is understandable that injuries will occur and cause staffing shortages.

The Lincoln Park DPS has experienced several injuries over the past two and a half years. Examples of some of the injuries include trench collapses, falling rock striking an employee's head, cleaning chemicals splashing an employee's eyes, knee strains, elbow strains, and various others.

Many injuries that occur within the DPS are due to unexpected circumstances. However, some are very much preventable with the utilization of proper personal protective equipment (PPE) or by observing proper safety protocols. Injuries result in workdays lost, productivity loss, and significant cost.

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Unfortunately, injuries also occur away from the job site. Personal injuries also result in days lost for employees. Over the past few years, the city has experienced some long-term injuries that have occurred away from the job site. These include a motorcycle crash that has led to more than a year absence and most recently a car-pedestrian accident that will result in a significant absence.

The following table shows the number of days lost to injury, and the number of days employees have been on light duty due to injury. Both are important as both represent an employee that is unable to perform their normal tasks in the field.

Year	2020	2021	2022*
Days lost to injury	57	215	97
Days on Light Duty	122	169	33
Total Injury Days	179	384	130

There are approximately 245 workdays in a year.

*2022 information current as of July 5, 2022

Paid Time Off

Paid time off (PTO) is a benefit provided to all full-time employees in the DPS. PTO comes in a variety of forms, vacation, sick, and personal time. Also, over the course of the COVID-19 pandemic, the city has provided a bank of eighty hours of additional time related to COVID-19 quarantines.

The amount of each type of PTO that is accrued varies between the various types. All DPS employees receive the same amount of sick time and personal time. However, vacation time accrues on a schedule based on years of service. As employees gain seniority, the vacation time accrual grows.

PTO Used in FY2021-22

Type of PTO	Hours Used	Days used
Personal	664.5	83
Vacation	1985	248
Sick	1783.25	223
COVID	305.75	38
Total	4738.5	592

Use of PTO can lead to short-staffing conditions. This is especially true when it comes to unscheduled PTO such as sick time. Vacation time is required to be scheduled two working days ahead and personal time is supposed to be taken at the beginning or end of the shift and is required to be scheduled four-hours before the end of the shift. The scheduling of these types of PTO allows the supervisors to adjust work assignments accordingly.

The table on the previous page, PTO Used in FY2021-22, shows the amount of time that was used during the previous fiscal year. The two types of PTO that had the most usage last fiscal year were vacation and sick. Vacation time used represented 248 days and sick time used represented 223 days. As mentioned previously, sick time used is a big factor in short-staffing conditions. With only 245 workdays in a calendar year, the use of 471 days of PTO represents nearly two employees being off for the entire year.

Number of weeks of sick time taken by employee totals

Less than 1 week	1 – 2 weeks	2- 3 weeks	3 – 4 weeks	Over 4 weeks
10 employees*	6 employees	4 employees	1 employee	3 employees

*Of the 10 employees that took less than a full week of sick time, one employee left employment during the fiscal year, and another was on military leave until April 2022

The table above shows how many employees used a variety of quantities of sick time during the fiscal year. This table is only showing those employees who were eligible to use sick time during the fiscal year (total number of twenty-four). As can be seen in this table, a significant number of DPS employees used over two weeks' worth of sick time during the fiscal year (thirty-three percent). This presents significant problems with scheduling tasks for the department and contributes to short-staff conditions.

Also significant of note, is unpaid time off. The most notable of these is military leave. Between March of 2021 and March of 2022, one DPS employee was on military leave. The city is required to hold that employee's position during the time of leave. This also helps to contribute to short-staff conditions.

Turnover

Turnover can be defined as the number of employees that have left employment in relation to the total number of employees in the department. High turnover is costly as the city must recruit and hire new employees and the department must train the employees. Often there is a gap between the last day of employment and the first day of a new employee. This contributes to a short-staffed condition.

Year	2020	2021	2022*
Total FT Staff	25	26	26
Staff Separated	4	4	5
Hired	5	4	3
Staff Change	+1	0	-2
Turnover Rate	16%	15.4%	19.2%

*2022 information current as of July 8, 2022 and does not indicate the full year.

The table above shows the turnover rate for the DPS over the past two and a half years. The turnover rate is calculated as a percentage of those employees leaving employment in comparison to the total number of employees during the year. Over the past two and a half years, the turnover rate has hovered between sixteen and nineteen percent.

The turnover rate indicates that each year, approximately fifteen percent of the employees of the department are new and require training. It also signifies various times during the year at which the department can experience a short-staff condition as the hiring process usually takes longer than the traditional two-week notice that is provided in an employee's resignation.

An interesting fact on the amount of turnover over the past two and years presents itself. During this time, of the thirteen employees who have left only two had significant seniority. The other eleven employees had less than six-years of experience with the city with five of them having less than a year on the job.

Of the thirteen employees that have left the DPS over the past two and a half years, 69% were with the city less than two years.

The information above certainly indicate that the department has been experiencing a short-staff condition. Considering the following factors, the department has been operating on shortage.

- Workdays lost to injury both duty and nonduty injury
- Use of PTO (specifically the significant use of sick time)
- Turnover within the department.

To determine if there is an understaffing condition (again an intentional policy decision) we should look at staffing levels and services provided by comparable communities.

Community Comparisons

To compare communities, I looked to our neighbors as well as another older Michigan city. The three comparisons below come from the following cities, Allen Park, Southgate, and St. Clair Shores.

It is important to note that each community is unique and some contract different services versus providing the service completely in house. The following table shows the budgeted staffing levels for these communities.

Community	Allen Park	Lincoln Park	Southgate	St. Clair Shores
Population	28,237	40,245	30,047	60,000
Act 51 Miles	93	116	82	187
Water Main	120	120	85	220
Leadership positions	4 (director, deputy director, 2 supervisors)	3 (director, 2 supervisors)	5 (1 Director, 4 foremen)	3
Administrative	2 FT, 1 PT	1 FT	1 FT, 1 PT	4
Roads	6 FT, 1 PT seasonal	6 FT, 4 PT	4 FT	3
Water	4 FT, 1 PT Seasonal	8 FT	8 FT	10
Sewer	4 FT	6 FT	2 FT	7
Parks/Forestry	2 FT	1 PT Parks Maintenance	1 PT (forestry)	3 Forestry
Building Maintenance	0	2 FT	1 FT	0
Motor Pool	2 FT, 1 PT	2 FT (1 PT)	3 FT	3
Total Full Time	26 (26 filled)	28 (24 filled)	26 (24 filled)	33 (26 filled)
Total Part Time	2 (2 filled) 5 seasonal (2 filled)	6 (4 filled)	2 (2 filled)	7 (3 filled)

Of course, as previously mentioned each city is unique with respect to the services that are provided and the services that are contracted. All four of these cities provide the following services in house: road maintenance, street sweeping, water and sewer maintenance, motor pool/fleet maintenance, and pump station maintenance. Both Lincoln Park and Southgate contract most or all of their tree services, while Allen Park does most of their tree service in-house. Grounds

maintenance (grass cutting) is done in-house with St. Clair Shores and Allen Park, while Lincoln Park and Southgate both contract these services.

The following table shows an illustration of the various city services and the provision method:

	Allen Park	Lincoln Park	Southgate	St. Clair Shores
Road maintenance	In-house	In-house	In-house	In-house
Tree service	In-house	Contracted	Contracted	Combination
Sweeping	In-house	In-house	In-house	In-house
Water maintenance	In-house	In-house	In-house	In-house
Sewer maintenance	In-house	In-house	In-house	In-house
Grass cutting	In-house	Contracted	Contracted	In-house
Pump station maintenance	In-house	In-house	In-house	In-house
Motor pool	In-house	In-house	In-house	In-house

Based on the information collected, our budgeted staffing levels seem to be consistent with those of other communities. Of these four communities, the budgeted staff for Lincoln Park is higher than everyone except St. Clair Shores which has a fifty percent higher population, approximately sixty more miles of road and a hundred more miles of water main. As of the time of this report, while St. Clair Shores is budgeted five more full-time staff than Lincoln Park, they only have two more positions filled than Lincoln Park.

With Allen Park and St. Clair Shores providing more of their services in-house than Lincoln Park, it is expected they would have more staff. Even considering this fact, Lincoln Park's budgeted staffing numbers do not appear to be significantly below either.

Looking across the various services provided in-house, Lincoln Park has more road and sewer staff budgeted than any of the four communities. The only community with more water employees budgeted is St. Clair Shores.

Parks and forestry is an area with more variation and is also an area where Lincoln Park has fewer budgeted employees. This is also likely due to the amount of grounds maintenance and tree services that are contracted by Lincoln Park.

The last area of interest is in the leadership and administrative positions. While the overall leadership positions are close it does appear Lincoln Park's administrative staff level is slightly behind some of the other communities.

In 2021, the city contracted for an outside evaluation of the DPS. The purpose of this was to identify efficiencies and to benchmark the department's staffing levels. At the end of the evaluation, the following recommendations were made for improvement:

1. Standard Operating Procedures
2. Monitoring Requirements
3. Garage and outdoor area organized
4. Contract Management (Tree Contractor and City Grounds Lawn Contractor)

5. Training and Safety Priority
6. Utilizing Work Order System

Since these recommendations were given, there has been some overall progress, but these items remain outstanding. The DPS still does not have formal and adopted standard operating procedures. The department is still contracting for a water Operator in Charge (OIC) as there is nobody on staff with an adequate license. The yard is still in need of some significant organization. Training and safety remain an issue.

The only area in which there has been significant improvement is in contract management with grounds maintenance. While the city has brought on a new grounds' maintenance contractor, the DPS has taken a more active role in oversight with the contractor. Items that need attention have been receiving that attention much more quickly than previously.

While the slow improvements and progress on these recommendations could be attributed to staffing issues, we must understand that the areas in which staffing has been significantly short over the past year are the laborer positions and not leadership. There has been some turnover and injuries in supervisor positions, however, we have had various individuals step-up to fill those roles.

However, it is likely that the department would benefit from some additional organizational and administrative assistance. As we move towards further professionalization of the department, which includes reopening the front doors to the public, and additional clerical staff might be able to help keep the workflow moving in the department. Improvements in tracking, scheduling, and organizing work orders could be realized which might free up time for the leadership to create and implement standard operating procedures as well as a safety program.

Final Thoughts, Other Considerations

This report has given a significant amount of information regarding the current state of the department. It has not however given much consideration for future growth of the department. This report has is limited in that there are some future considerations that need to be addressed.

One such consideration is implementation of the long-awaited valve maintenance and water leak detection program. The program design has recently been completed from Hennessey. This program will necessitate the hiring of two more laborers for the water division. It would also necessitate the hiring of a team lead.