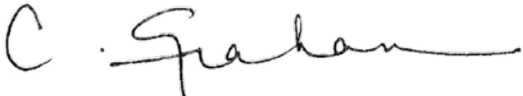




COMMUNICATION UPDATE

TO:	Mayor and Members City Council
DATE:	June 2, 2022
SUBJECT:	Parks Turf Mowing Program – Service Level Impacts (ES22005) (City Wide)
WARD(S) AFFECTED:	City Wide
SUBMITTED BY:	Cynthia Graham Acting Director, Environmental Services Public Works Department
SIGNATURE:	

This update is being provided to highlight the current impacts to the Council approved mowing and trimming service levels in the City of Hamilton's (City) parks and sports fields, performed by the Parks and Cemeteries Section of the Environmental Services Division.

Turf Management Program

This Spring, City staff began the turf maintenance program which services various park sites across the City. The program includes monitoring and assessment of general turf health, the application of fertilizers, topdressing materials and grass seed, aeration of sports fields, ground litter/debris control, field lining and regular mowing activities.

Early in the season, the City experienced wet weather and a late winter which resulted in wet ground conditions making it difficult to cut without resulting in ruts in the grass due to heavy equipment, which would have negatively impacted the sod areas and field playability well into the season.

Grass grew quickly with the warm weather and often the grass has already grown substantially before the next scheduled cut on the 7 working day schedule. Staff are resourced for the Council approved levels only.

OUR Vision: To be the best place to raise a child and age successfully.

OUR Mission: To provide high quality cost conscious public services that contribute to a healthy, safe and prosperous community, in a sustainable manner.

OUR Culture: Collective Ownership, Steadfast Integrity, Courageous Change, Sensational Service, Engaged Empowered Employees.

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Additional challenges this year are related to staffing levels and experience. Parks Operations has seen impacts to staffing levels due to retirements, Covid absences, and difficulty in hiring for positions. These factors have led to a delay in getting sports fields cut and lined and to the standard normally achieved. Many Parks staff are new and supervisors and superintendents are working hard to train new teams, to ensure staff understand the intricacies of the work and the routes. Current vacancies in Parks Operations are 19 full time staff and 39 students.

Parks Operations has also had multiple equipment breakdowns across multiple yard locations, which slows down the wide area cutting schedule across the City. In order to manage this, staff are working to get the areas cut by smaller equipment and two-behind mowers, however, this is less efficient and takes more time to complete. Mowing and trimming activities are performed by Parks maintenance staff and equipment/resources are shared across district boundaries where possible to respond to issues such as equipment breakdowns or park event programming in order to maintain consistent program service levels.

Mowing and trimming activities are the foundation of the City’s turf management and Integrated Pest Management (IPM) Programs. Park mowing service levels are tiered relative to the type of playing fields or parks and Council approved levels of service are outlined in the table below. Please be aware all parks are being cut in order of the existing service delivery schedules. Weed growth (due to the cosmetic pesticide ban) is evident this month and may impact on the visual aesthetics of the park, but for overall efficiency, service delivery schedules require strict adherence. These cycles are currently at risk in many areas of the City due to weather events, staffing shortages and equipment breakdowns.

Park Type	Mowing/Trimming Frequency Maintenance Standards	Anticipated Number of Cycles *
	Late April/May - October Only	
Class A and B Sports fields	1 time / 5 working days	21 or 22 cycles
Class C and D Sports fields	1 time / 7 working days	17 or 18 cycles
Citywide, Community, Neighbourhood general parklands	1 time / 7 working days	17 or 18 cycles
Parkette	1 time / 7 working days	17 or 18 cycles

* Cycles completed per year are weather dependent and can be influenced by equipment breakdowns and staff shortages.

Naturalized Areas

The City of Hamilton is rich with natural open spaces that include valued natural heritage features, corridors and habitats. Many parks include naturalized areas or are adjacent to natural open spaces and require natural buffers. Staff receive inquiries

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about ticks this time of year and the City's approach is focused on education and ensuring that parks users are aware that ticks could be present anywhere. Standard messaging is that all park users should check themselves for ticks, and wear light coloured clothing to facilitate identifying and removing any ticks. Natural areas are an important part of the City's biodiversity action planning and provide valuable area for habitat, canopy coverage and help in the fight against climate change impacts.

Should you require further information, please contact Kara Bunn, Manager, Parks and Cemeteries at extension 4334.

APPENDICES AND SCHEDULES ATTACHED

Not Applicable