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From the Manager

Kudos to Streets and Forestry Crews: It has been a rough weather winter. Though we sometimes get critiques, we heard a LOT of shout-outs to the Streets Crews (and other divisions who helped plow) over the past week. I heard it from my parents and neighbors and even, when I went to the dentist for a filling, from the dental hygienist! She said: “The plowing crews did such a great job. When I pass a plow driver, I say a little ‘Thank You’ in my head.” She was very happy when I said I’d pass on that message to you all. We hope all of our plowing crews know how many of us feel the same way as the hygienist, and say a “thank you” in our head when we see you out at work!

Here are some more samples:

- “Shout-out to the Plow-guy on Park Ridge Ct today! He was kind enough to turn his blade to plow the snow to the East side of the road where there are no driveways. As a street that has all Senior Citizens and all with some form of disability - you have no idea how much this was appreciated! I stopped him to thank him and gave him a baggie of cookies... We all are so very grateful! Great job EC!”
- “Best snow removal after 4+ inches I have ever seen in the city. The fact that you could keep schools open and have folks get to work while everyone else closed is great to see.”
- A Community Services Admin shared that she got a call from someone at Mayo Healthcare System who submitted a work order online last week for a large tree branch that was down in a boulevard. He said that it was taken care of in under 12 hours, and he was really impressed. The caller said: “It just made me really proud to live in Eau Claire, and I wanted you to know that.”

We complain a lot on social media (its true 🙄) but huge shout out to @CityofEauClaire street crews. Roads are good, many side streets cleared by 9am and frankly within the city the impact of the storm is minimal.

This is Upstate NY city quality snow removal



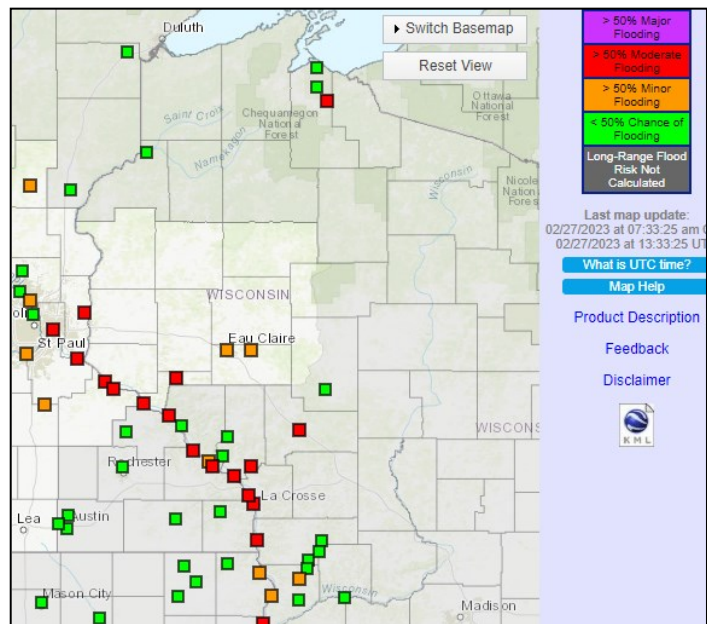
Gas Leak Help: More thanks are owed to crews who supported Excel crews as they worked to address a gas leak this past week. A manager from Excel shared this appreciation for City staff. She wrote:

“We have been dealing with a gas leak on Bellinger St since Monday. Our crews renewed a service on Monday, monitored residual gas reads around the clock all week, and we made the decision to replace a section of 4” gas main in Bellinger St today. This is in front of the old RCU building and a primary entrance to Mayo Hospital.

The City of Eau Claire has been excellent to work with all week. City engineers have been very accommodating and snow plow drivers have been extra cautious around our crews working in the right of way. I called the City this morning when we decided to expand the scope and ensure the leak is secured before the weekend. Within an hour a City street crew was onsite with signs and channelizers to set up proper traffic control to help vehicles navigate the roadway and keep our workers safe. They even went so far as to haul in sand to help with traction on the snow and ice. This is remarkable, especially considering street crews have been working around the clock all week cleaning up after the snow storm.”

Preparation for Higher-than-Normal Spring Flooding:

Tyler Esh from the County shared information with us about an upcoming meeting related to the forecast for flooding. He said: “Craig Schmidt, Hydrologist for the National Weather Service-Twin Cities, will be at the Health Department’s Public Health Emergency Preparedness meeting next Thursday, March 2nd at the Altoona Fire Department. He will be talking about the latest spring flood outlook that was released today and can be found: [Advanced Hydrologic Prediction Service: Twin Cities/Chanhassen \(weather.gov\)](https://www.weather.gov/twin-cities/chanhassen). This outlook shows a much higher than normal risk for minor, moderate, and major flooding on both the Chippewa and Eau Claire Rivers. Cory Tietz, Operations Coordinator for the City of EC, will talk about local mitigation and response efforts that the City of EC does when river levels get to certain points.” In case anyone would like to join, here is the meeting information: Local Public Health Emergency Preparedness (PHEP) Committee Meeting, Thursday, March 2nd. 10AM to 11:30AM, IN-PERSON Location: Altoona Fire Department, 1904 Spooner Ave, Altoona, WI 54720, Virtual Options: [Webex Link](#) | Phone #: 1-415-655-0001 | Access Code: 259 2316 2662



Casework Team from Senator's Office: After meeting with Senator Baldwin recently, her staff shared information about their Casework Team. I'm passing it along to you in case you have a constituent who could use any help from this office. It can be hard to know when and how to contact the Federal level of government, so perhaps this resource can answer some questions. Anna Ringstad, the Northwestern Wisconsin Regional Representative for the Senator, shared the following:

"Our office has a team dedicated to helping with issues constituents face within federal agencies and programs. Some of our most common requests deal with Veterans benefits, delays in tax returns, visa/passport delays, and social security benefits. That being said, this list is by no means all-inclusive.

If you, or someone you know, could benefit from reaching out to the Casework Team, please have them contact our Madison office at 608-264-5338. While we have regional offices for Senator Baldwin, our Madison, Milwaukee, and DC offices have front desk staff to answer phones during regular business hours. Our regional offices do not always have support staff, so it may take longer to receive a response. Otherwise, you can always share my email address with them (Anna.Ringstad@baldwin.senate.gov), and I'd be happy to help them connect."

Fireworks Planning: As mentioned in a prior newsletter, we are evaluating the feasibility of having the fireworks shot off of the High Bridge. A number of you have raised questions, and below is what we have learned so far. We will have a Study Session sometime in the next month or so to give you a chance to have more Q&A time on the topic.

Question: Is there an impact on water for refuse created from the fireworks?

Answer: The DNR wrote the following information... "The WDNR does not regulate fireworks or their use (unless it's in a state park where they are prohibited). Most of the regulations surrounding firework displays will be handled by the local authorities. In this case it would be the EC Sheriff's Office and the City of EC. From my perspective, as long as the fireworks are not causing an excessive amount of litter than I do not have any concerns as the local Conservation Warden. My request would be to have employees/volunteers check the river's edge and 'fallout zone' the following morning to clean up any big chunks or litter that remains."

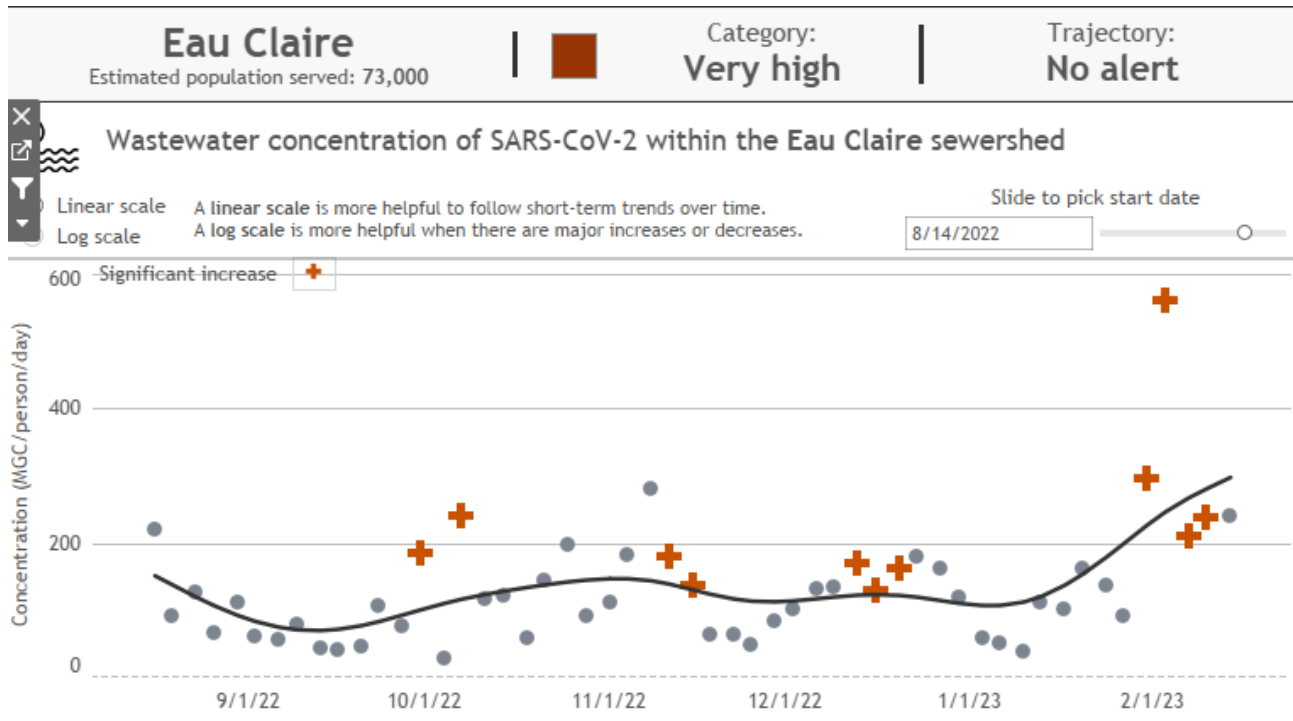
Question: Will the neighbors be impacted and unhappy with the fireworks?

Answer: We're working on gathering feedback. Cory Tietz has visited the Upper Westside Neighborhood Association Steering Committee and will additionally talk with constituents on the other side of the river and with businesses in those areas.

COVID Monitoring in Wastewater Update: Here is an update from the Health Department on Covid monitoring in Wastewater. We're detecting a significant increase in SARS-CoV-2 and a somewhat similar increase in reported case data in Eau Claire. This would be indicative of elevated COVID-19 transmission within the area. Looking at the [state lab's genomic dashboard](#), it looks like the rise has

roughly correlated to the increase in the proportion of the Omicron XBB subvariant. We know that case data is often underreported these days, and we've seen strong correlation between wastewater data and case data in the past, so we've been more confident following the wastewater trends. It's possible the high point is a bit of an outlier—there's still quite a bit of variability in these data. Current information though still indicates an increase in SARS-CoV-2 presence. While the CDC Community Level is currently at "Low" there is increased likelihood that exposure could happen.

Recommendations remain that same related to COVID-19. People should stay home and test if sick. Treatment options are available for those that are at risk and individuals should check with their health care provider. Vaccination remains an important tool in decreasing the risk of severe illness if exposed. More information is available at: [COVID-19: Wisconsin Coronavirus Wastewater Monitoring Network | Wisconsin Department of Health Services](#) and [Coronavirus and COVID-19 Information Hub \(arcgis.com\)](#).



Thank you for Neighborhood Problem Solving: President of the Shawtown Neighborhood Association, Brad Candel, gave a shout-out to City staff for their help creating the proposed Neighborhood Association Events ordinance. A huge thank you to Billie Hufford, Dawn Comte, and other staff from Recreation, Parks, Community Development, and the City Attorney’s Office for working through the details. Also, thank you to the many neighborhood leaders who spent their time and energy to find approaches to try. From Brad: “Not only are we incredibly excited about the opportunities that this will enable for Associations like ours, but I would be remiss if I did not also share my gratitude for the process that both recognized these challenges and enabled a collaborative team to propose

responsible solutions. Billie and Dawn have been truly instrumental in the recognition and collaboration that felt incredibly uplifting and worthwhile... Thank you again for the impacts you make every day within our great community! Eau Claire is a better place because of the hard work of each and every one of you.”

Some Updates from Utilities: Here’s some news from this division...

- Water Treatment Plant: As mentioned in the last newsletter, the Water Treatment Plant hosted US Senator Tammy Baldwin to present \$1.6 million for PFAS removal efforts. The first pilot study of PFAS removal started on Wednesday, February 15th and is expected to operate for two to three months. The study is looking to determine the best media to use for PFAS removal in our water.
- Waste Water Treatment Plant: The Waste Water Treatment Plant is operating very smoothly. A pre-bid meeting was held on Wednesday February 15th for the Eau Claire River Lift Station upgrade project, with the bid officially opening on February 28th.

In other news, Viresco, a waste management company from Turtle Lake, is looking to bring wastewater material to the wastewater treatment plant. It would amount to approximately 6,500 gallons/day, three days a week. They would be part of the pretreatment program and will be charged for each load that is brought to the Waste Water Treatment Plant.

- Distribution/Customer Service: Lead service lines continue to be replaced as the weather and ground frost permits. The valve/hydrant contract and service leak contract are preparing to be bid. Bids open on Tuesday, March 7th.

Some Updates from Streets and Fleet: Here’s some news from this division...

- Streets:
 - Crews have been hauling snow from dead end streets and cul-de-sacs in an attempt to make more room for any additional snow this winter.
 - All City residential streets were sanded on Thursday, February 16th where needed. Some roads are now bare pavement, while others are still heavily rutted with ice pack. Crews have spent the last two weeks scraping



residential streets with loaders and a grader to try and smooth out the roads and get rid of some of the snow/ice pack.

- Crews have been out filling potholes that were created to the frequent temperature fluctuations.

- **Fleet:**

- Fleet staff continue to work tirelessly to keep the fleet in good working order.
- Crews are working towards getting the Police Department's first pick-up ready for service. The Police Department is trying these pickups in place of the Chevy Tahoe vehicles which have proved to be fairly unreliable with being overweight and multiple engine issues.



Pictured here: Mechanic Chris Ball works on a new

Police Department pick-up truck. A box storage system, tonneau cover, and emergency lighting package will all be part of the completed vehicle. Amd. *Fleet staff also took delivery of a new forklift, which is a CIP item first requested five years ago.*

Some Updates from Recreation: Here's some news from this division...

- **Fairfax Concession Stand Renovation:** Rohm is working on demo block work, soffit and fascia for tie-in work. Dernovsek is doing the block work and Hudson Electric is going to rough-in on block and demo existing electrical. Depending on weather, roofing could start very soon.
- **Outdoor Rinks:** Outdoor ice-skating rinks are closing for the season due to warm temperatures. Pinehurst shelter will remain open for sledding, snowboarding, downhill skiing, and gear share until February 26th.



- Hobbs Ice Arena: Hobbs Concessions 2023 YTD sales are \$24,403. In comparison, 2022 YTD sales were 17,283 at his time. Team play-offs are in full swing. Most teams will have completed their season within the next two weeks. After that, off-season use will begin.
- Amazing Eau Claire Clean-Up: Marketing is underway for the annual clean-up effort. After just one week of promotion, 21 groups are already registered to participate.



Pictured here: Progress continues on the Fairfax Concession Stand renovation. And, a participant enjoys the annual Par-te-Rec Valentine's Day.

Council Calendar (With Tentative Work Session Dates)

- Monday, February 27th: Regular Council Public Hearing/Discussion night
 - Continuation of Street Hearings
- Tuesday, February 28th: Council Meeting
 - Work Session or Study Session on Proposed Vehicle Registration
 - First Reading of Remote Participation Ordinance Change
 - Strategic Planning Work Session #2: Review of Community Values and 2023 Goals
- ❖ Wednesday, March 1st: Manager Evaluation responses due back to Human Resources.
- Thursday, March 2nd: Second Open House for the Public on Vehicle Registration Fee
- ❖ Tuesday, March 7th: Compilation of responses on Manager Evaluation will be emailed to Council Members and Manager for review
- Monday, March 13th: Regular Council Public Hearing/Discussion night
- Tuesday, March 14th: Council Meeting
 - First Reading of Proposed Vehicle Registration Tax (if requested by Council)
 - Work Session on Boards, Commissions, and Committees
 - Closed session: Manager Annual Evaluation
- Monday, March 27: Regular Council Public Hearing/Discussion night
 - Public Hearing on Proposed Vehicle Registration Tax (if requested by Council)
- Tuesday, March 28th: Council Meeting

- Council action on Vehicle Registration Tax (if requested by Council)
- Introduction of any ordinance changes related to Boards
- Study Session on location for Fireworks for summer of 2023
- CIP Budget Work Session #1: Financial Overview and Parameters
- Monday, April 10th: Regular Council Public Hearing/Discussion night
- Tuesday, April 11th: Council Meeting
 - Last meeting for President Weld
 - Council action on any ordinance changes related to Boards
- Tuesday, April 18th: Organizational Meeting
- Tuesday, April 25th: Council Meeting
- ❖ Monday, May 1st: Council receives Proposed 2024-2028 CIP Budget
- Tuesday, May 9th: Council Meeting
 - Council 2024-2028 CIP Budget Work Session #2
- Tuesday, May 23rd: Council Meeting
 - Council 2024-2028 CIP Budget Work Session #3
- Monday, June 12th: Regular Council Public Hearing/Discussion night
 - Public Discussion of 2024-2028 CIP Budget
- Tuesday, June 13th: Council Meeting
 - Council action on 2024-2028 CIP Budget

Additional Dates:

- Thursday, March 2nd: Second Community Meeting on Vehicle Registration fee
- Thursday, March 2nd: Downtown Awards & Celebration
- Tuesday, March 7th: Police Department Promotional and Awards Ceremony
- Wednesday, March 29th: 29th Annual Chippewa Valley Rally
- Friday, March 31st: Eggs and Issues Legislative Breakfast
- Friday, April 21st: Eggs and Issues State of Altoona
- Friday, July 28th: LWM Local Government 101

Employee Spotlight:

Here's our next spotlight. (Give a shout-out to a City employee using [this form](#)).

Today we highlight **Tessa Nyhus!**

A coworker said this about Tessa: "Tessa makes the day more enjoyable with her witty remarks and great sense of humor. You can hear the laughs from the property room down the hall. Tessa is also a hard-worker and is continually on the lookout for ways to improve processes."



- **Your Position:** "I'm currently a Property and Evidence Technician with the Police Department. I have been in this position for almost 6 years with almost 13 years total with the City of Eau Claire."
- **What people may not know:** "My husband Chris also works for the great City of Eau Claire as a Paramedic/Firefighter and you may have seen him featured in the Employee Spotlight a few weeks ago. I can fact check that he DOES annoy me on a regular basis and on purpose."
- **Favorite activities:** "My husband introduced me to hunting a couple of years ago and it's now something we enjoy together along with my 11-year-old stepson Max. I'm quite certain his ulterior motive was to get me interested enough that I don't question the purchases he makes for such an activity."
- **Best part about working for the City:** "The people! Hands down. I know it always feels like the obvious answer, but your coworkers really do make or break your job. And I have the best partner in the Property and Evidence Room as well as some really amazing coworkers who make each day interesting!"
- **Life Philosophy:** "Tomorrow isn't promised! Don't wait until you're too old to travel, go to concerts, explore new places and things, and BE PRESENT with your family and loved ones. Money spent on experiences that create memories is never wasted!"

A Few More Pictures: Dave Solberg visits with Archie, the unofficial therapy puppy who sometimes visits City Hall. Jason Rohloff explains to staff who to enter information into OpenGov for the Capital Improvement Plan budget process, which is already underway. And a picture of the progress so far on the future Menomonie Market.

