
**Government of the District of Columbia
DC Department of Public Works**



**DPW Performance Oversight Hearing on
Fiscal Years 2016-2017**

Testimony of
Christopher J. Shorter
Director

Before the
Committee on Transportation and the Environment
Council of the District of Columbia

The Honorable Mary M. Cheh, Chairperson

John A. Wilson Building
Room 412
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
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Introduction

- Good morning Chairperson Cheh, members of the Committee on Transportation and the Environment. I am Christopher J. Shorter, Director of the District of Columbia Department of Public Works. With me today is DPW's General Counsel, Christine Davis and Agency Fiscal Officer, Perry Fitzpatrick. Thank you for the opportunity today to present information on behalf of Mayor Muriel Bowser on the programs and services provided by the Department and its accomplishments in FY 2016 and 2017 to date.
- I also would like to thank the Mayor and City Administrator for providing me the opportunity to serve District residents as Director of Public Works and for their continued involvement, leadership and ongoing support.
- Mayor Bowser's administration remains committed to creating pathways to the middle class by investing in education, infrastructure, public safety, and people. The Fair Shot Budget for fiscal year 2017 (FY2017) was the first budget developed wholly under Budget Autonomy. For the first time since Home Rule was passed in 1973, the District was able to spend our local dollars without having to wait on Congress to pass the federal budget. This brings us one step closer to operating like the 51st state.
- The mission of the Department of Public Works is to provide environmentally healthy municipal services that are both ecologically sound and cost effective. To that end, DPW serves all District residents, businesses, visitors and commuters by providing:
 - Solid waste management services, including:
 - Collections and disposal of trash, recycling, bulk, litter, deceased animals, household hazardous waste, and e-cycling;
 - Street and alley cleaning;
 - Solid waste education and enforcement;
 - Grounds maintenance and landscaping;
 - Leaf collection;
 - Snow removal;
 - Zero waste policy and program development;
 - Parking enforcement services, including towing, booting, removing and impounding abandoned and dangerous vehicles; and,
 - Fleet management services, including acquisition and disposal, fueling, and vehicle maintenance services.

- During the last 12 months, we have been very busy making the necessary short and longer term adjustments in our operation to improve our overall capacity to deliver timely, seamless, and cost effective services. These improvements include strengthening our executive management team. In 2016, Mr. James Jackson and Mr. Gabriel Robinson were appointed Deputy Director and Chief Operating Officer, respectively. As the agency's Deputy Director, Mr. Jackson provides director support to the Office of Waste Diversion and Solid Waste Management, Parking Enforcement Management and Fleet Management Administrations. Mr. Jackson is also our Citywide Snow Coordinator and serves as the primary liaison for the District snow and ice removal program.
- Mr. Robinson is our Chief Operating Officer and oversees our administrative support functions, including the Human Capital Administration and the Offices of Administrative Services, Communications, Information Technology Services, and Organizational Effectiveness and Change Management.
- Both leaders have added great value to the agency's management team and are working with other agency leaders to increase our capacity to deliver top of the line services to District residents.
- With a stronger executive management team in place, I am very optimistic about our future. I will focus my remarks today on three core areas of activity that are critical to improving service delivery:
 - (1) **Customer Service;**
 - (2) **Program Innovations; and**
 - (3) **Long-term Strategic Investment.**
- I will start by discussing how we enhanced customer service on multiple levels, ranging from the use of new media to more traditional face-to-face contact to improve outreach to and response from residents, visitors and those doing business in the District.

Customer Service

- I firmly believe that direct communications with our customers increases their understanding of our operations and it also increases their trust.
- To that end, this past year, I had the honor to meet with well over 50 Advisory Neighborhood Commissions, civic associations and community organizations. We listened to residents and gathered valuable feedback especially about our most frequently requested services – parking enforcement, residential permit parking, and bulk trash removal.
- To ensure that we were responsive to these communities, we used information from 311 service requests to tailor our presentations to provide specific service updates for the neighborhood's interests. Each meeting provided valuable feedback to assess how well

we delivered our services. We engaged in lively discussions with residents citywide and we always appreciate their interest in our work.

- Outreach to our senior population was a major focus for our team this year. We attended multiple senior lunches and meetings across the District to inform seniors of the Snow Shoveling Exemption program to encourage their participation before the season.
- Following our continuous outreach, we realized that more timely person-to-person interactions produce better outcomes, so last year we initiated weekly and as-needed conference calls with Advisory Neighborhood Commissioners. During these calls, we shared information about DPW services and elicited feedback from Commissioners about their constituents' concerns. From the feedback, we began to give advance notifications to alert ANC's when there are service changes such as daily trash and recycling collections schedules. These calls also established a point of contact with the DPW ANC Liaison who then handles their concerns.
- We stay in close contact with the Mayor's Office of Community Relations and Services and CORE teams to provide residents with information about our services and programs. Frequently, we attend community meetings and events alongside the MOCR's. This past year, we participated in several community walks with the Mayor to address any specific community concerns and to gather feedback.
- DPW also maintains consistent contact with Council through your constituent services staff as key audiences for feedback and outreach.
- Earlier, I mentioned the transformation and growth the District is experiencing. As a result, we stepped up our use of social media and improved our websites to give our customers 24/7 access to information about our services.
- We have grown our social media following by 50% percent this past year and average more than 30,000 views each month. Additionally, we have assigned a dedicated customer service team member to manage feedback received through social media to meet rising expectations to provide real-time responses to customers.
- Last year we began using GovDelivery to increase our public outreach because not all communications can be delivered through a one-to-one interaction. GovDelivery is a platform developed in partnership with the District's Office of the Chief Technology Officer, which allows regular and frequent distribution of topic-specific email blasts to residents about DPW services. To date, DPW has distributed email blasts to more than 4,800 subscribers.
- Our websites – **dpw.dc.gov** and **snow.dc.gov** – are used actively by our customers and both received upgrades to make them more accessible to mobile devices. In FY 2016, dpw.dc.gov had **519,681 sessions** and more than **1 million page views**.
- In FY 2016, snow.dc.gov had **110,720 visits** and more than **168,000 page views**, with 44% of all sessions coming from new visitors looking for information for the first time. Snow.dc.gov received a thorough upgrade in FY17, including new text and graphics and

provided more robust information about winter season readiness in a user-friendly, simple and contemporary format adaptable to mobile devices.

- We believe this level of proactive engagement and responsiveness with our customers is vital for the agency and aligns with the Mayor's expressed desires to innovate in terms of public engagement and public participation.
- How well we deliver our services and interact with our customers is based on our long-term strategic investments and program innovation. Sanitation services, parking enforcement, and fleet operations all are influenced by the quality of those investments and innovations.
- With that said, I'd like to take a few minutes to provide updates on some of our program innovations first.

Program Innovations – Sanitation Initiatives

- “DC Clean Alley” is a new program that began in FY 2016 to beautify Ward 8 alleys and create a safer, more attractive environment by improving overall cleanliness and removing blight. DPW and the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) launched “DC Clean Alley,” which was funded through a DHCD federal grant designated specifically for community improvements. “DC Clean Alley” cleaned 529 alleys through September 19, addressing issues of illegal dumping, abandoned vehicles, rodent infestation and other sanitation and safety concerns that can lead to neighborhood blight and crime. We have already begun making plans for a return to Ward 8 next month and we are expanding the effort to Ward 7, where work will take place in June.
- Through partnership with the Department of General Services, DPW assumed responsibility for managing the city-wide grounds maintenance program. During the first season (FY 2016), DPW increased its portfolio of properties from 314 to almost 1,100. All of these properties were reclassified to identify the type and frequency of service – mowing, landscaping and beautification – each would receive during the season. DPW received \$1.2 million to enhance staff and equipment for the new program. We successfully decreased the mowing cycle from 3-4 weeks to a consistent 2 weeks.
- We cannot be effective in our work without partners. Our primary partnership to keep our streets clean is between DPW and the public. Currently, DPW has more than 6,700 litter cans spread across the city. Right now, we are testing two types of smart litter can technologies to determine their efficacy.
 - The first pilot features 25 solar-powered cans, funded through a partnership with the Department of Health, that were installed in the Barracks Row and Eastern Market neighborhoods. These 32-gallon cans are designed to send a signal to indicate the level of waste and they have the ability to compact the equivalent of up to 8 times their 32-gallon size. This pilot will last one year.

- A second smart litter can pilot features equipping existing DPW cans with solar-powered lids and sensors that signal the cans' waste levels. Currently, 19 cans are in use along sections of U Street, NW and Pennsylvania Avenue, NW, and 400 additional cans will become part of the pilot later this spring. The lids and sensors on the first 19 cans were provided by the vendor at no cost to the District.
- We are using both pilots, which provide remote monitoring technology to indicate fill levels and service needs to determine how to better deploy our resources – people and equipment – to keep our streets clean.
- Continuing in our mission to keep our city clean and beautiful, this past year, we launched The “Great Graffiti Wipe Out,” a six-week program created to bring city officials and the community together to eradicate graffiti and cut down on illegal tagging in every ward of the city. During the Wipeout, the agency’s graffiti abatement team spent one week in each ward cleaning graffiti and removing illegal posters from highly visible areas and also responding to abatement service requests. The Wipeout cleaned more than 700 graffiti markings and removed more than 2,000 posters and stickers from public spaces in each of the District’s eight wards.

Program Innovations – Zero Waste Initiatives

- I am very pleased to report that while our Office of Waste Diversion is small, its progress toward meeting the Solid Waste Amendment Act goals has been large. In FY 2016 and into FY 2017, they have created strong partnerships with stakeholders, initiated major programs and set the District on the path to zero waste.
- We are conducting a waste characterization study and working with the interagency waste reduction working group to develop a zero waste plan – the path to achieving 80% waste diversion District-wide.
- DPW, in partnership with the Department of Energy and Environment (DOEE) and the DC Food Policy Council hosted the first Organic Waste Summit on May 18 at the Ronald Reagan International Trade Center. Local and national policy experts and advocates came to discuss best practices in organic waste management. Panelists and presenters addressed household food waste source reduction, food donation, community composting, curbside collection of food and yard waste, as well as organic waste processing infrastructure.
- That same day, we participated in the Feeding the 5,000 DC event at the Ronald Reagan Building and International Trade Center. A delicious, free meal, sourced entirely from fresh top-quality produce that otherwise may have been wasted, was provided to 6,750 residents and visitors. This event, in which DPW participated as a partner, showcases and promotes positive and delicious solutions to the global food waste crisis. It draws international attention to the District’s priorities of decreasing hunger and food waste.
- We appreciate the need to have a strong communications program to let residents know what we are doing and how they can participate. Last spring, we created a waste prevention webpage on the DPW website, and promoted the Save the Food campaign via

social media. The campaign also was promoted through DOEE's Sustainable DC social media outlets.

- A number of steps have been taken with our partners in the past year to lay the ground work for increased waste diversion and reduction and prevention of substances containing chemicals and materials of concern, which include the following:
 - An electronic waste take back program led by DOEE that took effect on January 1, 2017 and the associated electronic waste disposal ban will assist in limiting the volume of products containing heavy metals entering waste to energy and landfill facilities.
 - In December 2016, the District issued an updated list of materials required to be recycled in commercial and residential recycling. The purpose of this list is to achieve greater alignment of what can be recycled or composted in the District regardless of whether in a commercial setting or a single-family home. The requirement will take effect on January 1, 2018.
 - Using the updated list of recyclable materials, DPW, in partnership with the interagency waste reduction working group, is developing new recycling outreach materials, including new zero waste web pages on DPW's website and new information for DPW-serviced residential properties, multi-family dwellings, businesses, and special events.
- Finally, we are very excited to launch the Food Waste Drop-Off program this April. The program will be located at a Saturday Farmers Market with one location in each ward. This is a free, brand new service for District residents to drop-off their food waste for composting. Residents can bring their fruit and vegetable scraps, expired bread, grains, cereals, rice and pasta, egg shells, and uncoated paper bags.
- All markets should be open by June as the farmers market season picks up and we expect about 75-100 participants weekly. At the same time, we will launch our ***"Waste Less. Compost More"*** campaign to communicate with residents on the process and benefits of composting as well as ways residents can reduce food waste at home.

Program Innovation – Other Cross-agency Partnerships

- This year we made significant advancements in our snow and ice removal program preparation, including the following measures:
 - Development of a comprehensive winter maintenance plan.
 - Enhanced performance reporting capabilities.
 - Acquisition of additional snow vehicles and specialized equipment for sidewalk and roads.
 - Specialized training for all snow program staff.
 - A citywide winter preparedness summit with District public officials and government leaders.
 - Acquisition and installation of new automatic vehicle location (AVL) system units on all snow vehicles and contractor equipment.
 - Development of an interagency and comprehensive communications and stakeholder outreach plan.

- This year, DPW, in conjunction with the District Department of Transportation, developed a new QA/QC process for winter weather operations. In the past, a manual and rudimentary process was in place, which became time consuming and did not provide real-time information to decision makers. DPW developed a new system to allow for key personnel to obtain the status of road conditions and visualize it on an interactive digital map. This will allow DPW and other stakeholders an opportunity to make resource allocation decisions during a deployment. Instead of pen and paper, QA/QC staff now use tablets and other mobile devices to record real time road conditions, notes and even pictures.
- DPW is the primary enforcement agency of parking regulations and we worked very closely with DDOT in FY 2016 to prioritize parking enforcement to ensure the continuous updating of signage throughout the District, including:
 - Coordinating monthly collaboration meetings.
 - Reporting conflicting signs/meters through service request/work order system.
 - Making interagency field observations.
 - Keeping DDOT abreast of “H” St. Streetcar Corridor progress.
- During Metro’s SafeTrack initiative, DPW participated in meetings with our SafeTrack partners to enforce extended rush hour coverage and staffing adjustments to accommodate fluctuations in arterial traffic routes.
- Our Fleet Management Administration touches every DC government agency in some way every day, whether through acquisition, maintenance or fueling. Once again, the District fleet operation has been recognized as one of the nation’s top 100 performing fleet operations for our use of alternative fuel vehicles. Currently, we have 1,607 AFVs in the fleet that are hybrids or use E85, CNG, or bio-fuels. All these vehicles are used daily by DC government agencies to support their operations.

Long-term Strategic Investment

- DPW employees are our most valuable resource. Our operations are labor-intensive. Whether collecting trash, driving a snow plow, towing a vehicle from a rush hour street or turning a wrench on a mission-critical vehicle, our employees are at the heart of municipal service delivery. So, with tremendous pride, I want to salute the DPW staff for going well beyond the call of duty to deliver great service.
- Making long-term strategic investments in them is the surest way to continuously improve service delivery and ensure they benefit from the District’s position as an international leader for inclusive prosperity and resilience.
- We are fortunate to have a productive partnership with our labor leaders to share in organizational improvement strategies and capacity building. After signing the Labor Management Partnership charter in June, 2016, DPW’s LMPC has created subcommittees to address concerns on employee safety and employee wellness. DPW’s LMPC also has robust discussions on how we can continue to improve the services and

quality of service DPW employees provide to the District of Columbia citizens and agencies.

- Last year, I announced a new DPW program, Career Pathways and testified that with a more thoughtful approach to professional counseling, employees will see the opportunities beyond their current job, and we will provide the support to help them achieve goals that make them stronger professionals and our services more effective.
- Well, I am excited to report that was a vision and now is a reality.
- We have developed several professional development workshops that have been taken by our managers and supervisors. The impact of this training has led our administrators to incorporate these classes in their managers' and supervisors' performance appraisals. We have managers proactively involved in their employees' development, identifying classes to prepare them to be competitive when opportunities arise.
- The Career Pathways Supervisory Boot Camp has also been established. It offers an array of courses, including supervision, drug and alcohol policy, workplace harassment, labor relations 101 and Chapter 16 of the DPM. We have also created a professional development track for administrative professionals that include self-management and time management workshops.
- Career Pathways is a strategy to produce a direct, positive impact on the entire Department by improving morale, career satisfaction, motivation, productivity and responsiveness. This is inspired by the Mayor's vision of establishing very clear pathways to the middle class for our residents and by extension our employees.
- We also are supportive of employees who want to earn their college degree. In February, we introduced employees to the College for America online program that confers associate and bachelor's degrees through Southern New Hampshire University. In addition to providing a flexible course schedule, tuition is only \$3,000 per year.
- More than 130 employees attended this "open-house session," and many have begun their classes. As of today, many still are signing up to take advantage of this opportunity.
- In FY 2017, DPW will partner with DC Public Libraries and the Academy of Hope to create an adult learning curriculum for employees to complete their GED or obtain other certifications to move up the career ladder at DPW or other agencies.
- Instructors from DC Public Libraries and the Academy of Hope will provide instruction to DPW employees in areas such as literacy, computer training, career assessment and planning, map reading and life skills. We are establishing computer labs at our facilities to provide work stations for those participating in the adult learning programs.
- And we are supportive of those seeking opportunities. DPW is known as a place where you will be given a second chance. Through opportunities such as Mayor Bowser's LEAP (Learn, Earn, Advance and Prosper) program and DPW's Career Pathways, we are

a place for District residents in need of a hand and real life work experience to put them on the pathway to employment.

- In FY 2016 DPW hosted 25 LEAP participants within our Fleet Management and Solid Waste Management Administrations (12 and 13 employees, respectively). Of the original 25 participants, 19 completed the program and found either permanent or temporary jobs within DPW, one participant was hired by WMATA and another participant was hired by Fire and Emergency Medical Services.
- In FY 2017, DPW has 16 participants who began February 21, working in DPW's Fleet Management Administration. Already, they have completed their forklift training and certification. Next is OSHA certification for safety and pollution prevention. Additional training through the year includes ASE (automotive service excellence) training, CPR and automated external defibrillator, Commercial Driver's License and defensive driver training.
- And, finally we are excited to have recently launched an effort to meet Public Works Management Practices standards set by the American Public Works Association (APWA) to achieve full APWA accreditation. Accreditation is a voluntary program designed to provide public works agencies with a national program to recognize agencies that are well managed and comply with recommended management and operational practices developed by public works practitioners from across the nation. Accreditation provides us with an opportunity to grade our policies, procedures, and practices against nationally recognized objectives.

Conclusion

- In closing, I'd like to thank you for your leadership and support. As always, we strive to operate with complete transparency, and I will ensure that the communication channels with your staff remain open and productive. This concludes my presentation. My staff and I are happy to answer any questions you may have.