Who is Responsible for City Sidewalks

Johnny is headed down the middle of the sidewalk, he dodges left, ducks under a limb, gets tripped up, regains his balance, and he’s to the corner. This would be great if he was a running back, but not when he’s a citizen just going for a walk. If this sounds like a sidewalk in your neighborhood, then there may be some maintenance required.

What we are talking about today is whose responsibility it is to take care of the Right of Way (ROW). The ROW is the area from a property line to the street. It can be a parking strip, sidewalk or just a curb. The type of ROW can vary from property to property but it must be maintained by the property owner and kept clear of obstructions. In other words, if the ROW is not well-maintained, it is the property owner’s responsibility to correct any problems.

Let’s get back to our example above. If Johnny is walking down the sidewalk and has to duck under a tree limb, move over to avoid a hedge, worry about tripping over a crack in the sidewalk, or slipping on ice or other debris, those things need to be addressed.

Now Johnny is driving. He stops at a stop sign as required by law. He gets out his handkerchief, rolls it up, and ties it on as a blindfold. Johnny stomps on the accelerator and shoots out into the intersection, hoping for the best. This seems ridiculous, but if the vegetation is not maintained, drivers can’t see oncoming traffic or pedestrians.

Property owners are responsible for obstructions such as vegetation, broken fences, and parked cars. These things should not obstruct sidewalks or vision lines at intersections. There should be 10-foot of clearance for an alley and 20-foot of clearance for a street.

The obvious theme with these examples has been to illustrate the responsibility of the property owner to maintain their property, including the public ROW. Failure to maintain property can result in warnings and fines from the City of Grants Pass. It can also become a liability issue for the property owner. We understand sidewalk repairs can be expensive. However, the City of Grants Pass has a program that may assist with up to 50% of sidewalk repair costs. To inquire about that program contact the Public Works Department at 541-450-6110.

For further information about these issues, or other parts of the Grants Pass Municipal Code, please visit www.grantspassoregon.gov/316/Municipal-Code. Contact the Department of Public Safety Community Service Officers (Code Enforcement) at 541-450-6260 or the Fire Prevention Bureau at 541-450-6200.
Utility Rate Forum on October 19

The Public Works Department will host a Utility Rate Forum on October 19, 2017. The forum will be an opportunity for citizens to hear about capital construction needs of the City’s utilities and future regulatory challenges which will drive future rate decisions. It will also be an opportunity to hear how utility rates are calculated and get a look at proposed new rate structures. The City Council will also be available to hear your feedback.

Ensuring the respective utilities are financially sustainable was a high priority for the City Council at last year’s strategic planning session. To fulfill this goal, the City has undertaken a comprehensive water and wastewater rate study to evaluate the current rates and to plan for future rate increases to ensure projects can be funded while endeavoring to keep the rates affordable. Additionally, the City’s consultant will be assisting with the formation of a new stormwater utility to help fund much needed improvements to the aging system.

Strategic Planning Community Forum on November 2

The City of Grants Pass would like to receive comments and suggestions from community groups and interested individuals on what they believe are the highest priorities for the City to accomplish at the Strategic Planning Community Forum November 2, 2017.

Strategic planning helps us determine our priorities, get organized, make big decisions, and realize our dreams. The act of merely setting a goal brings about positive change for many people. When setting goals we are creating an exciting challenge for ourselves.

Strategic planning establishes a process for evaluating priorities as well as prioritizing goals to be accomplished over a given period of time. This is an important part of Council’s strategic planning process. The strategic planning process works by:

• Identifying the most important things for us to accomplish for our community.
• Establishing organizational responsibility and reasonable time frames for achieving them.
• Allocating the resources necessary for programs and projects to implement them.

Setting goals and priorities should drive the budget process, not follow it. This approach allows the City to better focus our organization-wide efforts and resources in ensuring that the most important, highest-priority objectives are accomplished, and that these high-priority objectives are communicated to the public.

Both Community Forums will be held at 6 pm in the City Council Chambers, 101 NW A Street.

Before the Storm

Rather than wait for a flood to occur, you can act now to protect your property from flood damage. Even if your property never flooded in the past, there is a 26% chance of experiencing a flood over the life of a 30-year mortgage for a property located in the floodplain.

There are a number of ways to protect your property. Electrical boxes, air conditioners, and water heaters can be elevated or relocated to a place less likely to flood. Improving drainage around your home or on your property, and keeping nearby ditches and culverts clear of obstructions can prevent water from backing up onto your property. You can also improve your home with retrofitting techniques, such as installing flood vents or flood-resistant materials, or even elevating your home above flood levels.

Flood damage is not covered by homeowners or renters insurance. Flood insurance is available within the City of Grants Pass, and anyone may buy flood insurance, regardless of their location. By protecting your property and reducing your flood risk, you may help reduce your insurance rate.

Call the Parks & Community Development Department at 541-450-6060 for a property protection consultation. The City provides property owners with assistance about property protection, including one-on-one consultations, site visits and advice on how you can protect your property. Flood protection assistance is site-specific, so you can relate the flood risk to your property.
The Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) has launched a $5.3 million rehabilitation project to improve the Caveman Bridge which began on September 5. The 17-month project will strengthen the bridge and update the aesthetics of the structure; a critical link for Grants Pass and southwest Oregon.

Due to the amount of traffic that uses the bridge every day, any work requiring lane closures will be performed at night. There are 12 full-night closures planned for the project, along with nighttime single-lane closures.

This rehabilitation project will be the first major upgrade to Caveman Bridge since it opened in 1931. The construction will:

- Repair and strengthen sections of cracked concrete, exposed rebar and failed joints along the nearly 550-foot structure;
- Repair bridge deck delamination and replace it with a stronger concrete overlay;
- Replace the bridge rail, maintaining its unique aesthetic while meeting today’s safety standards; and
- Add new lighting that maintains the character of the bridge’s historic-looking street lights.

"Due to the importance of the bridge to traffic and the Grants Pass community, the project team balanced the closure times with the times the contractor can perform the work. That extended the project completion date to early 2019," said ODOT Project Manager Tim Fletcher.

Pet Preparedness

We have recently seen the impact of the fires in the Northwest and hurricanes in the Southeast. These events had a significant impact on people and their pets. Making preparations for the care of your pets prior to an emergency makes good sense.

The City has identified hazards that pose higher risks in the Grants Pass area. Wildfire, severe weather and floods are three of the hazards that pose higher vulnerability and have a higher probability of occurring. Other hazards, such as earthquakes, landslides, drought and potential volcanic related impacts also exist.

Some of the things you can do to prepare for the unexpected, such as assembling an animal emergency supply kit and developing a pet care buddy system, are the same for any emergency.

Whether you decide to stay put in an emergency or evacuate to a safer location, generally the decision that is best for you is best for your pets too. If you must evacuate, take your pets with you if you can.

Be aware that some public shelters may not allow pets. Identify shelters that will work for you. You will want to have a back-up emergency plan for both your family and your pets. Make sure each pet has tags that are up-to-date and securely fastened. Have a picture of you and your pets together for identification purposes. Plan for a way to securely transport your pets. You can find further information with the ASPCA at www.aspca.org/pet-care/general-pet-care/disaster-preparedness.

Stay informed, plan ahead and be prepared.

City Council Meetings
1st & 3rd Wednesdays at 6 pm
City Council Workshops
Mondays at 11:45 am
Holidays will alter schedule
City Council Chambers, 101 NW A Street
Meetings are televised on Charter Cable Channel 183 and posted on our website at www.grantspassoregon.gov.

Listen live to City Councilors and staff discussing local issues on KAJO (1270 AM) the 1st and 2nd Tuesdays each month at 9:30 am.

City of Grants Pass
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