



## *From the desk of City Manager Teresa Wilson*

### **City Manager's Month in Review October 2013**

- The City's **Emergency Shelter** opened on Saturday, October 5<sup>th</sup>. To date, the Shelter has provided 2,722 guest beds for men and 860 guest beds for women. In addition, the Shelter has provided 156 guests with opportunities to find assistance through numerous providers and job sites. Fifteen guests have been placed into long term programs or housing. Classes are also offered on site. Shuttle transportation is running effectively as well as on site security. The Columbia Police Department actively monitors the adjacent areas.
- City of Columbia **safety and security** remains a priority for Interim Chief Ruben Santiago and the CPD team. The Columbia Police Department has seven main goals to:
  1. Provide effective policing to ensure continued public safety for all citizens
  2. Increase citizen safety and the perception of safety/crime
  3. Reduce, prevent and control criminal activity
  4. Establish, maintain and enhance community partnership
  5. Maximize operational efficiency and deliver excellence in customer service
  6. Increase the proportion of crimes cleared by arrest (s)
  7. Be the Law Enforcement employer of choice

Reviewing the month of October, the community has been concerned with Gang activity and high profile crime incidents. The Police Department is constantly looking for ways to be more effective in reducing violent crime. Currently the City is experiencing the lowest crime rate in more than five years (30 percent decrease). While CPD regularly seeks innovative ways for improvement, the department is also focused on building and maintaining partnerships with community groups and businesses. CPD is pleased with more citizens reporting crimes in progress and utilizing the toll-free and anonymous CRIMESTOPPERS hotline. CPD is tasked to serve and protect the entire city. The next few months will be challenging due to **the holiday season**, and we are pleading with our employees, residents and businesses to take the extra time to be aware of your surroundings for personal safety and safe guarding your personal property. Spikes in burglary and auto-breakings are usually experienced during these months.

- The City has installed 57 "**Cameras in Use Signs**" in and around the perimeter of Five Points. The Five Points Association is also installing signs on private property throughout the area. In addition, effort has been made to trim trees to allow for enhanced lighting in and around Five Points.



**Lighting upgrades** have been made in the alleyway along the railroad between Greene St and Blossom. Staff is also working with lighting vendors to pilot LED lighting options in the area.

- **Demolitions** – We celebrated in October the 50<sup>th</sup> residential demolition (3006 Truman Street) of dilapidated residential property. During the past two years, we have demolished 24 houses in Council District I alone. We expect several additional demolitions to take place this month, to include the demolition of The Varsity (2706 N. Main Street), a commercial building that has been vacant for many years and deemed unsafe.
- Fire Chief Aubrey Jenkins and the **Columbia Fire Department** work to protect lives, property and the environment through the enforcement of fire codes, presentation of comprehensive public fire safety education programs, the investigation of incidents of arson, and rapid, effective responses to and mitigation of fires, rescue incidents, hazardous material leaks and natural disasters:
  - 38 Fire Recruits started class on October 14, 2013 and will graduate December 6, 2013. All the recruits are experienced and have their firefighter certification.
  - Chief Jenkins has also made conditional offers to 35 non-experienced recruits. This class is set to begin on December 9, 2013 and last for 16 weeks. The graduation date is April 4, 2013.
- **911 Communication go-live on automated scheduling solution**

In the spirit of “Build Columbia” and running the City more effectively and efficiently, 911 Communications went live on an automated scheduling solution called TeleStaff on October 26, 2013. TeleStaff is helping 911 automate and streamline the back office function of maintaining staffing levels for their 24 hour operation of the Telecommunications Center. The Columbia Fire Department is currently using TeleStaff to ensure that mandatory staffing levels are maintained to provide fire suppression services. TeleStaff is a solution used nationally by cities, counties and other organizations. All employees involved in the implementation of this automated system should be commended for its success to date.
- Jeff Caton, Director of **Parks and Recreation**, and his team continue to look for new ways to give you the best that we have to offer. Their mission is to enhance the quality of life for all those we serve through good stewardship of the city's natural and physical resources, through the presentment of safe and accessible facilities and through the operation of exemplary leisure services:
  - **Memorial Park**; was re-lamped which included the replacement of all light fixtures and lights to help improve on safety in the park.
  - **M.L.K. Park**; was awarded a \$25,000 grant from TD Forest (TD Bank's environmental initiative). On October 25 (TD Tree Day), some 50+ volunteers worked with Parks Division employees to plant seventy five trees. M.L.K. Park was one of only 18 locations selected for this nationwide tree-planting effort.

- **Rocky Branch Creek;** Parks Division led major litter cleanup effort along Rocky Branch Creek.
  - **Program Accomplishments;** Hosted Let's Move Professional Development Workshop and other activities to support Let's Move! Columbia and worked towards goal requirements to become 1st place among 350+ cities, towns and counties.
  - **Recent/Upcoming Events;** Katheryn M. Bellfield **Booker Washington Heights Cultural Arts Center** Grand Reopening–Saturday, November 2, 2013 (10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.)
    - ❖ 35<sup>th</sup> Annual Veterans Day Parade - Monday, November 11, 2013 (11:00 a.m.)
    - ❖ Main Street ICE opens – Thanksgiving Day- Thursday, November 28, 2013 (5 – 9 p.m.)
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- **Water Audit:** In order to enhance business processes, we will review and analyze billing data to confirm that the proper rate structure is being used for all customers. In addition, staff will work with the consultant to field verify and ensure all customers currently receiving services are being billed accordingly. RFQs were collected, evaluated, and a firm has been selected by staff. We have sent a notice to the selected firm to set up a meeting to discuss scope and pricing. We anticipate having a contract for Council's review by December.
  - The second of two public input meetings was held for the **Devine Street/Ft. Jackson Commercial Area Plan**. At this meeting, LandDesign, the consultant leading the planning effort, presented draft recommendations and implementation strategies for public response prior to developing a final plan that will be submitted to Planning Commission and City Council for approval.
  - The first public outreach meeting was held in support of the **West Gervais Planning Study**. This meeting was held outside under the Blue Marlin canopy as well as in front of Region's Bank and elicited strong and diverse input on the future growth and development of the area. This is a staff-led initiative that will result in recommendations for strategies to support the continued vibrancy of the Vista.
  - The **Bike and Pedestrian Master Plan & Bike Share Plan** RFP has been released by the Central Midlands Council of Governments. City staff is very involved in this process and will continue to be throughout the project. The submittal deadline is December 3, 2013 at 2:00 PM.
  - **Parking along Main St. – The free timed parking project along the 1600 block of Main St. begins today, Monday, November 4<sup>th</sup>.** We are excited about this pilot and seek feedback from everyone on the opportunities it provides as well as the challenges. It will provide a good evaluation period for us to look at implementing free timed parking for the long term.
  - City Council approved several items of interest to our citizens in the month of October to include approval of a sale of the **Palmetto Compress Warehouse** and updated **Commercial Revolving Loan Fund Guidelines**.

Please do not hesitate to contact me with your concerns, suggestions and hopes for our City. I take pleasure in my service to each of you!

All my best,



We Are Columbia

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Teresa Wilson".

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