

# MUNICIPAL AUDITING REPORT CITY OF ROANOKE



## Transportation Right-of-Way Maintenance August 8, 2016

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Audit Plan Number: 16-024

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## AUDIT OBJECTIVES & SCOPE

### Audit Objectives:

1. To determine if the City's landscape and right of way maintenance employees safely perform their work.

**Yes** – The City's Office of Risk Management evaluated workplace hazards for landscaping and right of way maintenance employees in 2015. The Transportation Division requires that employees utilize appropriate personal protective equipment [PPE] that meets or exceeds the requirements set out by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration [OSHA] based on the identified hazards. In addition to regular guidance provided by crew leaders while on the job site, employees attend monthly safety presentations provided by the City's Safety Specialist. Two (2) Crew Supervisors are responsible for conducting regular, random site inspections to ensure employees are working safely, including appropriate signage and PPE.

2. To determine if the City's landscape and right of way maintenance crews are effectively meeting established cycle times for mowing, trimming and weed control.

**Yes** – There are three (3) Trim crews and one (1) Ventrac crew who maintain 134 sites over a 14 day cycle. One (1) Tractor crew maintains over 700 steep slope and large median areas over a 28 day cycle. A Weed Seeker crew abates weeds at 282 sites monthly and performs plant and shrub maintenance at six (6) locations. Crew activity is documented weekly and entered into spreadsheets to compute and report cycle times. Average cycle times for the Trim and Ventrac crews substantially met the 14 day goal. The cycle times for the Tractor crew exceeded the 28 day goal from April through June. One (1) seasonal position was unfilled during this time.

3. To determine if contracted landscape maintenance crews meet established contract specifications.

**Yes** – The City's Crew Supervisors regularly visit all sites assigned to contractors and grade the quality of each contractors' work. Performance is documented on the Landscape Areas Maintained spreadsheets. Contractor services and associated payments were consistent with the signed contracts.

### Audit Scope:

We reviewed the safety, cycle time, and contractor performance monitoring processes established by the Transportation Division and the Office of Risk Management for landscape and right of way maintenance employees as of April 30, 2016. We surveyed employees as of June 9, 2016, and observed crews working on June 29, 2016. Our sample testing of safety

inspection and cycle time records covered April 11, 2016 through June 30, 2016. Our test of OSHA training completed by a sample of employees covered July 1, 2015, through June 30, 2016.

**End of Audit Objectives & Scope**

## BACKGROUND

The Transportation Division is primarily responsible for maintaining and improving the appearance, ride-ability, and safety of the City's streets and rights of way. The Division strives to create a safe and attractive environment for all right of way users by providing appropriate pedestrian and bicycle accommodations, smooth surfaces, good drainage, as well as appropriate traffic signs and markings.

The Division's Landscape Maintenance group is responsible for maintaining the City's medians and rights of way [ROW] including:

- Mowing
- Controlling and abating weeds
- Maintaining turf
- Collecting litter
- Mulching
- Pruning

It also manages a number of vacant properties purchased by the Roanoke Redevelopment and Housing Authority on behalf of the City.

The Landscape Maintenance group employs 19 permanent and ten (10) seasonal employees full time from April through November of each year. These employees are organized into six (6) crews:

- Three (3) trim crews are responsible for mowing and edging the turf, as well as collecting litter. These crews use walk-behind mowers, weed-eaters, blowers, Ventrac mowers, and zero turn mowers.
- One (1) weed seeker crew is responsible for spraying and pulling weeds, edging, planting, collecting litter and limited mowing in medians. The crew uses walk-behind mowers, weed-eaters, blowers, and zero turn mowers.
- One (1) ROW tractor crew is responsible for larger sloped areas, areas with heavier brush and areas behind guardrails that other crews cannot reach. This crew uses large tractors with A-Boom and Sidehog attachments.
- One (1) Ventrac crew is responsible for mowing and trim work of smaller but steeper areas that aren't well suited to the trim crews or tractor crew. The crew uses walk-behind mowers, weed-eaters, blowers, zero turn mowers, and the 8-wheeled Ventrac with a 72-inch cut.

Each crew has a crew leader who directs the work and oversees crew performance. Two (2) Crew Supervisors coordinate the work of the crews, monitor compliance with safety protocols and performance standards, and fill in when crews are short-staffed. A Landscape Coordinator

oversees the entire group and reports to the Manager of Transportation.

The Landscape Maintenance group also operates an Outdoor Power Equipment [OPE] Shop that maintains and repairs the tools and equipment used by the median and ROW landscape crews, as well as Parks and Recreation, and the Stormwater Division. The OPE Shop also services tools and small equipment used by other City departments when requested.

The three (3) Trim crews and the Ventrac crew maintain a total of 134 sites on a 14-day cycle. The ROW tractor crew mows more than 700 rough and steep slope areas between City streets and adjoining private parcels on a 28-day cycle. The Weed Seeker crew focuses on weed abatement once per month at 282 sites including concrete medians, turn lanes, bridge decks, full and partial blocks of brick sidewalks and 1,400 mulch tree rings. Crews also perform traditional landscaping activities such as turf grass fertilization of medians and rights of way, as well as plant and shrub maintenance at the following locations:

1. Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial
2. Valley View Boulevard
3. Crystal Spring Village Center
4. Williamson Road Medians
5. Public Works Service Center
6. Municipal Building Green Roof

The Transportation Division also oversees the following contracts for landscape maintenance and mowing:

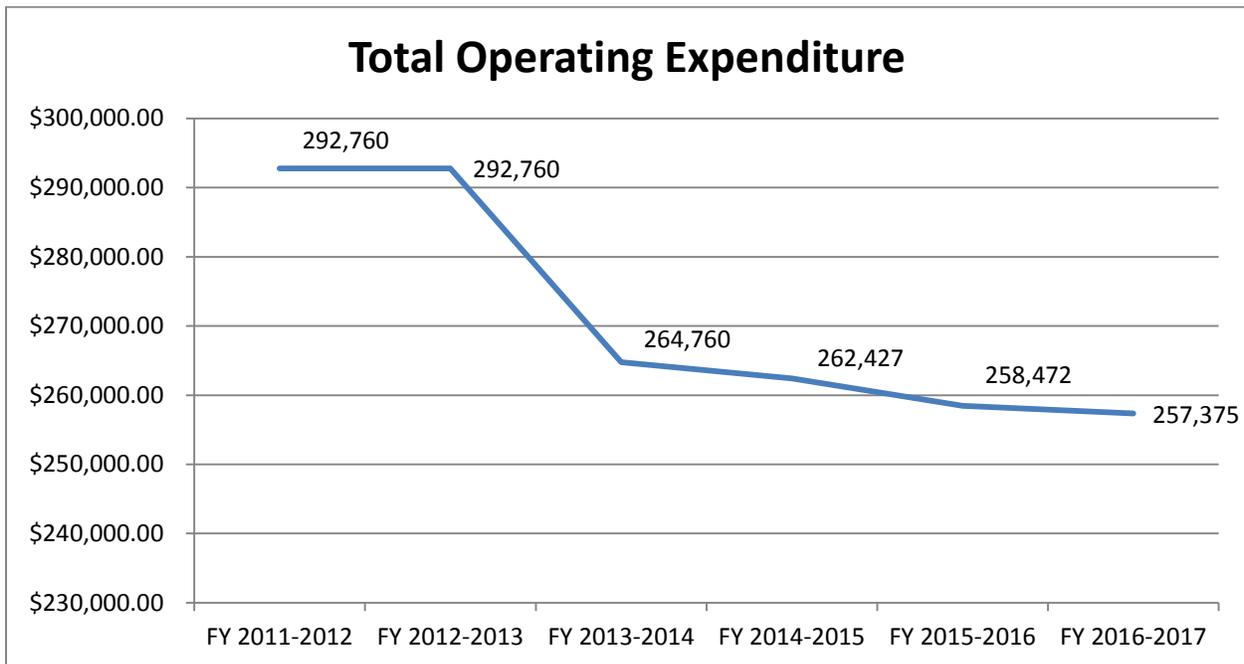
- Creative Nursery and Landscapes – landscape maintenance to the I-581 interchange at Orange Avenue **[\$10,800 annually]**
- One Earth Landscapes – turf grass maintenance for Roanoke Redevelopment & Housing Authority [RRHA] lots (various lots on Orange, Cherry, Hackley, Gilmer, and Shenandoah Avenues, and 5<sup>th</sup> Street) **[\$5,070 annually]**
- M & M Grounds Management – turf grass maintenance and mowing at Roanoke Centre for Industry & Technology (RCIT) **[\$46,640 annually]**

Several key personnel in the Landscape Maintenance group maintain certifications or permits which are required by the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services [VDACS]. These include a contractor applicator permit, which is required by Virginia Fertilizer Law, for any person or business that distributes or applies any specialty fertilizer, soil amendment, or horticultural growing medium, and a fertilizer application certification for the use of pesticides. The Landscape Coordinator, both Crew Supervisors and five (5) of the six (6) Crew Leaders currently maintain the contractor applicator permit and the fertilizer application certification. The Landscape Coordinator is also a Certified Grounds Manager, and according to the Professional

Grounds Management Society website, there are currently only 88 Certified Grounds Managers in good standing. These certifications and designations demonstrate a commitment to professionalism that helps ensure effective and efficient operations.

The 2015 City of Roanoke Citizen’s Survey reported that 97% of citizens considered the mowing of the City’s rights of way, street medians, and roadsides to be very important [65.6%] or somewhat important [31.5%]. Approximately 67% of citizens rated the City’s mowing of rights of way, street medians, and roadsides as excellent [21.8%] or good [45.3%].

Budgeted operating expenditures for the Landscape Maintenance group have trended down since FY 2013 as illustrated by the following graph:

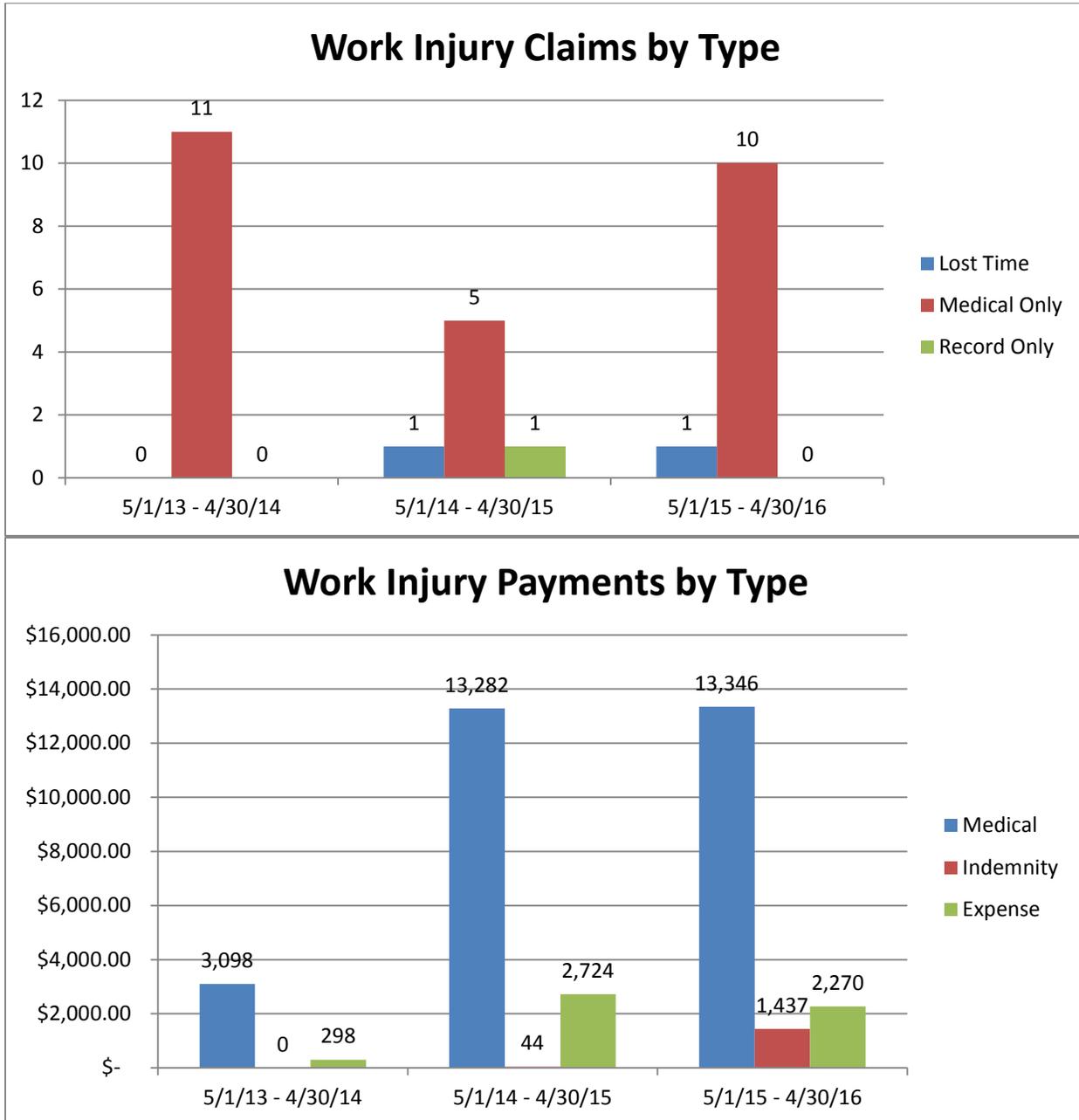


The FY 16-17 budget reflects funding to replace one of the four (4) existing Ventrac mowers at a cost of approximately \$25,000. The landscape and ROW budget also funds small equipment replacements such as lawn mowers, string mowers, and weed eaters. All large tractors and lawn mowers are purchased by the Fleet Management Division through the fleet replacement program.

In collaboration with Transportation Division management, we identified safety of staff, citizens, and personal property to be the most significant operational risk. Due to the inherently dangerous nature of the work performed and the equipment used, minimizing injuries and property damage is a top priority for the Division.

The PMA Workers' Compensation Claims reports of accidents occurring from May 1, 2013 through April 30, 2014, show that the City paid a total of \$36,500 for work-related injuries incurred by employees within the Streets and Traffic Division of Transportation.

The following two (2) charts illustrate the volume and types of work injury claims, as well as the amount paid by the City on those claims from May 1, 2013 through April 30, 2014:



End of Background

## Objective 1: Safe Performance of Tasks

### Audit Objective:

To determine if the City's landscape and right of way maintenance employees safely perform their work.

Yes

### Overview:

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration [OSHA] requires employers to assess the workplace to determine if hazards are present, or likely to be present, which necessitate the use of personal protective equipment [PPE]. Employers must protect their employees from workplace hazards such as machines and hazardous substances that can cause injury. OSHA requires employers to institute feasible engineering and work practice controls to eliminate or reduce hazards in advance of instituting the use of PPE.

The City's Safety Specialist with the Office of Risk Management stated that he assessed workplace hazards for the median and right of way landscape maintenance area in April 2015. His assessment was based on OSHA's Checklist for Establishing a PPE Program but was not documented. There were also no records on file documenting previous assessments by the Safety Specialist's predecessors.

The City issues the following PPE to all median and right of way landscape maintenance employees:

- Safety shoes [steel-toe boots - \$75 reimbursement from the City]
- Reflective vest
- Hard hat
- Ear protection
- Eye protection

Median and right of way landscape maintenance employees are trained on the proper use and care of PPE and are required to utilize the equipment while working on the job site. Training is crucial in helping to ensure that employees can correctly and safely perform their jobs. Certifications obtained by some of the full-time median and right of way landscape maintenance staff include the following:

- Basic Workzone Traffic Control [VDOT]
- Flagger [VDOT]
- Registered Technician Certification [Virginia Department of Agriculture...]
- Certified Fertilizer Applicator Permit [Virginia Department of Agriculture...]

Crew Leaders and Supervisors train each new crew member on the proper use and care of equipment and PPE prior to going out onto the jobsite. Employees are also expected to attend a monthly presentation covering OSHA specified safety topics presented by the Safety Specialist from Risk Management. Our testing indicated that the majority of median and right of way landscape maintenance employees stay current with required training. While some employees miss training due to vacation, sick leave, or based on hire date, causing them to be out of compliance for some period of time, crews collectively have the necessary experience and training to operate safely.

Crew Supervisors are responsible for monitoring compliance with safety protocols through regular field visits to observe work site setup, signage and use of PPE. Crew Supervisors document their inspections on a Crew Supervisor Weekly Report and address any observed safety violations with the crew members immediately.

We reviewed the *Weekly Reports* documenting the safety inspections performed by the Crew Supervisors from the start of the 2016 mowing season [April 11], through June 30, 2016, noting that inspections were not as frequent as expected. Crew Supervisors often work with crews that are short-handed, which prevents them from observing each crew daily. Of the inspections that were performed, the documentation suggests that all crew members were in compliance with established safety protocols.

We accompanied a Crew Supervisor during inspections on June 29, 2016, to observe for ourselves the work area signage, beacons, use of PPE, and condition of equipment. Crews were complying with all required safety protocols.

We surveyed median and right of way landscape maintenance employees to obtain their perspectives on the reliability of equipment, quality of training, and the importance of required PPE (See **Exhibits 1 and 2** for survey and results). Nineteen (19) employees participated, completing at least a portion of the written survey. Due to some surveys being incomplete and other anomalies in the responses, the results provided only general insights.

- 82% of the responses were positive (“agree” or “strongly agree”)
- Employees are safety conscious and working safely is an emphasis
- Some employees believe the condition and reliability of vehicles and power equipment need to improve

Management uses the following internal reports to document, track and monitor safety, quality and cycle time adherence:

- Weekly Crew Leader Report: Used to document crew production on a daily basis; filed weekly with the Crew Supervisor.

- Crew Supervisor Weekly Report: Used to document crew performance ratings, safety inspections, crew member absences, weather delays, and other irregularities.
- Landscape Areas Maintained Spreadsheets: Used to document the date each site was mowed and to track cycle times; reviewed by the Landscape Coordinator.

These reports and spreadsheets are critical components of the system that communicates information and enables effective monitoring of operating and compliance goals. Upon reviewing a sample of these forms, we noted that the information is not consistently recorded and not all information is utilized. This can affect the reliability of information, limit its value for decision purposes, and affect employee productivity and morale by having them document unnecessary information.

**End of Objective 1**

## Objective 2: Cycle Time Adherence

### Audit Objective:

To determine if the City's landscape and right of way maintenance crews are effectively meeting established cycle times for mowing, trimming and weed control.

Yes

### Overview:

The Transportation Division established cycle times for mowing and landscaping based primarily on considerations of maintaining safe and attractive streets, compliance with City code, and available funding. The Division's current cycle time goals are as follows:

- Right-of-Way Tractor Crew: **28 days**
- Ventrac Crew: **14 days**
- Trim Crews: **14 days**
- Weed Seeker Crews: **14 days mowing and 28 days spraying**

Key performance indicators for the Transportation Division are:

1. Adherence to established mowing cycles: **Target = 90%**
2. Adherence to maintaining turf grass under 10 inches: **Target = 90%**

Six (6) crews of city employees perform median and right of way landscape maintenance on Roanoke City properties. Each crew has a Leader who performs maintenance work, supervises the work, and completes the Weekly Crew Leader Report documenting the properties mowed.

Two (2) Crew Supervisors collect the weekly reports and enter the information for each property into the Landscape Areas Maintained spreadsheets. The spreadsheets calculate average days between mowing's and the average quality score.

At the end of each month, the Landscape Coordinator transfers applicable data from the Landscape Areas Maintained spreadsheets to the Operations Cluster Status Report. The information entered includes the following:

- Status of cycle completions for each crew
- Status of cycle time adherence for each crew
- Number of bags of litter collected
- Number of QAlert requests completed
- Training courses/certifications completed
- Preventive maintenance and repairs completed by the Outdoor Power Equipment shop

The Operations Cluster Status Report is used to communicate key operational activity in the Transportation Division, including landscaping and right of way maintenance, to the City Manager's Office.

We reviewed the Landscape Areas Maintained spreadsheets from the start of the 2016 mowing season [April 11] through June 30, 2016, to determine whether City landscape maintenance crews met the established cycle times. The majority of average cycle times for crews, other than the Tractor Crew, were in line with established goals, with minimal overages. The Tractor Crew substantially exceeded its 28 day goal for the first mowing cycle. Based on our discussions with management and our review of the 2015 cycle times, the time required to on-board and train new or seasonal employees and the accelerated growth rate of grass in early spring requires more time to complete each property leading to longer cycle times. Cycle times improve as the year progresses.

There are a number of variables that can impact crew productivity and affect cycle time performance, including:

- Equipment availability
- Equipment performance
- Staff availability
- Staff performance [re-work]
- Weather
- Special event priorities

The Transportation Division operates its own repair shop, frequently referred to as the outdoor power equipment [OPE] or Tractor Shop. During the months of December and January, the OPE shop services all the tractors, mowers, and power equipment in preparation for the spring mowing season. During the mowing season from April through September, the OPE shop is primarily focused on repairs so that crew productivity is not impacted. As time permits, the OPE shop performs preventive maintenance on mowers and tractors that have exceeded 100 running hours since their last service. This 100-hour maintenance includes the following:

- Oil and filter change
- Air filter check and replacement if needed
- General observation to identify repairs/maintenance needed

The OPE shop uses the Fleet Management Division's work order system [FASTER] to record labor and parts used on OPE shop repairs. While OPE shop functions were not included in the scope of this audit, we did obtain access to the FASTER system to learn more about its functionality and to review work order activity. A future audit of the FASTER system and the OPE shop will be scheduled.

All equipment operators on the crews are expected to inspect their equipment daily and perform minor repairs / preventive maintenance weekly. This preventive maintenance entails checking and sharpening blades if needed, checking fuel levels, and thoroughly cleaning all equipment. The Crew Supervisors monitor crew compliance with the preventive maintenance protocols and document results on the Crew Supervisor Weekly Reports.

**End of Objective 2**

### Objective 3: Contractor Performance

#### Audit Objective:

To determine if contracted landscape maintenance crews meet established contract specifications.

Yes

#### Overview:

The City currently has agreements on file with three (3) contractors for median and right of way landscape maintenance work:

1. Creative Nursery and Landscapes, Inc.
  - a. Northeast exterior quadrant of the I-581 interchange at Orange Avenue
2. Grounds Management Services of Roanoke, Inc. [DBA One Earth Landscapes]
  - a. Contract #1: Roanoke Regional Housing Authority [RRHA] lots
  - b. Contract #2: Various other lots throughout the City
3. M & M Grounds Maintenance, LLC
  - a. Roanoke Centre for Industry & Technology [RCIT] lots

The City has worked with all three (3) contractors for several years, and agreements have been renewed with each of them accordingly.

Contracts negotiated for median and right of way landscape maintenance work include a "Scope of Work" section which details the various responsibilities of the contractor including how often the contracted services must be performed and particular project specifications. Each contract identifies the specific properties the contractor is to service, how often the contractor should invoice work, and an amount which cannot be exceeded for the contract year. The two (2) contracts with One Earth Landscapes also specify an amount which cannot be exceeded per mowing cycle.

The Crew Supervisors monitor contractor performance through regular inspections of the properties. They visit each property after work is completed, record the date completed and assign a quality score using a 100 point scale using criteria such as:

- litter removal
- turf grass height and condition
- weed control
- mulch quality
- pruning

Any rating less than 80 requires correction before the Crew Supervisor will approve the invoice for payment. One Crew Supervisor monitors Creative Nursery and Landscapes, Inc. and M & M Grounds Maintenance, while the other Crew Supervisor monitors One Earth Landscapes.

The Crew Supervisor tracks the average cycle time to ensure contractors are meeting the City's requirements. They also review contractor invoices, verifying service dates are correct and quality standards were met before approving payment.

We reviewed the Crew Supervisors' monitoring records and contractor invoices for work performed for the 2016 mowing season [April 11 through June 30, 2016]. Contractor performance was consistently in compliance with contract specifications and appropriately monitored by the Crew Supervisors. We also concluded that contractors are paid in accordance with the contract and only for work satisfactorily completed.

**End of Objective 3**

**SUMMARY OF MANAGEMENT ACTION PLANS**

<b>Management Action Plan – Safety Inspections</b>	
<p>Management’s Response:</p> <p>Management will perform safety inspections on at least a weekly basis and revise the weekly reports to record only the date and time the supervisors perform their crew’s safety inspections. The landscape coordinator will periodically review the crew supervisor’s weekly reports to assure the safety inspections are being performed according to department procedures.</p>	
<b>Assigned To</b>	<b>Target Date</b>
George Bradney and Jerrald Beheler, Crew Supervisors (Maintenance Technician IV’s)	12/01/16

<b>Management Action Plan – Crew Report Documentation</b>	
<p>Management’s Response:</p> <p>Management will review the internal crew weekly reports and spreadsheets and make revisions to track only data needed to ensure goals and employee performance standards are achieved. Management will also communicate and explain expectations to landscape maintenance employees as to why this data is collected and relevant. These reports will also be reviewed by management as needed.</p>	
<b>Assigned To</b>	<b>Target Date</b>
George Bradney and Jerrald Beheler, Crew Supervisors (Maintenance Technician IV’s)	12/01/16

<b>Management Action Plan – OSHA-Required Training</b>	
<p>Management’s Response:</p> <p>We agree that all employees including newly hired employees and those who miss scheduled training need to complete the required OSHA training in a timely manner. The Manager of Transportation and Landscape Coordinator will ensure attendance and proper documentation of training.</p> <p>Suggestions for ensuring completion of training include having employees participate in an upcoming training session conducted by the safety specialist for other Divisions and providing the required training documents in an online format for review by individual employees.</p>	
<b>Assigned To</b>	<b>Target Date</b>
Mark Jamison, Transportation Manager and Bob Boeren, Landscape Coordinator	3/01/17

**Management Action Plan – Closing Work Orders in FASTER**

Management’s Response:

Management will work towards a goal of closing out work orders in the Faster system in the Outdoor Power Equipment (OPE) shop at the end of the business day or by the next morning. Management is not of the opinion that the Active Work Order by Shop report is necessary to manage workload and determine excessive downtime. The majority of repair efforts occur the same day while the operator waits on a particular piece of equipment. The OPE shop supervisor currently manages daily workload effectively and communicates directly with each department as to the repair status of their equipment.

<b>Assigned To</b>	<b>Target Date</b>
Chris Eanes, OPE Shop Supervisor (Maintenance Technician IV)	3/01/17

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

We would like to thank Mark Jamison and Bob Boeren for their assistance and cooperation throughout this audit. We would also like to thank Crew Supervisors Jerrald Beheler, George Bradney, and Christopher Eanes for their assistance and cooperation during the audit. We are also thankful to the Office of Risk Management for their time and cooperation during this audit.



Cari M. Spichek, CIA  
Senior Auditor



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Municipal Auditor

## EXHIBIT 1 – ROW Employee Survey

The Roanoke City Municipal Auditor's office is currently performing an audit of Roanoke City Median and Right-of-Way Landscape Maintenance. We want to understand crew member perspectives regarding safety protocols, safety training, and the safety/reliability of the equipment used. Please complete this brief survey by entering your response (1,2,3,4 or 5) in the box provided, add any comments you feel are necessary, and return to the Auditor on-site when complete. This survey should take about 5-10 minutes to complete, and will remain completely anonymous. Please note that there are questions on the front and back of the sheet.

### Scale:

- 1 = Strongly Disagree
- 2 = Disagree
- 3 = Neutral
- 4 = Agree
- 5 = Strongly Agree

1.	Employees have been formally trained on safety protocols for their positions.
2.	Employees are encouraged to work safely and in accordance with safety protocols.
3.	Employees have been provided with adequate personal protective equipment to best ensure their safety in the performance of duties.
4.	Employees have been trained on the proper use and care of personal protective equipment, and understand the importance of using it.
5.	Employees have the equipment needed to perform their job.
6.	Equipment is available when needed.
7.	Employees inspect the equipment used on a daily basis to ensure it is working properly and safely.
8.	Employees have been trained on how to use each piece of equipment needed to perform their job.
9.	The monthly safety meetings are important.

## EXHIBIT 2 – ROW Employee Survey Results

Auditor removed surveys #3, #14 and #19 and analyzed the results. These three (3) surveys were either answered with all 1s or all 5s, and had no written comments; therefore, the participants may not have understood the scale.

Participant	Survey Question #1	Survey Question #2	Survey Question #3	Survey Question #4	Survey Question #5	Survey Question #6	Survey Question #7	Survey Question #8	Survey Question #9	Comments
1	5	5	4	4	5	4	5	4	5	None
2	5	5	5	5	5	4	3	5	5	None
3										
4	3	4	4	5	5	**	**	**	**	None
5	5	5	5	5	5	4	5	5	5	None
6	4	4	4	4	3	3	4	4	4	None
7	3	3	3	3	2	**	**	**	**	None
8	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	3	None
9	3	4	3	5	4	4	3	5	5	None
10	4	4	4	4	4	4	2	4	4	Comment on question #7 stated "Some of us."
11	4	4	4	4	2	**	**	**	**	None
12	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	Comments on questions #5, #6, and #7 stated "yes" instead of a ranking.
13	4	4	3	3	3	**	**	**	**	Comment on question #4 stated "Has been in past. We get cars and trucks back from garage that would not pass inspection." Questions #3, #4, and #5 were rated "3-4."
14										
15	4	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	4	None
16	5	5	5	5	5	**	**	**	**	None
17	4	4	1	4	4	2	3	3	4	None
18	4	5	5	5	5	5	5	4	5	None
19										
<b>Total Score</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>48</b>	
<b>Average</b>	<b>4.13</b>	<b>4.38</b>	<b>4.00</b>	<b>4.38</b>	<b>4.13</b>	<b>4.00</b>	<b>4.00</b>	<b>4.36</b>	<b>4.36</b>	
<b>Rounded Avg</b>	<b>4</b>									

**Tickmarks**

\*\* Employee did not enter a rating on this question (questions were on the back of the sheet and were perhaps overlooked).

*Best Possible Score for each question = 80*

*Worst Possible Score for each question = 16*

**Score rankings from most favorable to least favorable**

	Total Score	
#2 and #4	70	
#1 and #5	66	
#3	64	
#8 and #9	48	<i>These four (4) questions were not answered by five (5) of the survey participants which affects the total score.</i>
#6 and #7	44	<i>Therefore, the best possible score for these questions is 55 (11*5) and the worst possible score is 11 (11*1).</i>

<b>Total survey questions</b>	<b>144</b>
<b>Survey questions answered</b>	<b>124</b>
<b>Totals by Criteria Ranking:</b>	
1	1 1%
2	4 3%
3	17 14%
4	50 40%
5	52 42%
	<b>124 100%</b>