Dear Readers:

While we did not have a city council meeting this past Monday, I decided to write what follows in hopes of helping you be aware of some issues that might be of interest to you.I have been asked by many here in the city to have the city post the days that it picks up trash and when and if trash is collected on holidays. The link to the pick up days is <http://www.choosecambridge.com/DocumentCenter/View/122/Garbage-Pick-Up-Schedule-by-Street-PDF?bidId=>

I have put in a request to the City Manager and Odie Wheeler (DPW) to provide the holidays when trash is not picked up so that I can let you know that as well. I have also asked that that information be placed on the city website.

I have also put in a request to the City Manager and Odie Wheeler to provide the schedule for the street cleaner and the leaf machine in order that we can be sure to park our vehicles out of the way when they are scheduled in our Wards. I have also asked that that information be placed on the city website. When I receive that information, I will be sure to share it with you.

One of the environmental challenges that we have mostly in Cambridge but elsewhere in the county is the amount of trash and debris from us that winds up in the Bay and its tributaries. I have had the opportunity to talk with Matt Pluta from Shore Rivers about some of the things that are harming our waters and some things that we could do at little or no cost to reduce that impact. What I am talking about are leaves that fall in the Fall and cut grass that is with us in the Spring.

Addressing the grass and debris is not an issue all year around so it's not a huge time commitment. One step would be to have a city staff member tasked with developing and overseeing the execution of a work plan that would clear out storm drains and support residents in mulching and composting the debris.

Here are some of Matt’s ideas.

For people in the county, do what you can to clear out the leaves and yard debris from the roadside ditches. The ditches help control flooding, and they all drain to a creek, stream or river so the same pollution threats are present when debris piles up in a ditch.

For the City of Cambridge, develop and execute a Storm Drain Management Program that focuses on preventing yard waste from collecting in the City's storm drains. The program could include developing a clear out schedule and supervising a team of people with suspended sentences on low risk crimes and low risk inmates from the County Jail to collect *and dispose* of yard waste collected on city storm drains. This kind of program for other types of community work is already in place, and the cost to the city for supervision would be minimal, if a sheriff deputy had to supervise the workers or none if a volunteer would be able to supervise the workforce.

In order to reduce the amount of debris being placed in our streets and gutters, there should also be an educational component targeted at landowners, landlords, and lawn care companies responsible for managing residential yard waste. The education would focus on implementing practices that prevent yard waste from being placed or blown into the street and compliance with city code requirements that already exist. We could also volunteer and clear out storm drains on our street when we are doing our yard work.

To implement the Storm Drain Management Program mentioned above any work plan would also include the *simple* maintenance of the stormwater management projects owned by the city that I understand are not being maintained currently. The projects include the Maryland Ave bioretention, Long Wharf parking lot tidal wetlands, and bioretention in the parking lot behind Chesapeake College. The maintenance would involve mulching once a year, weeding 2-3 times a growing season, and pruning 2 times a year. All these tasks could be overseen by someone knowledgeable about what needed to be done and could be accomplished with the help from volunteers or supervised inmates.

The general concern and need for this work arise because grass, leaves and other yard debris collect on the storm drains and prevent the flow of stormwater into the drain. That causes flooding and clogging of those drains. When that yard debris enters local creeks, streams and the river - which is where the storm drains empty - it becomes a major source of nutrient pollution that creates algae blooms and unsafe fishing and swimming conditions.

The time frame for these suggested efforts would be as follows:

**April - May**: When residents are performing spring maintenance on their lawns.

**October - November:** When trees begin to lose their leaves

**Education to landowners, landlords, and lawn care companies** should begin one-month prior to the above and continue through each seasonal timeframe.

There is a misperception by the residents/lawn care providers that because the city runs the street sweeper and leaf pick-up truck, the leaves and yard waste should be placed in the street. Wind and rain can then wash that yard debris to the storm drains. The city street sweeper cannot pick up large piles of leaves and debris. Also, the city's leaf pick-up truck can reach over the curb, so residents should be stacking up debris *on their property* adjacent to and a few feet from the curb. They should also park their cars away from these piles to provide access to them by the leaf pick-up truck.

City ordinances need to be consistent with best practices, and they need to be enforced. City Code Section 16-9 is clear and reads as follows: “Depositing debris in gutters or sidewalks – No person shall deposit in the gutters or streets any ashes, leaves, or other debris or material which might or could obstruct the free flow of water”.

Possibly the city could develop a city composting yard as an outlet for people to bring their yard waste (free of charge). Overtime this compost could be used to maintain the landscaping on city-owned property. The compost could also be sold to city residents at a modest cost to generate some revenue.

Matt has suggested that this Storm Drain Management Program could be the first step in developing an 'Urban Nutrient Management Program.' (UNMP). Such program would focus on properly managing residential yard waste, in addition to fertilizer use. (Note that an UNMP is one of the goals identified in the Cambridge Clean Water Advisory Committee's [10-year plan](https://extension.umd.edu/sites/extension.umd.edu/files/_docs/FINAL_Moving%20Toward%20Clean%20Water%20-%20Cambridge%20Report.pdf" \t "_blank).) Matt is aware of possible funding sources to help get such a program started. One grant will open next month with a deadline in February. If you are interested in learning more or attending one of the meetings, contact Matt at [mpluta@shorerivers.org](mailto:mpluta@shorerivers.org) for more information.

Matt has provided the attached that can give you a quick and easy guide on what you might be able to do.

Thanks for Reading

Steve.