



COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
JOHN A. WILSON BUILDING
1350 PENNSYLVANIA AVENUE, NW
WASHINGTON, DC 20004

JANESE LEWIS GEORGE
Councilmember, Ward 4

COMMITTEE MEMBER
Human Services
Labor and Workforce Development
Recreation, Libraries and Youth Affairs
Transportation and the Environment
Special Committee, COVID-19 Recovery

December 30, 2021

Christine Davis
Director, Department of Public Works
2000 14th Street NW
Washington, DC 20009

Dear Director Davis:

I write to you on behalf of Ward 4 residents seeking an update on DPW's Leaf Season Collection Program. I understand that the scheduled leaf collection is delayed, but many Ward 4 residents and Advisory Neighborhood Commissioners have reached out to my office seeking clarity on when they can expect DPW to collect leaves on their streets. I share their frustration with the process and lack of communication my constituents are experiencing and ask that you help expedite and clarify this situation.

According to the DPW leaf collection tracking map, Ward 4 neighborhoods have all received a "first pass" collection as initially scheduled but according to multiple residents throughout the Ward, this does not match their experience of collections on their block. Similarly, I have also received reports from constituents whose streets are not on DPW's online database, such as Rock Creek Church Road, leading to a lack of leaf collections this year and for several years prior. Please confirm the Seasonal Leaf Collection Map¹ on DPW's website is accurate and, if so, please explain how or why certain residents have not had their initial leaves collected despite preparing their yards by the required deadlines. What is being done to remedy the issues experienced by residents?

Related, I am receiving reports that when residents submit 311 requests for collection, many are having their tickets closed out with a comment indicating that collections are complete. These are clearly inaccurate and only serve to undermine public trust in our government's ability to work and communicate effectively. Please let me know how your office is resolving reports of improperly closed 311 requests for leaf season collection.

I am also concerned by reports that DPW is experiencing staffing shortages amidst the current surge in COVID-19 cases. Our workers are the backbone of the city and their safety and wellbeing must be prioritized. To that end, I would appreciate an update on how many employees have contracted COVID-19 recently or been forced to quarantine because of exposure, and, more importantly, what employee health and safety measures are being taken to protect our city workers, including ensuring their unencumbered access to *paid* sick leave. It is essential to understand the city's staffing and adaptation plans at times like this: is there a risk that staffing challenges have impacted or will impact essential city maintenance services (e.g. further delays in leaf collection

¹ DPW seasonal leaf collection map: <https://dpw.dc.gov/service/leaf-collection>

for second rounds, changes in trash collection schedules, preparations for snow removal)? I urge any the agency to be proactive in sharing any updates in city service plans and to circulate changes widely including to all ANC commissioners, civic associations, via regular Administration communication channels, and more.

Finally, I would appreciate an update on the number of vacancies at the agency and if and how this may be contributing to service delays, for leaf collection purposes as well as for other essential DPW operations. What efforts are being taken at the agency to fill these vacancies - or to otherwise supplement staffing with many essential workers out sick or needing to quarantine – and when do you expect to achieve full staffing capacity?

Your responses will help me understand our current case-surge operations, the mismatch in agency reporting and experiences of my constituents regarding leaf collection, what current - or prospective – DPW service disruptions may be occurring as a result of the pandemic, and what steps your office is taking to make sure these challenges are transparently, proactively, and consistently communicated to the public.

Thank you again for your partnership and leadership through this public emergency, I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Janeese Lewis George". The signature is written in a cursive style and is contained within a thin black rectangular border.

Janeese Lewis George
Ward 4 Councilmember

Cc: Lucinda Babers, Deputy Mayor for Operations and Infrastructure