



All in a Day's Work at the City of South Haven
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It's All About the Beaches

I think many of you would agree that the City of South Haven has many wonderful assets. At the top of the list would be the beautiful beaches. Ever wonder how they remain so beautiful and so clean? Possibly the beach

cleaner and the operators have something to do with it.



The beach cleaning task is started early in the morning at 5:00 a.m., seven days a week. I met Ryan at South Beach to learn all about the operation. Ryan has operated the beach cleaner for two years and seems like an expert to me.

To begin, Ryan showed me all the levers and what each one does. There are no brakes – the machine operates by hydraulics. The basic operation is this: the machine drives over the sand; the 'shaker' vibrates to shake the sand through the filter and retain the objects; then the sweeper at the back of the machine smooths out the sand.

Ryan explained how the glass bottles, large sticks, beach chairs, and such items have to be picked up by hand which means stopping the machine and getting off to physically pick the items up. This interrupts the process but these items cannot go through the machine. You have probably taken part or have watched children digging holes in the sand, sometimes even burying themselves. It's very common and of course, lots of fun. These are the holes that can get tricky when driving the machine over them. The raker is the part of the machine that actually rakes through the sand. In the instance of a hole, the raker cannot reach the surface. The driver must be careful by slowing down and letting the raker run its course over the uneven surface.

Ryan went one round to make a "track" so I would have a pattern to follow. I climbed on the seat, which by the way, is on the side of the machine. This can be tricky when maneuvering around an object such as a picnic table. (I learned this by experience.) I put on the headphones – very important. It is loud once the vibrator is turned on. I put it in gear and followed Ryan's track, keeping just to the right. It was smooth-going until I came to a utility pole with a picnic table in close proximity. I just took it slow. Then there was the big hole. It was eerie driving over it because the raker wasn't touching the ground. Again, 'slow' was the best mode for me. I returned to the beginning point and gave the wheel back to Ryan. He had about 2 ½ hours ahead of him at South Beach then he was driving over to North Beach. It will take him about 4 hours there.

I'm glad I had the chance to drive the beach cleaning machine and learn the operation. I hope you have gained some insight as well. Now on to beach parking.

Beach Parking

Ted has been working for the City Beach 'Park and Pay' program for ten years and hasn't missed one day. He considers this a fun job. As Ted says, "I get to meet people, get a tan, and enjoy being outside."

Ted admits that he tries hard to be nice to everyone. This is probably the main reason that he hasn't encountered a belligerent person in the ten years he has been here.

The beach parking attendants could also be referred to as tourist specialists. They are asked directions and answer many questions. One of Ted's tasks is to repair meters that have jammed or the battery has run down. In fact, he has his SUV set up as a portable workshop – working right out of the back. Attendants keep an eye out for problems and people in trouble. Most of them have CPR and AED training.



The 'Park and Pay' system includes North Beach, South Beach and public beach access locations – Oak St, Packard Park, Dyckman Av, and Woodman St. The 'Park and Pay' hours are 9:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. Now, do not confuse 'Park and Pay' hours with regular City park hours. North and South Beach park hours are Dawn to 11 p.m. and until 10 p.m. at the public beach access locations. One remaining beach access location – Newcombe Beach – does not have the 'Park and Pay' system. So, if one does not want to pay for parking, then go before 9 a.m. and after 6 p.m. but remember to adhere to the regular City park closing hours.



The parking fee is \$5 per space – good for all day. In the unfortunate case that a person is given a ticket (\$10), it can be paid at the yellow box (in the photo at left). Often, the landlords of the rental units purchase and then give beach passes to their renters. One little known fact Ted shared with me – vehicles with handicap stickers may park in any space – not just the designated handicap space.

Beach parking stickers are available free to residents (2 maximum) and also for purchase - \$30 for the season and \$15 for the week.

Look for Ted at the beaches and say hello. He promises to be friendly and give a smile.

Visit the city's web site to view past articles: www.south-haven.com If you have suggestions for topics, you are welcome to email me at: ddavidson@south-haven.com

Until the next adventure,
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City of South Haven