



CITY OF
St. Joseph

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January/February 2013 Newsletter Volume 19, Issue 1

CITY CONNECTION

Your Connection to City Hall and the People Who **SERVE** You

2012 REVIEW & 2013 BLUEPRINT

Dear Residents,
Each year, at their October goal setting meeting, the City Commission works to develop their goals for the next fiscal year. On October 22, 2012, the City Commission met with staff to reflect upon the 2012 achievements and how they will have a positive rate of return for you, our stakeholders. They also assessed our current needs and developed goals and objectives, setting our direction for 2013.

2012

If you recall, this time last year, we announced the City Commission's primary goals for 2012, which included the creation of a public safety department, the reduction of long-term employee legacy costs and a strategy to improve our city streets. The City Commission was quite clear that we needed to reduce our ongoing operating costs, eliminate our multi-million dollar unfunded liability for post-retirement employee benefits and fix our streets. The Commission was also very direct that accomplishing our street repairs must not result in a tax increase.

As we look back on the past year, we are more than satisfied with the implementation of those goals.

On July 1, our separate police and fire departments were officially combined into a public safety department. In October, we also joined Berrien County in their central dispatching service. These two consolidations will result in cost savings of over \$700,000 annually, while improving the efficiency and delivery of public safety to all of our residents. In 2012, we were also successful in eliminating the city's future liability for retiree health care from \$22,345,898 to \$2,321,734. This reduction is an unparalleled savings for our taxpayers who, before the changes, were obligated to pay over \$22,000,000 in future retiree health care costs for city employees. While employees still

enjoy a very comfortable retirement program, we no longer offer retiree health care to our current or future employees, with the exception of current public safety officers. We were able to reconstruct several streets in 2012, including Napier Avenue and Lake Street. In addition, we were able to complete other neighborhood utility and street repairs.

It is important to publicly thank the St. Joseph citizens who served on the public safety committee this past year, including Chairman Milt Agay, Vice-Chair Bill Marohn, Bill Hanley, Kathy Burzack, Chad Mandarino, Deb Koroch, as well as members from our police and fire departments, Steven Neubecker, Bryan Elliott, Jim Crow and Jason Yonker. The committee spent several months considering the concept of public safety prior to recommending the switch to the City Commission in March.

As of January 1, 2013, city taxpayers have saved nearly \$400,000 with the implementation of our public safety department.

The City Commission and our team also led the way in adopting a Shoreline Protection Ordinance, improving the appearance of Bear Park (near the Library), holding Free Movie Nights at the Whirlpool Compass Fountain, passing a moratorium on short-term rentals, adding more features to Light Up the Bluff and repaired miles of city sidewalks.

2013

The City Commission has laid out their blueprint for 2013 and I'm sure you will be pleased with the plan.

Several recreational improvements to city facilities include a new restroom and pavilion at Lions Beach, a new restroom and fish cleaning station at the municipal boat launch, and plans are underway to develop a new canoe and

kayak site. Additionally, new in-car cameras in each police car as well as new firefighter turnout gear will be purchased for members of our new public safety department. As part of our on-going desire to keep you informed and attract guests to our town, we will overhaul our website and create an exciting Planes, Trains and Helicopters public art program. Finally, Price Street and West Highland Avenue will be reconstructed in 2013.

The best news as far as we are concerned is that all of the 2012 projects we have undertaken and plan to initiate in 2013 are being financed with annual operating cash, which will leave our taxpayers with no additional long-term debt. It would be easy for an elected body to have the "build and they will come" philosophy, but that would lead to huge debt for decades to come. The St. Joseph City Commission has a very clear and cautious approach to spending. Under their direction, we stay away from long-term debt for "wants" and only consider debt for "needs".

Our anticipated debt for 2012 and 2013 projects is zero.

Please feel free to contact city hall (983-5541) if you have any questions regarding the anticipated 2013 projects.

On behalf of Mayor Robert Judd, Commissioner Jeff Richards D.V.M., Commissioner Mary Goff, Mayor Pro-tem Mike Garey, Commissioner Fran Chickering and our entire team at city hall, I want to wish you and your loved ones a healthy and peaceful 2013.

Sincerely,

Frank L. Walsh
City Manager

MARK YOUR CALENDARS

- | | |
|---|--|
| January 21st: Dr. Martin Luther King Day, City Hall, Library & SJPS closed
Normal rubbish schedule | February 11th: City Commission 6pm |
| January 22nd: City water bills due
Library Board 7pm | February 14th: 2012 Winter Tax due by 5pm
Valentine's Day |
| January 24th: MEDIC I 8:30am | February 18th: President's Day, City Hall and SJPS Closed
Normal rubbish schedule |
| January 25th: Last day for Christmas tree pickup | February 20th: DDA 1pm
Water Board 4pm |
| January 28th: Last day to register to vote for February election if needed
TwinCats 9:30am | February 21st: Airport Authority 9:30am
Joint Wastewater 11am
Zoning Board of Appeals 4:30pm |
| January 30th: Parks Advisory Board 8am | February 25th: TwinCats 9:30am
City Commission 6pm |
| January 31st: Last Day for Seasonal Day Vendor Applications | February 27th: Parks Advisory Board 8am |
| February 7th: Planning Commission 4:30pm | February 28th: Last day to pay taxes at City Hall
Last day to purchase dog license at City Hall
Medic I 8:30am
Cemetery Board 9am |
| February 8th: Magical Ice Fest (SJT) | |
| February 9th: Magical Ice Fest (SJT) | |
| February 10th: Magical Ice Fest (SJT) | |



Be sure to save the date and plan for fun during the 2013 Magical Ice Fest being held February 8-10. Ice carving begins on Friday and goes all weekend long. New this year - Ice Wars! Onlookers will have the chance to watch pro carvers duel it out in 15 minute bouts of ice-carving chaos. They need you to cheer them on! So be sure to bring the family and tell your friends, this icy weekend will have something for everyone. Keep track of all of the planned action at facebook.com/stjoetoday or online at www.magicalicefest.com. See you there!

FOR POLICE, FIRE, MEDICAL EMERGENCY CALL 911

Infrastructure Construction in 2013

Work in the coming year is expected to include traffic signal improvements at the intersection of Napier Avenue & Langley Avenue, reconstruction of Price Street, 2013 Combined Sewer Overflow (CSO) work and reconstruction of West Highland Avenue. The table that follows provides general information regarding the projects; more detailed information will be provided to the neighborhoods impacted just prior to construction. If you have questions, please contact City Engineer Tim Zebell at (269)-983-5541.

PROJECT	LOCATION	TIMEFRAME	REMARKS
Napier & Langley Traffic Signal Improvements	Napier & Langley Intersection	Early April – Early June	Replacement of the traffic signal and upgrade to more reliable video detection. Optimize timing to improve traffic flow. Predominantly funded by CMAQ Grant.
Price Street Reconstruction	Price Street: State St. to Lake Blvd.	Mid April – Late May.	Reconstruction of Price St. Funded by EVIP Grant awarded due to efficiencies achieved by transition to Public Safety.
2013 CSO Project	Elm Street: Main St. to State St.	Early Sept. – Late Oct.	Storm sewer work on 600 block of Elm St. - south side of road from alley to State St.
	Alley east of State St. 200 thru 400 Block		Storm Sewer work to provide roof drain connection points in alley. Funded by S2 Grant & SRF (low interest) Loan.
West Highland Avenue Reconstruction	West Highland Ave: Lakeview to Veronica	Early Sept. – Mid Oct.	Reconstruction of West Highland Ave and underground utility work. Funding Source: General Funds made available due to savings achieved by transition to Public Safety Department.

We Need You!

The City of St. Joseph is always seeking interested residents to apply for membership to one of our many Boards or Commissions. Board memberships and terms vary and we are certain that there is a good fit for most citizens who are willing to serve.

If you are interested in serving on one of our Boards or Commissions, but do not have previous committee experience or leadership development training, we encourage you to apply anyway and note on your application why you think you may be ready for board participation.

As with all board members, you need to be able to commit to regular meeting attendance, have the ability to receive communication by phone and/or email and have some comfort in communicating ideas in a group setting. Each of our Boards and Commissions are staffed by city personnel who assist with on-going administration of the group.

Serving on a City Board or Commission is a great opportunity for you to 'give back' to your community and use your experience to help shape policies and programs!

If you are interested, please contact the City Clerk's Office at 269-983-6325 for more information or complete the Board and Commission application available on our website at www.sjcity.com.

City Employees Adopt a Family at the holidays . . .

Each year at Christmastime, city employees adopt a local family and provide them with a special holiday, which not only includes gifts but a Christmas turkey with all the trimmings. This year, when Public Works staff delivered presents and food to the chosen family of six (6) on December 20th, the family was so thankful for the generosity shown them. Thank you for your kindness city staff!



IMPORTANT INFORMATION ABOUT YOUR 2012 WINTER TAXES

Winter Tax Bills

City winter tax bills were mailed to property owners on December 1, 2012. All City bills include the city logo in the upper left corner and are printed on white paper with black ink. If you received a winter tax bill printed on green paper, it is not a City of St. Joseph tax bill.

Payment Deadlines

2012 Winter Tax Bills are due and payable December 1, 2012, but may be paid without penalty through 5:00 p.m. on February 14, 2013. Winter tax payments received after 5:00 p.m. February 14, 2013, will be assessed a 3% penalty. The City will accept payments clearly

postmarked February 14, 2013 as paid on time.

The City will collect payment for winter tax bills at the St. Joseph City Hall through February 28th. After which, all payments must be made at the County Treasurer's Office at the Berrien County Administration Building at 701 Main Street, St. Joseph, Michigan.

Winter Tax Deferments

Qualified persons may file for a deferment of taxes beyond the February 14th due date. A deferment will allow time for you to receive your Michigan Homestead Tax Credit before paying your property taxes.

To be eligible for this deferment you must file for a Homestead Property Tax Credit with the State of Michigan as soon as possible. After completing the Homestead Property Tax Credit Claim form, either mail or drop off a copy to the St. Joseph Treasurer's Office. To qualify, the completed form must be received by the City Treasurer no later than February 14th. Upon receipt of the Homestead Property Tax Credit Claim form, your taxes will be deferred without penalty until April 30th.

If you have questions or need assistance, please call the City Treasurer's Office at 269-983-4731.

St. Joseph Public Safety

Goes High Tech to Search for Missing Children



St. Joseph Public Safety under Director, Mark Clapp, has formalized an agreement with the A Child Is Missing alert program that has led to a high tech method now in place to search locally for missing children, missing elderly (often with Alzheimer's), college students, and missing persons who may be mentally or physically challenged or disabled.

Upon receipt of a missing person call, St. Joseph Public Safety will now make their first phone call to a toll free number that rings in Fort Lauderdale, Florida. This call, answered 24/7, 365 by a technician at A Child is Missing, initiates a rapid process of information gathering and sophisticated mapping systems which expedites thousands of phone calls within minutes with a customized recorded message detailing the missing persons description and last known whereabouts. The message will also include a [agency name] Police Department phone number to be called by anyone who has information regarding the location of the missing person.

Phone numbers that are called by this program include listed numbers and mobile numbers available to ACIM in the selected area. Mobile numbers, unlisted numbers, broadband/voice-over IP numbers, or TDD/TTY devices can be added to ensure they, too, are called in the event of an alert. To enter your cell phone, unlisted, broadband/voice-over IP or TDD/TTY device number visit www.achildissing.org and click on "add your name" to enter your name, number, and address. This information will only be used for emergency message alerts.

A Child Is Missing is a nationwide non-profit organization that helps law enforcement agencies locate missing children, missing elderly (often suffering from Alzheimer's), college students, and missing persons who are mentally or physically challenged or disabled. A Child is Missing utilizes sophisticated computer mapping systems and trained technicians with the capacity to place 1,000 alert phone calls in one minute to residents and businesses in the area where someone has gone missing. To date the efforts of A Child Is Missing have been credited with more than 1,200 safe assisted recoveries. To register your unpublished home or cell phone number, visit www.achildissing.org.



Look for Legos Around Town . . .

from February 23, 2013 through March 23, 2013. The St. Joseph Public Library, St. Joseph Today, Shadowland at Silver Beach, Silver Beach Carousel, Curious Kids' Museum and Discovery Zone, The Heritage Museum and Cultural Center, The Box Factory for the Arts, and Krasl Art Center will host a month full of LEGO fun. Look for LEGO building competitions on March 2, 2013 at Shadowland at Silver Beach and LEGO displays at each of the locations listed above. More information will be available at the St. Joseph Public Library and St. Joseph today soon.