

Let's Put on our Creative Thinking Hats!

Public Art celebrates its 10th year in 2013 and we are running out of creative ideas!!! Do you have a great idea that you would like to share with us?

Let us know by emailing ssolon@sjcity.com with any nifty ideas.

All ideas before October 11th please!

PUBLIC ART AUCTION

WINE & FOOD FESTIVAL!

September 29, 2012
5 p.m. - 10 p.m.
 Whirlpool Centennial Park (below the bluff)

\$10 Admission
 Includes 4 wine samples

FEATURING Michigan Wines, Food from Local Restaurants & Live Music!

MUSIC BY JazzminII 5-7 pm
 Shawn Bell Quintet 8-10 pm

For those attending the Auction only, the sale of this year's public art will take place promptly at 7 pm with professional auctioneer Jerry Glassman of Glassman's Auction & Real Estate, Eau Claire, Michigan.

BEACHED PIRATES ARRRT IN ST. JOSEPH

(269) 985-1111
www.sjcitytoday.com



CITY OF St. Joseph

Frank Walsh, City Manager
 St. Joseph City Hall
 700 Broad Street
 St. Joseph, MI 49085-1276

Phone: 269-983-5541
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We're on the Web!
www.sjcity.com

City Hall is barrier-free. Use the lobby elevator. Accessible parking is behind the building.

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Pictured above is Jenn Gibbons arriving at West Basin Marine on August 8th. Jenn, a Battle Creek native, set out on June 14th from Chicago in her kayak with a goal to circumnavigate Lake Michigan's 1,500 mile perimeter during a 2-month quest to raise money and awareness for breast cancer. She completed her trip on August 14th and raised nearly \$118,000.

MARK YOUR CALENDARS

- | | |
|--|---|
| Sept. 22: Fall begins
Farmers Market (SJT) | Oct. 17: Pension Board 9am
DDA 1pm
Water Board 4pm |
| Sept. 24: City Commission 6pm | Oct. 18: Airport Authority 9:30am
Zoning Board 4:30pm |
| Sept. 25: Library Board 7pm | Oct. 20: Household Hazardous Waste
Collection www.berriencounty.org/recycle |
| Sept. 26: Parks Advisory Board 8am
Harbor Authority 12pm
Farmers Market (SJT) | Oct. 22: Water bills due |
| Sept. 27: MEDIC I 8:30am | Oct. 23: Library Board 7pm
Boards/Commissions Appreciation
Dinner 6pm |
| Sept. 29: Farmers Market (SJT)
Household Hazardous Waste
Collection www.berriencounty.org/recycle | Oct. 25: Cemetery Board 9am
Medic I 8:30am |
| Oct. 3: Farmers Market (SJT) | Oct. 26: Great Halloween Spectacle (SJT) |
| Oct. 4: Planning Commission 4:30pm | Oct. 31: Parks Advisory Board 8am
Harbor Authority 12pm
City-wide Trick-or-Treat, 6pm - 7:30pm |
| Oct. 6: Farmers Market (SJT)
Harvest Festival (SJT) | Nov. 1st: Planning Commission 4:30pm |
| Oct. 7: Antiques on the Bluff (SJT)
Fire Prevention Week begins | Nov. 3rd: City Hall open for Absentee
Voter Ballots 8am - 2pm |
| Oct. 8: Columbus Day, City Hall open | Nov. 4th: Daylight Savings Time ends |
| Oct. 9: Last day to register to vote for
November election | Nov. 5th: City Commission 6pm |
| Oct. 15: City Commission 6pm | Nov. 6th: General Election Day 7am-8pm |



September/October 2012 Newsletter Volume 18, Issue 5

CITY CONNECTION

Your Connection to City Hall and the People Who SERVE You

Protecting Neighborhoods

The City Commission places a Moratorium on Short-Term Rentals

As many residents know, for the last several years, the City and our residents have struggled with the best way to handle vacation rentals of homes and apartments, especially in residential neighborhoods. That issue is again before the City Commission, which is concerned the current regulations are not adequately protecting our residents and that changes appear to be needed. The City Commission has enacted a moratorium until March 15, 2013, on new applications in single-family and two-family residential zoning districts for what our ordinance calls "Short-Term Rentals", to allow the city to review our current ordinance and determine what changes are possible and necessary to better protect our neighborhoods and the character of our community.

Before 2007, the city had no special regulations for vacation rentals and so these units were treated exactly the same as any other residential rental properties. At that time, any residential unit could have been used as a vacation rental so long as it was registered with the city as a rental unit and inspected once every two years.

In 2006, concerned residents approached the city and indicated they were seeing more vacation rental units in their neighborhoods. Our residents reported their quality of life in their homes was being affected by noise and congestion as a result of the activities of some vacationers and expressed concern that if unchecked the continued expansion of vacation rental units would seriously damage the integrity of residential neighborhoods. The City Commission reacted to protect neighborhoods by placing a moratorium on registration of any new rental units—whether or not a vacation rental—while investigating the situation and considering how the city could best address it.

After a number of public meetings before the City Commission and Planning Commission and hearing from both residents and the owners of short-term rental units, new ordinances

were developed creating a new category of "short-term rentals" (STRs) for residential properties rented for a period of less than one calendar month. These uses would require a Special Use Permit in single-family and two-family residential districts, which is a stringent approval process requiring notice to neighbors and the public as well as public hearings before both the Planning Commission and the City Commission. Over the last five (5) years, three (3) of eleven (11) applications have been approved. In multi-family districts and Water Recreation zoning districts a less stringent process requiring only city staff review and approval was selected. STRs were not allowed in any other zoning district. These ordinance amendments took effect in early 2007.

However, under zoning law, it was not possible to close down short-term rental units that were already legally operating. Owners who had legally operated their property as short-term rentals before the moratorium took effect were given a limited period of time to provide evidence of this activity and to register as short-term rentals. Because these units were legally operating until the ordinance changed the regulations, they are technically known as "Nonconformities", although the term "grandfathered" is also informally used. There are currently approximately 40 short-term rental properties in the city, and approximately 30 of these are "grandfathered" properties that were in operation before 2007.

Although the ordinance has slowed or even stopped the growth of short-term rentals in residential districts (the number approved is offset by the number of grandfathered properties that have voluntarily ceased operating) our residents continue to report experiencing difficulties with some properties. And even though many short-term rentals are well operated and cause no problem for

neighbors, they still represent a commercial use in a residential district that introduces uncertainty and gives many residents concern about the long-term direction of their neighborhoods. Apart from wondering from week to week who their new neighbors may be, residents wonder if these commercial activities will render the neighborhood less desirable to other potential resident property owners, over time weakening the character of the neighborhood and potentially reducing property values. And it is a source of continued frustration that it is difficult for the city to hold short term rental property owners responsible for the behavior of their tenants.

During this moratorium period, the City Commission will review our ordinances on the basis of our experience over the last 5 years of administering the ordinance, to determine how the city can better protect our residents and the quality of our residential neighborhoods. We understand we cannot prohibit short-term rentals, but we need to re-examine whether they are allowed in the most appropriate areas of the community, if our regulatory ordinances are reviewing the correct characteristics, and how we can legally hold property owners responsible for the activities taking place on their property, up to and including the revocation of the rental permit even for a grandfathered unit. This will not be an easy process but the City Commission believes it is a necessary process and is determined to move ahead and lead the community toward the future our residents wish to see.

Sincerely,

Frank L. Walsh
 City Manager



911 Calls Dispatched Through County Effective October 1st

Residents Can Expect the Same High Level of Service from Public Safety

After reviewing an independent study conducted by the International City Managers Association (ICMA) and receiving a recommendation from a 10-member advisory committee, consisting of local police officers, local fire fighters, and community representatives, it became apparent to the City Commission that dispatch services were no longer necessary at the city level. The committee, chaired by Milt Agay, a city resident and Chief for Berrien Springs/Oronoko Police Department, overwhelmingly concurred with ICMA's recommendation to transition dispatch services to Berrien County in order to create better inter-agency interoperability, thereby increasing the safety of St. Joseph emergency responders and its citizenry, all while saving the city taxpayers approximately \$350,000 annually.

Preparation has taken place over the past several months for a smooth and efficient conversion, including training, upgrading radio equipment in police cars, and educating staff and public. Even though this is a major change, residents will see no difference in how 911 emergency calls are received and handled. Remember to always call 911 in case of an emergency.

For non-emergency or less urgent calls, residents are using 983-2571. Starting October 1, those phone calls will automatically transfer to Berrien County as well as the 911 calls. So, if you have a non-emergency question or request at the city level, such as obtaining a police report or contacting city police administration, please call 985-0300 any day of the week from 8 a.m. – 5 p.m. Administrative staff will be available to answer your questions and provide assistance. After regular business hours you may leave a message and your call will be returned promptly. Similarly, this procedure is to be used

for other city departments when calling after hours. For non-emergencies, please use that specific department's number when calling after 5 p.m. A list of each department's direct telephone number can be found on the city's web site, www.sjcity.com.

Additionally, for residents' safety and convenience, a lobby telephone has been installed, which is accessible 24 hours a day and located on the east wall as you enter city hall. This phone will have a direct line to Berrien County dispatch and will provide immediate access to police/fire or medical assistance on any day at any time.

Please be assured that the City of St. Joseph will continue to offer the same high level of service that our residents deserve. If you have any questions about this upcoming change or about public safety in general, please feel free to contact me at 985-0300.

Sincerely,

Mark Clapp
Director of Public Safety



New City Employee

Daniel Northup, a new employee in the Department of Public Safety, graduated from Central Michigan University with a Bachelor of Science in Psychology; minor in biology. After graduation, he discovered a love for law enforcement, attended and completed the academy and was most recently employed as a detective with the Benton Harbor Department of Public Safety. Dan is married and has three young daughters. Please join us in welcoming Daniel to our team.



Fall Leaf Collection

Public Works employees will begin leaf collection around October 1st. For your convenience, please rake your leaves into the curb for collection. Please do not put leaves in bags, or put branches, twigs, grass clippings, rocks or other debris in with the leaf piles. Our vacuum truck works very effectively with leaves but is easily damaged by other materials. In addition, we are not permitted to compost grass clippings or other plant materials. To keep leaves from interfering with traffic, residents who live along major streets such as Niles Avenue, Main Street, and Lakeshore Drive may bag leaves or rake them onto the tree lawn for collection. Brush removal is available from the City for the removal of small amounts of tree limbs or brush. This service is not intended for the removal of entire trees, small twigs, grass clippings, or other materials left by a tree trimming contractor. Before you place brush at the street, please call 983-6341 to arrange for a pickup. Public service employees only pickup brush when enough people have called to make a pickup most efficient.

If you see storm drains covered with leaves or other debris, please clear these items from the storm drain or call Public Works at 983-6341 to avoid road flooding during large rainfall events.

St. Joseph Today Presents . . .

United Federal Credit Union presents Harvest Festival! Saturday October 6th, 10 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.

Help us celebrate the fall harvest with our last Farmer's Market (9A-2P), Petting Zoo, Free Horse Drawn Trolley Rides around town, and Pony Rides! All at the corner of Pleasant & State Streets....and one block away in Lake Bluff Park. For more information, please visit www.stjoetoday.com or call 269-985-1111.

Great Halloween Spectacle Friday, October 27th, 2012

Downtown Halloween Trick-or-Treat: 5:30p.m. - 6:30p.m.
Trick-or-treating at downtown businesses!

Dog Dress Up Contest! 7:00pm

In front of FuzzyButz Pet Bakery on State St. Please call FuzzyButz for more info on the contest – 983-WOOF.



City-wide Trick-or-Treat

Trick-or-Treat hours throughout the City will be October 31, 2012 from 6 – 7:30 p.m.

Construction News



Lake Street Reconstruction: The city was able to secure \$236,000 in Federal Transportation Improvement Program dollars to help fund the project. The work, currently underway, includes reconstruction of Lake Street from Broad to Elm Streets; concrete spot replacement on Lake Street between Elm and Park Streets; and resurfacing of Park Street from Lions Park Drive to Lake Street. The work is expected to be complete by November 15th.



Ridgeway Area Water Improvement Project: The project is being undertaken in order to improve fire flows and water quality to the Ridgeway area. The project includes directionally drilling new 8" water main at three locations and replacement of hydrants on Ridgeway. Completion is expected by the end of October. Regular updates pertaining to traffic flow and water shut offs are available on the city's web site at www.sjcity.com.



General Election Tuesday, November 6, 2012

On Tuesday, November 6, 2012, the City of St. Joseph will hold a General Election to elect the President, a U.S. Senator, the U.S. 6th Congressional District Representative, State 79th Legislative District Legislature, the County 5th District Commissioner and various other Berrien County Officials.

Since this is a general election you may vote either a straight ticket, a split ticket of a mixed ticket ballot. Generally, these choices refer to the following ways of marking your ballot:

- ➔ Straight Ticket: Vote for the party of your choice. You need only to mark your party choice for the partisan races.
- ➔ Split Ticket: Vote for the party of your choice, but ALSO select individual candidates of your choice from other parties in individual offices.
- ➔ Mixed Ticket: Vote for the individual candidates of your choice in each office.

The polls will be open from 7:00 a.m. until 8:00 p.m. on Election Day. Please take note of our polling locations:

Precinct 1 – Library – 500 Market Street
Precinct 2 – Howard Ice Arena – 2414 Willa Drive
Precinct 3 – Zion Evangelical UCC Church – 3001 Veronica Drive

Remember, voting with the Optech Insight tabulator equipment requires that you simply draw one solid line to connect the ends of the arrow next to the candidate of your choice.

The AutoMark will be available to aid voters with disabilities to mark/vote their ballot independently. Please let the elections inspectors know if you wish to use this equipment.

For information on how to obtain an absent voter ballot, confirm your registration or check your polling location, please call the City Clerk's Office at 983-6325.

You may also check your voter status or polling location at www.sjcity.com just click on the Michigan Voter Information Center link, then enter your voter information.

See you at the polls!

2012 Fall Happenings @ the Library



Fall Book Sale!

October 18th - 20th

Organizing Your Financial Documents
October 3rd — 6:30pm
Estate Planning Workshop
October 16th — 10:30am



Genealogy Lock-in & Workshop
November 16th: 6:30pm
Registration Required

STAR WARS
Reads Day
Oct. 6th

Kid's Corner

Kids Saturday Movies:
4th Saturday of Each Month @ 2:00pm
September 22 -- The Princess Bride
October 27 -- Scooby Doo and the Goblin King

Fun Stuff for Tweens:
Gaming & Hot Dogs October 10th -- 5:00pm
Marshmallow Madness November 1st -- 5:00pm

Story Times: Sept. 18th—Nov. 21st
including a Halloween Party on October 30th & 31st

Gingerbread Houses: December 1st



Calling all little Book-aneers!

Join us for a swashbuckling good story time on Tuesdays or Wednesdays at 10:30am!

Book Clubs!

We've got a group for you:

Lake Bluff Book Discussion Group
Meets on the last Wednesday of each month at 7:00pm.

Men's Book Club: Scholars and Scoundrels
Meets on the 2nd Wednesday of each month at 7:00pm.

Not Your Mother's Book Club
Meets on the 2nd Monday of each month at 7:00pm. For the 20-30 something crowd. *Locations vary.*

Art + Books
Meets on the 2nd Thursday of each month at 7:00pm at The Krasl Art Center. Discuss art themed books.

Ten O'clock Book Club
Meets every Friday of each month at 10:30am. Listen to local author Marnie Heyn read about various topics and then discuss. Topics change monthly.

