



## *City Manager's Bits & Pieces*

TO: St. Joseph City Commissioners

FROM: Richard I. Lewis, City Manager

DATE: March 20, 2014

With the weather finally starting to cooperate, spring activity is in process, and cleanup / repairs have started. The world (at least our little part of it) is in order.

A number of activities are in process.

### **Downtown Sidewalk Amenity Policy – Merchant Meeting**

For your information, we have invited and scheduled a merchant meeting for Monday morning at 8:30 in the Commission Chambers. If we need to schedule an additional meeting, then we will do so. Also, a draft of the amended changes to Chapter 26 has been provided and is in review. The game plan is to have a final report and the proposed ordinance amendment ready for the April 14 City Commission meeting.

### **Downtown Parking**

The Downtown Development Authority met this morning and has recommended that the City take a step back from the recommendations to the Parking Plan approved in January. I will be preparing a more detail memo for the City Commission to consider at Monday's meeting but wanted to provide a brief update.

### **CSO Permit Renewal**

City Engineer Tim Zebell and I meet with Michigan Department of Environmental Quality officials on Wednesday regarding the City's permit renewal. The meeting was very positive and the bottom line is that our request to extend the implementation deadline to December 1, 2020 will be approved. We will be sending a confirmation letter of the extension and the draft permit will be forthcoming in the next few months.

**SAW Grant Update**

On Wednesday, March 18, 2014, the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ) posted the results of the SAW Grant lottery process on their website. The City of St. Joseph was picked approximately 135<sup>th</sup> out of a total of 600 plus applications. The bad news is we did not make the first round of SAW Grants awarded which capped out at \$97 million in funding. The good news is the City is in good position to receive funding in the next round of grants. The second disbursement of funding is expected to be within one year so as long as the legislature appropriates the next \$97 million dollars that MDEQ has requested. You likely recall that staff worked with Wade Trim to prepare the grant application and that we had a relatively short time-table to get it done. Staff sees a silver lining in the funding delay as it will allow time to review the work plan and approach the project in deliberate and cost effective manner when we are awarded the grant in December (thinking positive).

**Inspection Department**

All licensed contractors (building, plumbing, electrical, mechanical and etc.) in the State of Michigan are required to renew their state license and take an update class at the beginning of each 3-year code cycle. Ed Wainwright, our Plumbing Inspector, has for the third time assisted the plumbers in our area with these requirements. Again Ed secured a free conference hall at LMC, a free instructor provided by the Bureau of Construction Codes – Plumbing Division and funding for lunch supplies from Mort and Etna Supply. All of the 100+ plumbers that attended wrote their checks for a minimum of \$50.00 payable to “Make-A-Wish” Michigan. This years’ class was held on Friday, March 14, 2014 and raised \$5728.00 for the foundation. Each time Ed has conducted this class, the donations have exceeded the \$5000.00 threshold needed to pay for one complete wish for a child in the State of Michigan.

**West Basin Marina Docks**

The extremely cold winter caused significant ice to form in the West basin Marina causing damage to several of the docks. The ice forced several of the dock piers to lift up from their original set height. Although we have bubblers in the marina to prevent ice from forming, this years extended deep freeze was more than they could handle. The City will be seeking quotes to have several of the piers reset to the proper height before the boating season gets in full swing for 2014.

**Kiwanis Softball Field Donation**

The Whirlpool employee softball league recently donated \$1,000.00 towards renovating the Kiwanis softball field. Staff met with them and it was determined that the most pressing need was for the stone dust infield to be redone and for some leveling to be completed in the outfield. Staff will complete this work this spring prior to the season beginning in May.

**Leaves**

City staff recently removed all of the leaves from the curb-side leaf pickup program from the Public Works & Service facility. A total of 1,700 cubic yards were hauled to area farmers for use on their fields.

**LED light demonstration project**

Staff will be installing 24 LED lights and new globes on the downtown light poles on Broad Street west of State Street. Staff will be working to have this done in the next few weeks depending on the weather. This small sample will allow the City to evaluate the conversion for implementation in the entire downtown business district. DDA funds are being utilized to pay for this project.

**Christmas Decorations**

The frozen ground is causing delays in removing the items on the bluff, but staff has started removing what they can. A thaw would be greatly beneficial for several of the projects the Department of Public Works & Service needs to get underway before summer arrives.

**Brick Stairs on the Bluff**

Winter was not kind to the brick steps this year. The ice has caused many of the steps to heave and become unsafe. Staff is soliciting quotes to repair the bricks that have come loose. The steps are currently closed until we can get them repaired and safe for the public to use.

**Water Plant-Ice Cover and Water Treatment**

This winter has been a record breaker for Lake Michigan ice cover. On March 9<sup>th</sup>, the ice coverage on the lake reached 92.7%. We are pleased to report that the new water plant intake completed in 2011 made it through this brutal winter without an ice blockage. As you may recall ice build-up on the old intake would cause several blockages during a typical winter. The location of the new intake in deeper water and the inlet design on the structures are likely the reasons for this.

The prolonged ice cover has brought about changes in raw water quality that have presented challenges for the water plant. Without the mixing effects of wind the river water has become more concentrated over the intake. Given the close proximity of the intake to the mouth of the St. Joseph River the plant will draw in water with a high content of river water which is more difficult to treat than lake water. The suspended solids, alkalinity, turbidity and organics are all higher. Plant staff has managed the treatment process well and finished water quality has remained high all winter.

**St. Joseph High School Robotics District Competition**

In case you are interested, St. Joseph High School will be hosting the FIRST Robotics District Competition on March 27-29. As an aside, our Public Safety officials will be working with the school to assist in making the event successful.

**Housing Commission**

Attached is the agenda for the March 13, 2014 Commission Meeting and minutes of the January 9, 2014 Commission Meeting.

**Closing Thought**

Accomplish something every day. Sometimes days fly by without anything standing out in your mind, without any tangible improvement. Every day make sure, no matter how small the effort, that you do something to make your dreams come true.

Have a great weekend.