



City Manager's Bits & Pieces

TO: St. Joseph City Commissioners

FROM: Richard I. Lewis, City Manager

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "R. Lewis", is placed to the right of the "FROM:" line.

DATE: February 6, 2014

Two weeks ago when I wrote the Bits & Pieces memo, I asked if this snow and cold would ever end. My compliments and thanks to the Public Works & Services employees for their efforts to clearing streets, downtown, parking lots, and fixing broken water pipes. At least the weather will be perfect for the 10th Annual Magical Ice Fest this weekend.

With the weather, it seems everything has gone fairly quiet, but there are a few items to bring you up to date on.

Splash Pad Permit

Attached is an update memo from City Engineer Tim Zebell and it appears the permit is in process and repair is on track to be completed by mid-May. Tim can answer any questions you might have at the City Commission meeting on Monday.

Storm Asset Management Wastewater (SAW) Grant

Tim attended a session in Lansing on Tuesday regarding the grants, so I am repeating information he provided. There were 671 applications received for a total of \$520 million with the average grant amount being \$770,000. Only one grant per community will be eligible for the lottery, dropping the pool to 587 applications. There is \$97 million available to be awarded with \$20 million to be loans and the remainder as grants. Funding for next year looks positive, so if a community doesn't get funded in this cycle they will have a fairly good idea where they stand for the next cycle. The lottery will take place sometime this month with award in April. If a second lottery is conducted, it most likely will be held next December.

LED Sign

I met with the St. Joseph Improvement Association on Tuesday afternoon regarding their providing funding for the purchase and installation of the LED Sign. They approved funding the project if the City wished to proceed. Knowing concerns have been raised regarding aesthetics and fitting in with our downtown, this will be on the February 24 City Commission agenda for further discussion.

County Presentation – Pier Safety

County Administration Bill Wolf will be in attendance at the February 24 City Commission to make his presentation regarding pier safety. This had been scheduled for the January 27, but Bill had to cancel due to the weather.

Japanese Knotweed and Other Invasive Species

We have most of the information from Randy Counterman. Derek and I will be setting up a meeting with him to review the data and then bring it to the City Commission. My target date to bring this to the City Commission is March 10.

Closing Thought

The only thought I can give is for everyone to stay positive. Long, cold, grey wintry days is hard and we all need to find ways to stay upbeat.

Enjoy your welcome, wherever you are.



Memorandum

TO: Honorable Mayor Judd and City Commissioners
Richard I. Lewis, City Manager

FROM: Tim Zebell

RE: Whirlpool Compass Fountain - Splash Pad Discharge Update

DATE: February 6, 2014

You likely recall that the City received a violation notice from MDEQ late last fall because the discharge from the Splash Pad reservoir overflows into the sanitary sewer. The violation was issued because the discharge generated during high intensity rainfall events contributes to CSO overflows when the fountain is operational. Back when this came to light, staff immediately informed the MDEQ District Engineer about the situation, explaining that Abonmarche revised the original design (which had directed the overflow to the storm sewer – not the sanitary sewer) in order gain approval for the MDEQ Public Pool Permit. The District Engineer recognized the conundrum (further detailed below) and began working with staff to resolve the issue. However, after sewer water backed up in a Splash Pad in Traverse City, Splash Pads became a hot topic with MDEQ. When MDEQ’s enforcement division caught wind of the situation at our Splash Pad - that staff has openly discussed with MDEQ District staff for several years - they demanded issuance of a violation notice. Unfortunately, we also expect to see a fine in the near future.

On the surface, the solution to the problem seems easy, physically disconnect the reservoir overflow from the sanitary sewer and redirect it to the storm sewer. However, in order for the fountain to be safe for the public to use, the water must have a chlorine residual at all times. In other words, chlorine is good when it comes to fountain operation and public health. That is not the case for discharges to the storm sewer. When it comes to discharges to surface waters, chlorine is bad because it kills aquatic life. Therefore, when overflows are generated from the Splash Pad, the chlorine residual must be removed before the water can be discharged to the St. Joseph River. In concept removing the residual, or de-chlorination, is not overly complicated. So what has held up resolution of this matter? City staff and MDEQ District personnel were not able to identify a practical mechanism to permit the discharge given our unique set of circumstances.

In order to discharge the reservoir overflow water to the storm sewer, the City needs a National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) Permit. You are likely familiar with this acronym since the City holds an NPDES Permit for our Combined Sewer Overflow (CSO) discharges. In fact the City holds several NPDES permits with the others being for discharges from the Drinking Water Treatment Plant and our Storm Sewer System or MS4 (Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System). The CSO NPDES is an individual permit while the Drinking Water Treatment Plant and MS4 NPDES Permits are general permits. MDEQ staff strongly encourages applying for general permits because the process is less expensive and less time-consuming as compared to the individual permit process. Unfortunately, the general NPDES permits that MDEQ suggested the City consider did not fit our circumstances and would

likely have led to future permit violations due to overly onerous requirements that would have been difficult if not impossible to achieve. It was not until after the violation notice was issued that MDEQ agreed that an individual permit would be the best route for permitting the Splash Pad discharge.

City staff, with assistance from Abonmarche, applied for an individual permit in mid-December. Throughout the month of January, staff has been in contact with MDEQ to emphasize the urgency of the permit as we need to make the corrections prior to opening the fountain again this spring. This past week MDEQ provided the requirements that they intend to incorporate into the Splash Pad NPDES permit. In addition to staff review, input from the Joint Waste Water Treatment Plant was solicited regarding the requirements. The conclusion of the review process was the requirements were reasonable and therefore we have asked MDEQ to proceed with drafting the permit. Upon completion, MDEQ will forward the draft permit to the City for review. Providing we are satisfied, the draft permit will be posted for a 30 day public notice period. Assuming the public notice does not generate significant comment, the permit will be issued shortly thereafter.

Concurrent with the permit processing, it is our intention to advertise for bids the third week of February, open bids in mid-March, award the project in late March and start work in April. The goal is for construction to be complete by mid-May so that the fountain is fully operational and compliant for the Senior PGA tournament.