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# City Manager's Report

MARCH 15, 2010

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## Administration & Finance

### ➤ Department Wide

Recommended the issuance of a short-term loan to Kalamazoo Municipal Golf Association for satisfaction of 2009 payables.

Working with Bond Counsel to submit Notice of Intent to City Commission, in order to issue bonds for the 2010 Capital Improvement Program.

The Management Services Department is implementing a process improvement initiative to focus on efficiencies that may be gained from recent technological improvements, to generally eliminate duplicative and unnecessary procedures, and to create documented work-flow and updated strategic plans. While the initiative is department wide, it will begin with the Budget and Accounting Division and continue until all divisions have created and implemented a work plan. This entire initiative should be completed by the middle of 2011.

### ➤ Assessor

The 2010 March Board of Review public sessions will commence March 3<sup>rd</sup>. Time to make an in person appointment has passed, but taxpayers may appeal by mail if received by the Assessor's Office by 5:00 P.M. on March 15<sup>th</sup>.

### ➤ Budget and Accounting

The internal control review by external auditors, Abraham and Gaffney, is expected to begin during the week of March 29<sup>th</sup>, resulting in a report and recommendations that will be used as a baseline for administrative monitoring and updates.

Planning for the 2009 Audit and Comprehensive Annual Financial Review is underway, which is expected to be in mid April.

### ➤ Pension Administration

Demographic and financial data has been submitted to actuaries Gabriel, Roeder, Smith to complete the 2009 actuarial study as scheduled.

➤ Purchasing/Risk Management

Contracts were prepared after taking bids or soliciting contract extensions for six projects in excess of \$100,000. In collaboration with other City departments, recommendations were submitted for City Commission approval of products and work totaling \$2.4 million.

➤ Treasury

Treasury staff is currently working with BS&A on transferring all unpaid real property taxes (1998 through 2009) to the County Treasurer. The last day of collection of these taxes by the City was March 1<sup>st</sup>. The completed file was balanced and transmitted to the County Treasurer on March 8<sup>th</sup>. Actual settlement papers and tax warrants are in process and will be submitted to the County at a later date.

2010 Liquor License Review - The remaining liquor license establishment on the 2010 review of delinquent taxes were paid in full on February 24<sup>th</sup>, eliminating the need for a hearing and further action by the City Commission.

## **Community Planning & Development**

➤ Planning

Staff held a joint meeting of the Master Plan steering committee and the topic area working groups on February 23<sup>rd</sup> to discuss the first draft of the Master Plan update. Plan content, accuracy and relevancy were the main points of conversation. Revisions will be made throughout the month of March with small group discussions being led by staff by request at various locations.

Staff is continuing to refine wind energy and bike parking ordinances for adoption before mid-year. At its February 4<sup>th</sup> meeting, the Planning Commission approved special use permits to allow a new group day care use in the house at 711 Trimble Avenue, and expansion of a family day care use to a group day care use in the house at 1015 Homecrest Avenue. Two candidates were recommended for approval to fill vacant seats on the Commission. A site plan was approved to allow Mackenzie's Bakery to open a new store in the Westwood Plaza shopping center on W. Main Street.

➤ Zoning

The Zoning Board of Appeals held a meeting on February 11<sup>th</sup>. At that meeting, the Board denied a dimensional variance for a proposed driveway that would occupy 54% of the front yard where 30% is the maximum allowed impervious cover for the front yard area of a single family dwelling.

Staff discussed the Zoning Board of Appeals Annual Report. In 2009, ten Zoning Board of Appeals meetings were held. A total of 23 requests were brought before the Board, which was a reduction of 8% over 2008 (25 requests). All use variance brought before the Zoning Board of Appeals were denied and of the dimensional variance request 75% were granted. Two new Board members were appointed in 2009 - Karen Wellman and Doris Jackson. Two Board members resigned – David Artley and Richard Schau.

➤ Building & Trades

In the month of February 2010 there were 122 permits issued, representing \$19,103 in fees and \$1,471,983 in construction valuation. These figures brought year-to-date permits to 262 representing year-to-date construction valuation of \$1,865,317.

➤ Neighborhood Development

As announced last month, the City of Kalamazoo and the Kalamazoo County Land Bank Authority will jointly receive approximately \$15 million in federal neighborhood stabilization stimulus funding to reinvigorate six downtown core neighborhoods struggling with foreclosures: Eastside, Edison, Fairmont, Northside, Stuart, and Vine. In mid-February, City and Land Bank staff convened an initial Neighborhood Stabilization Program 2 (NSP2) meeting with neighborhood Executive Directors. City and Land Bank staff met with Michigan State Housing Development Authority (MSHDA) staff and their consultant to discuss Kalamazoo's NSP2 program implementation strategy on February 18 and attended a NSP2 Consortium Kick-Off meeting in Lansing on February 23.

In late March/early April, the City and Land Bank will convene a community partner meeting with housing-related non-profit organizations to begin exploring NSP2 partnership opportunities. Staff will continue to work with MSHDA to finalize a funding agreement in April. Contractors interested in participating in the NSP2 program can call the Purchasing Department at (269) 337-8020 to receive a Bidder's List application. Other questions can be directed to the Community Planning and Development Department at (269) 337-8044.

## **Economic Development**

➤ Riverfront Area

The People's Food Co-op's proposed relocation to 507 Harrison Street was announced with an update to the BRA and a press release. Staff is continuing to work with the project team on structuring the project, filling financing gaps, etc.

Staff held a first conversation with a stage-2 company interested in relocating to River's Edge. The company is also a good candidate for Davis Creek Business Park or the JA Richards property.

Staff is reviewing the new FEMA maps in regards to the impact they will have on BRA-owned property in the riverfront area.

Staff is exploring an application for a National Endowment for the Arts grant in conjunction with the Mayors' Institute on City Design for the extension of WMU's sculpture trail/tour along the Kalamazoo River Valley Trail and tying in with the corridor improvements at River's Edge.

Staff is supporting the Northside Business Association in their river clean-up project.

➤ Davis Creek Business Park

Site efforts are substantially complete for MDEQ-led contaminated soil and former refinery foundation removal activities. All that remains are site restoration activities expected to be completed this spring.

➤ Brownfield Redevelopment

Staff testified at a House Committee for Commerce hearing on February 17<sup>th</sup> in support of a bill (HB 5566) sponsored by Committee Chairman Representative Robert Jones. The proposed legislation from the City of Kalamazoo is to expand the list of eligible activities in Act 381 to include acquisition-related expenses for which local tax increment revenues could be used to reimburse municipalities and Brownfield Redevelopment Authorities for their related expenditures. The bill was approved by the committee and later by the House. A similar Senate committee hearing was held on February 24<sup>th</sup>.

Staff met with The Hinman Company to discuss site plan issues associated with the 610 South Burdick Street brownfield redevelopment project. The project is expected to commence this winter. A 20% MBT credit may be issued by the State if the project achieves a Silver LEED rating, or a 12.5% credit if not.

Staff has been working on the BRA acquisition of the former Panelyte property from the Michigan Land Bank Fast Track Authority. The elements of a Site Specific Sampling Plan and Health and Safety Plan have been submitted and approved by the EPA. Sampling activities are complete and our consultant is drafting the Phase II Environmental Site Assessment Report. Next steps are to prepare the Baseline Environmental Assessment, the Due Care Plan, and move forward with acquisition from the state land bank.

Staff worked with the MDEQ (now DNRE) on two grant funding applications to the EPA to complete the remaining demolition and Portage Creek relocation activities at the former Performance Paper property. Additionally, staff recently worked with the MDNRE to complete a third grant funding application to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration for partial funding of the same activities in an attempt to cover our bases if only partial funding is secured through the EPA.

The last site-specific Site Prioritization Committee meeting was held on January 28<sup>th</sup>. Staff is now preparing materials for feedback/voting at the committee's March 25<sup>th</sup> meeting.

➤ Economic Development

An IFT transfer application from Reith-Riley was submitted to the City Commission for first reading.

Staff conducted business retention visits with seven (7) companies.

Staff responded to various information requests from two business prospects interested in starting or expanding a business in Kalamazoo.

## Human Resources

➤ 2010 Respecting Difference

Make room on your calendars now for the 12th Respecting Differences Diversity Event, "The Power of Forgiveness," featuring Immaculée Ilibagiza. The event will be held at the State Theatre on April 22<sup>nd</sup> at 1:30pm and April 23<sup>rd</sup> at 9:00am.



This year's speaker is Immaculée Ilibagiza, who is a living example of faith put into action. Immaculée's first book, *Left to Tell; Discovering God Amidst the Rwandan Holocaust* (Hay House) was released in March of 2006. *Left to Tell* quickly became a New York Times Best Seller. To date it has been translated into fifteen languages worldwide.

Immaculée's story has also been made into a documentary titled *The Diary of Immaculée*. She has appeared on 60 Minutes, The CBS Early Morning Show, CNN, EWTN, The Aljazeera Network, The New York Times, USA Today, Newsday, and many other domestic and international outlets.

She was recently featured in Michael Collopy's Architects of Peace project, which has honored legendary people like Mother Teresa, Jimmy Carter, Nelson Mandela, and the Dalai Lama.

## Information Technology

### ➤ New NCC Server

Staff has built and installed a new SQL server that will house all data from the old NCC system. This new database will house all historical payrolls, Human Resources, tax, and other NCC data on a new efficient SQL server. The new server replaces an entire VAX system and saves the city ~\$15,000 per year on support and maintenance costs. The new server did not cost the City any additional capital outlay as it was a reclaimed server made available for use by the City's virtualization project.

### ➤ Computer Password Policy

Staff implemented a City-Wide Computer Password Policy that has added additional levels of security to the City's network and IT infrastructure.

### ➤ Google Fiber

In February, Google announced its plans to build an experimental fiber network in a selected city. This network will provide one gigabit connectivity to the internet for consumers who subscribe to the service (100-200 times faster than current broadband internet offerings). Staff is leading a team of individuals from across the organization to respond to the Google Fiber Request for Information (RFI). The completed RFI is due March 26<sup>th</sup>.

### ➤ Email Filtering

IT staff implemented a new spam filter called Postini (owned by Google). The new spam filtering service has drastically reduced the amount of spam received by City email addresses while reducing the number of legitimate emails being blocked. Further, the new spam filtering service is hosted offsite which reduces the amount of internet bandwidth that the previous solution utilized and the amount of time IT staff spends working on spam/email issues every week.

### ➤ Computer Skill Testing

Computer skill testing on Microsoft and other applications was moved to onsite training through a collaborative effort between Information Technology and Human Resources. This reduces overall fees and expenses for employee testing on Microsoft applications.

### ➤ Telephone Inventory

Staff worked over the last few months with AT&T to move all desk phones to a departmental billing method. This project resulted in over 160 telecom lines being eliminated resulting in a savings of over \$5,000 per month for the City.

## **Parks & Recreation**

- Staff met with Eric Lyons from O'Boyle, Cowell, Blalock, and Associates, Inc. to discuss the draft master plans for Milham and Blanche Hull Parks. Staff plans to conduct one more public meeting to share the plans with the public late spring.
- Staff met with citizens interested in the plans for the Fairmount Dog Park. The plans are finalized and they will be sent to Purchasing the first of March.
- Staff continues to work with Larry Harris & Associates, who is preparing cost estimates and site plans that are required components for grant applications for Woods Lake Beach/Park and LaCrone Park that are being submitted to the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) and Environments Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund (ENBRTF) and the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) respectively. The grants are due April 1<sup>st</sup>.
- Staff is attending the bi-monthly neighborhoods meetings with Community Planning & Development, Public Services, and Public Safety. The purpose of these meetings is to share information about concerns and project updates that impact the core neighborhood associations.
- Staff is working with the City Attorney's office on park ordinance revisions. A draft of the changes has been completed and staff will be asking for support at the March 2<sup>nd</sup> Parks and Recreation Advisory Board meeting.
- Staff met with Kalamazoo County Parks, City Engineering, Community Planning & Development and members of KATS to discuss current and future plans and planning for the Kalamazoo County River Trailway.
- Staff nominated Rob Redman of Meemic Insurance Agency for the Michigan Recreation Parks Association Community Service Award, for providing financial sponsorship for the last six years for Parks and Recreation's youth Coed Soccer and Flag Football leagues. Notification was received on February 17<sup>th</sup> that he was selected as this year's winner. On March 10<sup>th</sup>, staff and Rob Redman will attend the Awards Ceremony in Lansing and accept the award.

## **Public Safety**

- After a thorough review of cases, Criminal Investigation Division compiled a list of the top burglary and drug related robbery suspects. This information was disseminated throughout the department to provide a target list in an effort to assist in crime reduction.
- The CPO Unit organized a burglary crime prevention seminar at Woodward Elementary School where 30 residents attended. They were given information about home security tips to prevent being burglarized.

- The CPO Unit trained the Operations Division on the new Junk Auto procedure and disposition codes.
- The 24 hour incident summary was placed on the Lt's computer and they will be responsible for reviewing the past 24 hours of crime prior to their shift and to share any pertinent information with the officers on their shift.
- KVET conducted/attended raid training on February 19<sup>th</sup> and conducted the same raid training for the CPO unit on February 24<sup>th</sup>.
- As of March 1<sup>st</sup>, twelve (12) methamphetamine labs have been investigated by KVET for the year.
- April 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> will kick off the first evolution of "Broken Windows" in the Edison, Eastside and Northside Neighborhoods respectively.

## **Public Services**

- Construct Arboretum Roadway

No ARRA funding was available for this project. The decision has been made to proceed with the project using local funding per the original agreement with the WMU Foundation unless a second stimulus bill is approved in time to bid and complete the work this year. Hurley and Stewart continue to finalize plan details including the possible location of a bus stop and detour plans.

- Neighborhood Development

Crews have been clearing sidewalks on Drake, Michigan, and Stadium Drive in addition to walks in front of utility properties.

Tree removals continue to be done throughout the winter. Ninety (90) trees have been removed.

- Responsive and Responsible Government

General Superintendent Richard Beardslee is retiring after 30-years of service to the City; his last day will be March 19<sup>th</sup>. Rich is commended for all his hard work and dedication to the City. He will be missed by all.

Through February of 2010, we have assisted in 24 full burials, 3 cremain burials, and 3 FIA burials. Cemetery staff is currently researching gravesites which are owned, but have remained vacant for at least 50 years to determine if additional spaces may be reclaimed and re-entered into the overall inventory.

Competent person training for excavation work will be conducted in March. Continuing to update and clean up personnel training records for Harrison and Stockbridge personnel. Completed analysis of MIOSHA 300 reports and Workman's Compensation claims for 2009, will schedule a meeting with Human Resources to review findings. Conducted field inspections of various Field Services' job sites.

➤ Environmental Stewardship

We are starting to notice odor issues again southeast of Graphics Packaging. Graphics Environmental Engineer, Donald Krug, has been contacted and our concerns communicated. The odor has been very light and infrequent. Staff will be flushing the 36-inch Georgia Pacific sewer in March when weather and equipment is favorable.

Secondary Improvements Project was put out to bid on Feb 23<sup>rd</sup>. The pre-bid meeting is scheduled for March 11<sup>th</sup> and bid opening is scheduled for April 6<sup>th</sup>. The Construction Permit Application was submitted to the MDNRE on February 8<sup>th</sup>. The MDNRE projected a four-week turnaround for construction approval.

The Operator/Maintainer program is being applied to Wastewater and Water Employees with near identical applications. Both groups have embraced this change and we are starting to see applicable improvements in employee utilization, and reduction in overtime.

## **Transportation**

➤ Ridership

Fixed route ridership for the month of January totaled 216,803 passenger trips. That represents a 19.6% decline in usage under that mode. Productivity also dropped to 23.78 passenger trips per hour v. 27.68 for January 2009. Metro County Connect (Metro Van and Care-A-Van) saw an increase of 757 passenger trips, an 8% increase for the month. The Community Service Van program saw a decline of 640 trips, representing a 56% drop. There was one less service day this year than last and we also anticipated a drop in ridership because of the new fare increase that went into effect on January 4<sup>th</sup>.

➤ Comprehensive Operational Analysis (COA)

At its meeting on February 26<sup>th</sup>, the Transit Authority Board was presented with the draft final recommendations from our consultant completing our COA. The final report should be available in mid-March. Staff will review the recommendations and determine what routing and frequency changes can occur in the fall. Under the service agreement with the KCTA, that authority must also sign off on the recommended routing changes following a public hearing to be conducted by the City Commission, if requested.

➤ State Gas Tax Proposals

Following the introduction of the gas tax proposals in the State House, it was learned that without changes to the gas tax revenue stream, the Michigan Department of Transportation budget will decline by as much as 15% for 2011. That is because the State does not have the approximate \$80 million necessary to match almost \$500 million in federal funding for Michigan for roads, bridges and public transit. As a donor state, Michigan is currently receiving .92¢ for every \$1.00 it sends to Washington. That amount will drop to .50¢ if the federal dollars are left on the table.

➤ Diesel Fuel

Our last purchase of 18,000 gallons of diesel fuel for 2010 came in at \$2.2156 per gallon. The average price per gallon for 2010 is \$2.15. Diesel fuel is budgeted at \$2.80 per gallon for the year.