

Last week's Council Meeting agenda was extensive, 105 pages in total. It is very challenging to digest that data and prepare to discuss the issues being presented.

The Historic District Commission and Planning and Zoning Director Denise Blakeslee recommended extensive changes to the Historic District Boundaries. The changes impact River Street and Washington properties. The State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) and Certified Local Government (CLG) oppose the removal of properties from the District but suggest justified re-designation or possibly separating the River properties and Washington properties into unique districts. It is interesting that an agenda item asking to Council to approve the recommendations of the Study Group to move forward into Public Hearings is made despite the concerns expressed by SHPO and CLG. The Council voted to retain the Historic District boundaries and not remove properties to create irregular lines.

I've been critical of the Historic District Commission in the past and there have been changes in membership. While I support preservation, we must build bridges, not barriers – in developing and making use of our historical resources. The cost associated with rehabilitating a historical structure is significant. The permitting and navigating the commissions is time consuming and often frustrating. I've been in meetings where "what I would like to see" was voiced as opposed to "the standards require." We are supposed to help guide through the process, not hinder or delay for every undotted "I" and uncrossed "t" in the process.

Two proposed Ordinances; one for River Street trash and one for the Riverwalk.

River Street business not open on Sunday who put bags of trash on the sidewalk at close of business Saturday (5:00 or 6:00 PM in some instances) result in a cluttered appearance for businesses open late Saturday and on Sunday. Attempts were made to get removal moved to Tuesday, but that option was not available. The proposed ordinance would require businesses to put trash in sealable containers. This was tabled and will come back to a September Work Session. There is a lot of clutter created by people putting bulk items and trash out several days before pick-up, and bulk items are only picked up on the first pick-up of the month. I was at the Ordinance Committee meeting, and draft copies were not available for review. While refuse collection in the Business District presents some unique challenges (like where to put containers or designating central receptacle areas) a resolution should be reachable on this issue.

Dogs on the Riverwalk, bicycles, and skateboards have been prohibited in the past by signage at entrances. A general Ordinance requires individuals to obey signage, but was determined to not be enforceable, so a specific Ordinance is suggested to correct it. The narrow areas on the beach end and lack of hand rails along portions make this venue more appropriate to pedestrian traffic. Baby strollers would be an exception and I would hope we would make the feature universal access in the future to permit disabled access on the wider areas. We are a very "dog friendly" community and this restriction is for the benefit of the many who use this asset and safety of all. Boaters visiting the Marina often have pets and bicycles, so the ordinance needs to facilitate their access across the Riverwalk to River Street.

It would be refreshing for all Council members to have questions and comments on these issues, but the conversations are mostly dominated by Mayor Pro Tem Zielinski and myself. The first I saw the proposed Ordinances and Historic District documents, were when they were posted Thursday before the meeting. I spent several hours Friday (had a full day schedule Thursday), several more Saturday, and least 3 or 4 hours Sunday, Monday, and Tuesday before the meeting looking at the finances and getting

asking questions before the meeting so it won't take more time than necessary. The meeting always flows better if questions are forwarded to the City Manager, so he can answer questions or have staff prepared to respond to Council Member concerns.

If you have suggestions on the Riverwalk and Refuse Ordinances, please contact a Council Member or plan to attend the Work Session on September 11th at 7:00 pm. There is an opportunity for Public comments on agenda listed items at the start of the meeting. All Council Member emails are listed in the City Directory (on the City of Manistee website) and I would expect Council Member to return email and telephone inquiries.

Other:

I have an opponent for the election in November and would appreciate your continued support. I have signs available and would like to get more out in visible, high traffic areas. Please call or email me if you are willing to have a sign (jws.manistee.mi@gmail.com is on my cell phone or call 231-690-3948). Leave a voice mail if I don't answer, I turn the phone off when in meetings and generally put it on the charger around 9:00 pm.