

The Assessor issue – I’ve had people criticize my push to retain the Assessor as an “in house” function rather than contract it out to save a potential \$60,000 a year. Ludington was cited as an example, which was promoted as using a 3rd party contractor at a cost of \$60,000. The truth was, the contract cost was \$65,000 (Councilman Zielinski researched). Our Assessor Office cost is \$119,000 for the year, with a 22 year tenure Level III certified Assessor (we only require a Level II). The \$60,000 projected savings was using the \$60,000 contract value (verses the actual \$65,000) and assuming we would hire a replacement Assessor at the same pay scale as a 22 year employee. When a request was made to cost the replacement with a typical Level II employee, the salaries ranged from \$32,000 to \$45,000, with an average of slightly over \$37,700 – about \$20,000 less than our current Assessor salary. Now the “savings” is down to about \$35,000 – still significant. But when viewing the Ludington web-site posted budget for 2015, the Assessor Office budget is **\$207,000 - \$88,000** higher than Manistee. Why? In addition to the \$65,000 contract, there is an Assistant Assessor, a Clerk, and a part-time Secretary (along with normal office expenses). Those who weigh only the information presented, without investigating are lead to support the contracting for the position – without understanding the real cost. We would then have the contractor as one of three members of the Manistee Election Commission and representing the City of Manistee on the Board of Review (City Charter duties of the Assessor). The “savings” was planned to fund a new clerical position, shared with three functions, in addition to an Assistant DPW Director – not to fix streets or address any other priority. The Assessor is also a City Council appointed/dismissal position, not a City Manager position.

Building Inspector issue – This position falls under the Community Development Department and is hired by the City Manager. Two years ago a part time Secretary and Clerical position were eliminated and an Assistant Building Inspector position was created with the express intent of replacing the current Building Inspector who stated an intention to retire in the near future. Now that the Building Inspector retired, it is determined there is insufficient work to replace the Inspector (that was clearly the case before the Assistant Inspector position was created from a financial standpoint – just review the income versus the expenses history). The former Building Inspector also did Blight Control and until the Executive Director was hired for the Ramsdell, acted in that capacity. We will now have the State of Michigan conduct building inspections, a City Police Officer handle Blight, and contract the Rental Inspection program (with the inspection revenues going to the State of Michigan and the contractor). The person hired (and trained) as the Assistant Building Inspector will revert to their former position as Building Maintenance/Custodian for the city. We’ll lose most (if not all) revenue from the inspections, but will not have the salary/benefits of the Building Inspector position and time will tell if we maintain the former level of service, timeliness, and coordination with the Assessor Office. This “savings” was also planned to support added positions listed with the Assessor issue.

AES/2-1-1 Appropriations – The Alliance of Economic Success just won a three year contract with Manistee County for \$91,000 a year. This equates to \$3.70 per person on the county (Manistee residents pay the same 8.73 mills as other county residents). Last year \$46,500 was appropriated for AES by the City of Manistee (about \$7.60 per resident) on top of the Manistee County appropriation. So Manistee City residents pay \$11.30 per person to fund AES and the remainder of Manistee County pays \$3.70. That means 75% of the county gets a great rate and 25% pay significantly more, as no other Manistee County government appropriates funds for AES. 2-1-1 is similar, Manistee County appropriates \$3,000 for this service and the City of Manistee appropriates \$3,000. Here the per capita in the county (which includes Manistee) is \$0.12, and residents of Manistee put **another** \$0.50 per

person on top of that. The question is why does the City of Manistee pay in addition to their Manistee County contribution, when no other communities contribute? Not a lot of money here – but as we go forward it starts to add up.

Roger and I'll be questioning some long standing "traditions" that are funded from tax dollars (again, not a lot of money compared to the overall) that could be applied to real needs. Among them are a \$600 expense charged against Legislative (City Council) "office expenses" for Oleson's Gift Certificates for the holiday (Christmas) for non-union city employees. The annual City of Manistee employee Christmas Party (not sure what department that comes from yet) that Councilman Zielinski and myself attended with our spouses (we insisted on paying for our attendance and did so the Monday following the party - \$80 per couple). Listed expenses for coffee, tea, water, creamer, sugar, and other food items from various departments that appear to benefit employees, staff, or committee members rather than the public in general.

More updates to follow - Jim