

March 16, 2016

March 15th Council Meeting –

For those who track finance data attached to the agenda, the utility and telephone charges were estimated (at twice their normal costs) due to the vacation of the City Clerk. With the hiring of an additional Finance Department member training is taking place to insure all functions are trained with backups so business as usual can take place with illness, vacations, and other absences of one staff or the other. Some may have been alarmed at the amount paid for those items (like I was) but we can expect much smaller billing and payment on the next report to balance it out. I do review those reports in detail (and compare to other months or year data) and ask a lot of questions. With the budget process about to begin, it is very important to pay attention to the details and trends.

The Harbor Commission welcomes Dr. Fritz Boehm and Mr. Glen Zaring to fill out commission membership. Two great additions! There are still numerous vacancies on Commissions and Boards that need to be filled – applications are available from the City Clerk. The Compensation Commission has two vacancies, and meets very seldom – it deals with City Council compensation and would be an opportunity to recommend changes to compensation.

Council member Beaton addressed member's absences (she previously emailed all Council members with the intent to do so) and Mayor Pro Tem Gustad responded with a prepared statement addressing his frequent absences. It is interesting that Mayor Pro Tem Gustad expressed his full confidence in Council member's ability to discuss and conduct Council business in his absence after accusing four of those Council members last year of illegal collusion outside of Council meetings, and stating his embarrassment at working with those members (and calling for them to resign). I'm impressed with his renewed confidence! His claim that the City Manager and Mayor had been notified of his intended absences was interesting, since this has not been shared with other Council members. Maybe the compensation needs to be adjusted based on meetings attended rather than a set monthly or yearly amount.

The schedule for the Spring Trash haul is being set (to start April 11th).

An area is being set up at the new recycle center for bagged yard waste for those who want to drop it off, rather than wait for pick up. Check the City website or News Advocate for start dates. New yard waste bags are on the way – they are biodegradable and deteriorate over time, so we get a new stock each year and sold out the end of last year. They will be available at City Hall soon.

Council member Zielinski ask the status of the playground with treated lumber (arsenic). Actions are being considered, but it may be as simple as posting a sign alerting people to not eat on site and to wash hands after using the area. If you have a wood deck at your home or your children play somewhere when one exists, you have the same situation.

Several boat launch ramps have been installed at 1st Street and the daily/season pass machine should be equipped with coins shortly. The "pay tube" will soon be installed at Arthur Street and fees will be collected there like they are at 1st Street.

The Riverwalk was discussed and proposals will be offered at the April 5th City Council meeting to repair the erosion.

New pumps for the 6th Avenue station were approved – Council member Zielinski ask several questions on the recommended pumps since those recommended were not the lowest bid. The pumps selected are more energy efficient and require significantly less maintenance than others considered.

Roger Zielinski, Thad Taylor, and I will be attending the Michigan Municipal League meeting in Lansing the 22nd/23rd and I'll update following that event. Until then, feel free to email or call on issues that are of interest to you. Thanks for your continued support and input! Jim