

October 26

Election time is near! Only one contested race and the MNA is running a three part series on candidate responses to questions for those candidates.

One of the biggest issues is streets – with varied responses. My attempts to get \$600,000 this last year was not supported by other council members and they were very reluctant to take an additional \$83,000 from the Oil & Gas fund to reach \$500,000 for Local Streets. As it turned out, the State gave us additional funds and we had closer to \$560,000 – which prompted management to shift \$140,000 back to Major Streets (anticipating a reconstruct of 12<sup>th</sup> street next year) because part of the original Local Street funding was taken from Major Streets in the first place. That’s another issue for City Council to resolve with the new City Manager – I don’t expect budgeted items to be “redirected or repurposed” without consent of Council.

My highest priority remains streets and finding a steady, long term source of revenue for them. Not incurring more debt is another priority. I’d like to see a complete review of City Spending Policy and Salvage Policy and set dates for the Audit Committee to review invoices that are paid by the City where citizens can observe the process to see how diligent the committee is in discharging their duties. Getting water and sewer operating more cost efficiently and up to State standards is important to control costs to the customer. We’ve got to eliminate the Combined Sewer Overflows (in the millions of gallons) and the resulting discharges into Lake Michigan. Another cabana and more picnic tables do not top list of the three most important issues facing the City.

Debt from past City Councils has encumbered the current City Council (and will for years) by obligation Oil & Gas revenue to debt service. We need to start “pay our way” and stop looking at every revenue sources as something to leverage into long term obligation that gives the ability to spend more than we have. Doing so, and then having an economic down turn such as we just experienced, with decreases in tax values (and revenue) and losses on investments (with loss of revenue) puts the General Fund at risk to pay for these cost overruns and projects. We have enough expense with the Ramsdell and Marina now – and those two could fund a pretty good street improvement plan.