

September 8, 2016

Erin Pontiac was sworn-in as replacement for Eric Gustad through the election on November 8<sup>th</sup>. We are back to a seven-member City Council.

I've been asking questions about the high levels of overtime and don't really like some of the responses that come back. Planning and managing to avoid overtime should be a priority. I'll continue to offer suggestions and be critical of this expense in the budget process. With some new faces on City Council, we may see some changes in the way some of these issues are addressed and may actually see some items cut from proposed budgets and new approaches to how the City does business. Maintenance (and records) of city owned vehicles and equipment, an inventory of city assets, and exploding retirement costs are some of the issues that play into the finances of the city.

If you want to see a model budget, take a look at how Cadillac presents their budget. It is on the Cadillac official website. I brought this to the attention of our former City Manager and will do so for Mr. Taylor also. It shows comparisons with other communities, cost-per-resident for services, and is a very well presented document. Our current document, with the added three-year projection, is a step in the right direction. We need to focus on "sustainability" and make difficult decisions and what is affordable and practical for the future. Retirement unfunded liability and cost are increasing at an alarming rate, and while this was acknowledged by Mr. Bradford, no consensus was found with council to take on the issue. Identifying "unstainable" features of the budget and not addressing them is simply waiting for a crisis to force a solution in the future – and I want to be much more proactive in oversight of City finances. We need to embrace successful tools used in other communities and look beyond what we've "always done" for more resourceful and cost effective methods of providing services to the community.

DDA – has made an offer to one of the candidates for their Economic Director position. I find it interesting it was not mentioned Tuesday night at the Council meeting, and that City Council members read about it in the Manistee News Advocate the same time everyone else did (leaves council members in a poor position to answer questions about it). Interesting to note the article indicates neither candidate met the criteria for the job, but they offered one of them anyway. It seems as though there was not enough money available to get what was posted, so the skill set and experience was compromised to accommodate the budget. Another \$59,000 a year position (with benefits I assume) that will be a "work in progress." Suggestions to the DDA Board that local applicants should have been included in the mix were largely ignored. The City Manager indicated several meetings ago he had a goal of extending the DDA beyond the 2018 "sunset" date for the organization by the end of the year for forward planning and stability purposes. We have a Visitors Center, Chamber of Commerce, Alliance for Economic Success, and City resources (Planning and City Manager) so it is hard to understand why we need a separate Economic Development person for DDA in place of the former Executive Director. Could be because the bylaws for DDA require City Council consent for hiring an Executive Director, but gives the DDA Board authority to hire for "other positions." This could be an "end around move" that ends up costing the DDA support in the long run.

Fireworks Ordinance – approved by a 6 to 1 vote. A second reading is required prior to enactment of the ordinance that largely mirrors State law.

Write-in Candidate for the 1<sup>st</sup> District – Dale Cooper has filed as a "write in" candidate for the 1<sup>st</sup> District. Mayor Kenney is not seeking reelection for this seat and no candidate filed by the August 2<sup>nd</sup> deadline to

appear on the ballot. To vote for this candidate, you will need to darken the circle in front of the blank line, then write the candidate name on the line. Only candidates that file as a write-in by the Friday prior to the General Election are eligible to be elected to office. No candidate name will appear on the ballot for the 1<sup>st</sup> district seat this year.

Thank you for your continued support and comments - Jim