

TO: Mayor and City Commission

FROM: Kathie S. Grinzinger



SUBJECT: Status Report – June 2008

### **1. This Week At The Borden Building**

Mr. Baderschneider presented his monthly update on the West Broadway Redevelopment site activities at the first meeting in June. Since then we have been concentrating on various other aspects of the larger project.

Nancy Ridley and Greg Baderschneider have completed one of our regular spot-checks on the grant compliance, and we are very happy with the way the estimates and actual expenses are lining up with both the Waterfront and Brownfield Department of Environmental Quality grants.

There are still a few important projects that we must turn from estimates to expenditures on the City's side of the expenditure ledger, but we are still very confident we will meet the assurances we provided to the public and the Commission regarding costs. Within the next few weeks we will seek bids to install the streetscape and will then look for the best way to let proposals for all the audio-visual and cablecasting technology.

### **2. Summer Recreation and Staycation Activities**

Of all the "Staycation" opportunities we will be promoting this summer, this weekend may be one of the biggest. The 24<sup>th</sup> Annual *SummerFest* begins on Wednesday with the opening of the carnival and closes out Sunday afternoon after a huge schedule of events. As many of you know *SummerFest* began in the 1980's out of a Chamber of Commerce study committee to look for ways to bring the community together in a celebration of volunteerism and create signature events. Over the years this exclusively volunteer-managed group has given much back to the community through donations to the parks, creation and funding of the Christmas Sing event, and much more.

This year the City's "recreators" are sponsoring a Guitar Hero Competition in Island Park Thursday and Friday in conjunction with the festival. What a great opportunity to get your rock'n'roll on and live out your very own garage band fantasy! If you're thinking doing a little Springsteen may not be quite up your alley (anymore), feel free to use this excuse to invite the closeted idol-wannabes in your family and neighborhood to check out the festival and Island Park this weekend.

Volunteers from our Public Safety Department have worked to bring the Michigan Child Identification Program (MICHIP) to the Children's Village during the weekend as well. While still recruiting Saturday and Sunday volunteers as I am writing this note, MICHIP

provides parents the opportunity to have their children's fingerprints, DNA, and dental impressions taken at no charge. All samples are then provided to parents along with a color photograph and a recorded interview.

Friday the 20<sup>th</sup> is the kick-off of the Main Street Live summer concert series. The Resonators Percussion Ensemble will be the first band in the line-up, and the Farmers Market opens up at Town Center on Saturday the 21<sup>st</sup>.

As a new way of introducing our incredible park system to all residents and visitors we are celebrating National Parks and Recreation Month with a photo contest. During the month of July we are inviting all budding photo artists to submit their images of our parks system and compete for prizes. Entry forms and directions can be accessed through the website. (Photos of the interior truss system of the Borden Building that have been previously shown on the website are not eligible.)

We are quickly becoming the softball capital of the Michigan. For the second year in a row, Mt. Pleasant has been awarded the MASA Junior Olympic Girls' Fast Pitch State Championship tournament. The Fourth of July weekend will see thousands of players, spectators, coaches and officials descending on Mt. Pleasant for a three-day qualifying tourney. If your family is coming home for the holiday and you haven't already booked hotel rooms, it may behoove you to purchase a couple of blow-up mattresses. The next weekend a corporate-sponsored tournament is coming to town, followed immediately by the Next Door Food Stores Girls Youth Softball Tournament the weekend of July 18<sup>th</sup>.

To keep up with all the locally sponsored events and activities be sure to check out the Parks and Recreation website or subscribe to LeisureLinks by emailing parks-rec@mt-pleasant.org. The downtown Mt. Pleasant schedule of events can be accessed through [www.downtownmp.com](http://www.downtownmp.com) and click on the "events" tab.

### **3. Keeping the Public in the Loop**

Speaking of websites, we have nearly finished a complete review and update of all materials on our website. Randy Keeler, a Fire Equipment Operator with the MPFD, is completing his work on an information technology degree that requires nearly 300 hours of intern activity. (Lucky for us, tough for him.) Mr. Keeler has been working with our tech staff on a number of projects, not the least of which has been an overhaul of all data on the website. With his help we have also been able to assure that all departments' individual pages have the same easy-to-navigate system and format.

Very shortly we will be preparing to mail letters signed by the Mayor to all absentee voter applicants letting them know that two proposed Charter amendments will be included on the August primary ballot. All registered voters will receive a reminder of the issues as the election date nears. Charter amendment discussions only rarely hit the news or fuel the passion of voters so we attempt to provide basic information to the citizenry.

In this case the City's Charter Committee wished to ask the public to consider two changes. If passed the amendments will clarify the definition of "qualified elector" and tie

the number of signatures needed to petition for a referendum or initiative to the number of votes cast in the City for candidates for governor at the last gubernatorial election.

#### **4. Transportation Planning and Bike Paths**

During the Commission's discussion of the Capital Improvement Plan questions were raised about bike paths and non-vehicular transport planning in the City. Mt. Pleasant citizens expressed their support of integrated vehicle and non-motorized transportation planning in the Beyond 2000 Strategic Plan and the most recent Master Plan. While we have continuously understood these concepts as important, transportation planning for vehicles and "people-powered" modes have recently been elevated to a critical level of importance for the administrative team for a number of reasons.

Commissioners and residents have asked for review of the truck route designations in the City. Central Michigan University, the Isabella County Road Commission and the Michigan Department of Transportation are embarking on planning and major construction projects that could have great impact on the movement of vehicles and people throughout the community.

We are seeing the concept of designing and supporting a "walkable" community as intricately linked to the recruitment of residents and building a sense of place which is, in turn, crucial to our efforts at stabilizing our economic health. The citizens group Vision 2020 has requested the City's review and support of an effort to designate Mt. Pleasant an "Active Michigan Community". Granting such a title requires our support and commitment to many of the same standards as exist for walkable communities. The City, the Mt. Pleasant Community Foundation, CMU and other partners are reviewing all recreational and park trails and facilities to assure increased accessibility.

The synergy being created by all these demands is moving the issue of integrated traffic and pedestrian movement quickly to the forefront. We will be taking several steps in the ensuing months. Within the next few weeks Director of Public Works Duane Ellis will provide the City Commission with a report on the history and status of traffic planning in the City. That report will provide speed and truck traffic data on City truck routes. We will also soon be able to update the Commission on plans for a major Mission Street project.

We are also intimately involved in the work of CMU to reorient campus into a pedestrian-friendly site while establishing better traffic movement for buses and commuters. To further Central's goals while still meeting residents' needs near and around campus may require some very creative solutions which will need to be integrated into the City's long-term planning and will be introduced in future CIPs.

To better educate ourselves and the stakeholders in the community on the importance of all these issues we will begin introducing discussion on several of the issues in the ensuing months. We are planning to bring an expert in walkable community design to Mt. Pleasant in early fall to speak with the City Commission, the Planning Commission, the Zoning Board of Appeals, members of Vision 2020 (who wish to be co-sponsors of the

event), the Foundation, downtown merchants, the Chamber and other interested residents.

## **5. Fun in the Summer-Time for Public Works**

A Capital Projects Status Report will be included in the City Commission agenda packet for the first meeting of the month to keep the Commission, the press and the public informed of the progress being made on construction projects throughout the summer. We will also be providing information to our local media outlets and carrying any road disruption notes on both Channel 26 and our website.

Several local streets in various sectors of the community are scheduled for overlays this season. Nearly all asphalt work will be started in late June and is expected to wind up by the end of July. Water main replacement work will be behind schedule this summer and is not expected to start until early August. The contractor on the project was not able to secure the right materials to hit the original May timeline. To be sure projects do not interfere with each other, it was necessary to hold up waterline work until later in the summer. It is always our goal to check our construction schedule with the primary events in the community including the moving in and out of the CMU student body.

We are nearly finished inoculating the right-of-way ash trees that received their first shots two years ago. We are very optimistic that our efforts are being rewarded as the trees we are re-visiting seem healthy and un-infected. We will be completing our last section within the week in the Industrial Drive area and have been receiving mostly kudos from our residents.

## **6. For Your Calendar**

There are two Mondays between the upcoming Commission meeting, Monday June 23, and our next get-together on July 14. Feel free to consider that extra Monday as a paid vacation day. It will make it seem all the sweeter.

Tax bills will be mailed to property owners next week. With the change in State legislation to get county and school funds out earlier in the year, the summer bill will be but a shadow of its winter cousin. Commissioners should be able to freely shop in the local grocery store through the end of the month.

At this very moment in time we know of only three City Commission members who have registered for the Michigan Municipal League Annual Convention the first week of October. Commissioners who have taken care of registrations on their own or who may need information or assistance are encouraged to contact Mrs. Ervin so we may keep track of our total commitments.

KSG/je