



TO: Mayor and City Commission

FROM: Kathie S. Grinzinger

SUBJECT: Status Report – July 2007

Wow this has been an interesting month in ol' MountyTowne. The employees and the elected and appointed officials representing the residents of our lovely community have accomplished much and opened the door for many more successes in the last few weeks.

As has become standard operating procedure, following are a few notes to keep you updated about activities occurring around you and a couple of “heads-up” as to what to watch for. If we have left questions unanswered, or if you need any further information, don't hesitate to let us know.

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

As of today, abatement of lead and asbestos has been completed on the upper level of the old Borden Creamery. Removing all the lead-based paint from the trusses and the cupolas proved just as challenging as we had suspected; removal of the caulk more so than we had guessed. The Pro-Tech crew has now moved on to the lower levels of the structure. It is our hope that we can execute a “commencement of work” agreement with Central Michigan Development, LLC on or about August 1, 2007.

We now have **15 wells** up and out of the ground on the site that will eventually be the publicly-owned parking lot. All the underground pipes we have been able to locate are no longer under pressure. While that should be good news, it is obvious that water continues to gather on the site.

City Commissioners will be asked to approve a construction bid for the parking lot at the July 23, 2007 meeting. Assuming the Commission will award a construction contract, it seems most efficient to halt any additional efforts in the search for a water source until the contractor is on the job. In the course of excavating and preparing the site we will continue to look for spring-fed sources of water and may be able to solve the remaining issues through the construction of storm sewers.

Mr. Baderschneider will be available at the meeting of July 23rd to provide an update on the project to the Commission and the public.

2. **Welcoming All Visitors to Mt. Pleasant!**

Since we know the image folks have of a community is often set by their perception of the public facilities, our Buildings and Grounds Department is not looking too kindly on

Mother Nature this summer. Sure, we may be growing some healthy weed crops in a couple of areas and our turf management program may have taken quite a hit, but the parks employees deserve a huge round of applause for their work these last few weeks. While warring against the weather and the budget-based decisions to reduce irrigation, we have also welcomed increasing numbers of users into our parks this year.

Casual usage seems to be up in each of our parks as well as on the trail system. Summer Fest had great weather and a good turnout. According to the formula used by the International Convention and Visitors Bureau, the several thousand visitors drawn by the Junior Olympics Tournament may have spent upwards of \$2 million while they were in town. And, according to Kay Bouck, organizer of the tournament the very next weekend, she received nothing but compliments about our community, our employees and our facilities.

Speaking of attracting guests...One of the Downtown Development Board's goals is to create one attraction event per month to the center of Mt. Pleasant. Working with our Downtown Development Director, they are making great progress. Main Street Live is creating a positive vibe in the Central Business District. Last week's bluegrass band drew quite a crowd and our recreation activity station served 357 adults and 42 children. Country music will be featured this Friday, July 20th, at the Town Center stage beginning at 6:30 p.m. If you haven't visited the Farmers Market on Thursdays in Island Park or on Saturday mornings at Town Center, you are missing a great opportunity to stock up on fresh locally grown goodies while visiting with hundreds of your neighbors.

Next weekend, July 26th through 28th, arts and crafts vendors will fill the downtown streets alongside local merchants' sidewalk sale merchandise. Over 50 vendors have already been recruited. In yet another attempt to welcome visitors and establish ours as a pedestrian-friendly community, we will begin installing benches and bike racks downtown over the next two weeks.

3. Extra Capital Project Notes

Each month Public Works Director Duane Ellis includes a Capital Projects Status Report with the City Commission packet. A couple of this month's projects deserve an extra mention.

We had hoped to complete the Main Street overlay project and all the restriping downtown in plenty of time for sidewalk sale days. Main Street not only looks fabulous but was started and finished in one day, limiting inconvenience for merchants and shoppers alike. Russell Street is being completely reconstructed in the same fashion as was Broadway Street. With the way that project is progressing (depending on Michigan weather) we expect a completion date well ahead of schedule.

Next month the Commission will review bids and be asked to award a contract on "phase 2" of the Broadway Street sewer relining project. The Commission's agreement to step beyond policy and precedent to assist property owners in the relining of private sewer leads is a project that will benefit both the downtown business community as well as the

entire community by limiting future damage to a well-traveled street. The “phase 2” add-on to the project will extend the relining of some of the leads into the basements of downtown buildings that could not be reached through the original relining process. Bids are due from contractors at the end of the month and specifications are available on-line by accessing the DPW homepage.

Finally, a heads-up on two projects at the Mt. Pleasant Municipal Airport that are in the earliest stages of development. The City is eligible for a \$66,000 grant from the Federal Aviation Administration for the installation of a GPS approach system. This wonderful addition to our airport would allow a greater number of aircraft to land in Mt. Pleasant safely during inclement weather. In order to apply for the grant, engineering needs to be completed in advance and submitted with the application. Duane Ellis and John Benzinger, Airport Manager, have begun the process to search for engineering firms to complete the design. When grant funds are received reimbursement for the engineering costs will be included.

Expansion and refurbishment of the terminal built in 1973 has been on the wish list of the Airport Advisory Board for many years. As Mr. Benzinger pointed out at a recent Commission meeting, the number of corporate jets using and refueling at Mt. Pleasant has upgraded that wish to a significant need. A \$90,000 grant from the Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe, combined with \$45,000 from the State and \$45,000 in City funds, will make such an upgrade possible in 2008. JBS Contracting of Mt. Pleasant is assisting the Airport Advisory Board and Mr. Benzinger in preparing preliminary designs that will allow us to move into the specification and bidding stage.

4. Important Commission Considerations on the Horizon

You certainly don't want to miss the excitement of the first August Commission meeting when we present the amended budget resolution for 2007! The Commission generally amends its operating budget twice each year; once in August to reflect mid-year realities and again in December as we get close to the year-end totals. We are not expecting any surprises in the amended document as the State has guaranteed no changes to shared revenue through this budget cycle. In the last two years the City received \$100,000 in fire reimbursement funding above initial estimates. We have made several attempts to nail down this year's amount, but assurances are not forthcoming. Suffice to say, we are making no plans to spend a check that is not yet in the mail.

Assistant City Manager and Finance Director Nancy Ridley has begun work with our bond counsel in preparation to sell bonds to finance our cost to purchase the condominium in the Borden Building. We are assuming the Commission will be seeing this matter on October agendas. As was planned, we have delayed this move to save as much interest cost as possible and will cover any payments that may need to be made through our reserves until the bond funds are available.

October will also mark the beginning of the Commission's discussion regarding the 2008 Annual Operating Budget. The Commission clearly enunciated goals for the 2008 direction earlier this year, and the budget is being designed to provide a response to those

priorities. A number of work sessions are being planned for the Commission, beginning in September, on subjects relative to information that will be reflected in next year's budget document. So no one will be shocked, the summer reprieve on work sessions is scheduled to end shortly.

In prior years the Mayor has appointed a budget sub-committee to receive an initial look at the budget proposal. After discussion with Mayor Joslin and Vice Mayor Bissell it was determined that presenting the budget to the whole Commission and the public at the same time would give the entire body a better opportunity to discuss the proposal from a level playing field.

Finally, the second of the Commission's mini-retreats will be planned for later in September. During February goal-setting discussions Commissioners requested added time throughout the year to research, review and discuss crucial issues in a more detailed way. The last half-day session resulted in a consensus around the issue of a community center. A sub-committee of Commissioners continues to work with staff members to solidify a plan that can be brought forward for public debate. The September session is intended to give Commissioners and administrators an opportunity to look at the issues of economic and community development for Mt. Pleasant. We are hopeful that a new Director of Community Services will be on board to participate in those discussions by that date.

5. **Investments in Technology Paying Off**

Over the last year several initiatives have been implemented to enhance our efficiency, increase the timeliness of our communication, and make life easier for our residents and customers. Many of those enterprises have included augmenting the use of technology for both us and the citizens. We have reported before on the switch to on-line construction specification and bid processes which has greatly reduced time, mailing costs and paper proliferation; the upgrade to our website and increased access to on-line forms and applications; and conducting our surplus auction on eBay. The results certainly look promising.

Hits to the Mt. Pleasant website topped **50,000** in June, reducing some of the enormous summer burden on the City's phone system. Recreation program participants now have immediate access to enrollment forms, scheduling, weather information and cancellations through the web. During last month's heavy tournament schedule every player and coach could click on the latest win-loss information, game time and field locations so that volunteers could concentrate on providing the best service on the field. Our Information Technology gurus have prepared the enclosed graphs that track our website usage over the last year.

We will be rolling out yet another program in the next few weeks. The Mt. Pleasant Police Department, working with Isabella County Central Dispatch and local media, is creating an immediate alert system. Media outlets will be purchasing pagers for reporters who will be signaled immediately in times of disasters and emergencies. Not only will our partners in the local press be notified quickly and seamlessly about important events, we

will be better poised to use all outlets to get important information out to the public as quickly as possible.

Police are using their enhanced crime statistics programs to garner more precise data on frequency, location, timing and movement of criminal behavior. Officers are currently working with Fire Officers on profiling the movements of an arsonist(s) who started a number of minor fires in greenbelts and landscapes throughout the community. You may also have seen officers paying particular attention to street lighting throughout the community as they evaluate the impact of lighting against opportunity crimes in certain neighborhoods.

6. **Kid Stuff**

The Mt. Pleasant Police Youth Academy enrolled over 30 wonderful young people who worked with local officers in youth-friendly law enforcement training. Recruits completed such classes as self-defense, safe driving techniques, physical fitness, and crime-solving techniques. “Tweens” spend time exercising their self-discipline skills and learn the importance of working as members of a bigger team. Graduates of the Youth Academy are often called upon to volunteer at other community events long after their boot camp week with Police Officers whom they have come to know. The lessons and the relationships that are formed at Academy serve our youngest citizens, the officers and the community well into the future.

Another 430 children are enrolled in PEAK’s summer program which stresses recreation opportunities, cultural enhancement and continuous learning. On July 19 and 20, nearly 500 campers from PEAK and the Saginaw Chippewa Indian Niibing Program will embark on a community-wide service project. Children from all the summer camp sites will visit area homes to deliver shopping bags that will be collected on the 24th and delivered to Island Park. All non-perishable household and grocery items collected by the children will be sorted and donated to the Red Cross Food Bank and the Isabella Community Soup Kitchen.

7. **Just So You Know and Can Pass It On**

Yes, it is true that your neighbors have seen a lot more of the City Assessing Department out and about lately. Each year about this time the Assessor and his staff do field work in a different section of the community to update and validate existing property records. Working with information from the Department of Building Safety and Code Enforcement they will catalog new construction, renovations and expansions throughout the community. In addition, Assessor David Rowley and the volunteer Board of Review completed their July review this week. Thank you Mary Cook, Robert DeBruin and Gail Blunt for another round of critical but often thankless community service.

Summer tax bills are due July 31st and it is true that the bills are getting larger and larger. Years ago only City taxes were collected in the summer and the Charter founders determined that receiving the bill on the first for end-of-the-month payment would be

sufficient for this smallest levy. In recent years, however, the State legislature changed the rules in an attempt to move money to counties more quickly to make up for losses in state shared revenue. Today nearly 87 percent of all the property taxes City residents pay are due with the July bill. Just so you know, while the bill is bigger and is paid at City Hall, all the money doesn't stay here. The City dispenses much of those dollars to the other taxing units like the County, Mt. Pleasant Public Schools, Isabella County Transportation Commission and the District Library.

Petitions for City Commission candidacy are now available at City Hall. Two seats, those held by Commissioner Moreno and Vice Mayor Bissell, will be up for election this fall. Notice of Commission elections will also be published in the **Connections** newsletter, on our website and on Channel 26. Petitions are due back at City Hall on or before August 7, 2007 at 4:00 p.m.

It looks like our pro-active treatment of street and right-of-way ash trees may well pay off. Last year, unlike many of our neighboring communities and in opposition to the State's cut-and-destroy advice, we embarked on an aggressive injection treatment of several hundred ash trees. Recent reports imply that the treatment we opted to use is the only one showing positive results and as such we plan to propose treatment of our trees again in 2008. (Each injection is effective for two years.) While we purchased the injectable pesticide and trained our Street Department employees in its usage, the necessary equipment was purchased through a corporate-funded grant. Michelle Smith, DPW Analyst, is a member of the county-wide team responsible for research and public education on the emerald ash borer and the team leader for our urban forestry program.

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Enclosures