



TO: Mayor and City Commission
FROM: Kathie Grinzinger
SUBJECT: Status Report – November 2006

It is just mere weeks from the end of the year, and holiday decorations have been in the stores since Halloween. But until the yellow trucks actually pull out onto the street with their plows poised, I am prepared to believe I could still wake up to an Indian summer day tomorrow. Hope and optimism are never bad things!

Following are some highlights from the last few weeks, reminders, or notes of future interest. As always, don't hesitate to call or contact us if you need any further information or have any questions that we have not answered.

1. **Western Weekend and the Neighborhoods**

Western Weekend was blessed with rain and a CMU win. What more could we ask for! Public Safety Director Bill Yeagley and his colleagues are completing debriefings that will include an analysis of our costs as well as those of our partners. We hope to be able to share those observations in the coming weeks.

Building Official Brian Kench informs us that code compliance seems much improved in the central neighborhoods this year. Code Enforcement Officers worked flexible shifts for several weeks after school started to insure adequate coverage on weekends, particularly up to and including Homecoming and Western Weekend.

2. **Grants and Funding News**

Attached you will find a summary of all the disbursements granted by the Saginaw-Chippewa Tribal Council on Tuesday morning, November 21, 2006. Since 1994 the Tribe has returned over \$82 million to the local governments and schools districts. This round's disbursements represented just over \$3.9 million.

Vice Mayor Keith Spycher and Commissioner James Moreno represented the City Commission and joined Director Bill Yeagley, Recreation and Sports Director Chris Bundy, PEAK Director Nate Lockwood, Airport Manager John Benzinger and me in thanking the Council for their support of the City's residents. The Tribe provided over \$600,000 to the City to finance an expansion of the Mt. Pleasant

Municipal Airport, contribute to the street overlay budget, guarantee the continuation of PEAK, and support YSU into the first months of next year.

We have also received word of a \$375,000 grant from MDOT through the Governor's office for the reconstruction of Washington Street from High to Bellows. When those funds can be supplemented with another \$75,000 of our own we will be able to schedule the construction. At this time we are uncertain whether this project will show up on our 2007 or 2008 construction schedule.

And yet more good news from the State! We have received a supplemental appropriation for fire protection this year. The additional \$128,000 will further lessen the amount of fund balance transfer necessary to close out the 2006 books. See, nothing wrong with hope and optimism!

3. **This Week at the Borden Building**

If I have learned anything in my decades of dealing with the media it is that a headline does not necessarily the total truth make. We are operating under two extension agreements to allow for the time needed to make well-thought out and strategic efforts in moving past the planning phases of this project. The extensions that the Commission granted should not be considered a death knell but rather a thoughtful response to the kind of occurrences that are liable to occur when working on a 100-year-old building located on a less than pristine piece of ground. It is important to remember that previous environmental studies conducted on this site, while helpful in the early stages of discussion, were preliminary, years old and covered by a different set of regulations. This is the first time any project on the Borden site has reached this stage of investigation and involved this many partners.

This week J.E. Johnson, the City, and Peerless Environmental are meeting to write a set of reasonable specifications so that actual costs of contamination abatement will be available. Once those numbers are in, we can review the financing packages and approach the appropriate State agencies for alternative sources of assistance if necessary. We are adamant that alternatives must be offered by the bidders that will allow us to deliver a safe site at a reasonable cost.

MEDC is still on schedule to meet in December to consider J.E. Johnson's tax credits and our requests to use Brownfield captures to finance part of our relocation costs. We will attend that meeting to make sure our request for expanded school capture is given full consideration. SHPO will make a determination in December as well regarding the historic compliance of the project and the historic tax credits. As we mentioned earlier, all agencies are on notice that the project requires continued collaboration. We are scheduling a trip to Lansing to bring all those agencies together. Frankly, we are expecting a sympathetic audience.

As is apparent, demolition activities under the H & M contract are well underway and we continue to unearth footings from long-forgotten structures. Now, my favorite good news-bad news Borden story of the week. Bad News: Found another underground storage tank last week under the floor of the connector building. Have to call in the environmental guys. Good News: Looks like tank is full of 50-year-old molasses. Bad News: Because tank was underground, contents must be sent away to lab for testing. Testing could delay removal for at least a week. Good News: If contents are molasses, tank can be emptied into the sanitary sewer and then be disposed of in a regular landfill. Solution costs very little and, if results ever get back from lab, won't delay work much longer. Bad News: Soooo much molasses dumped into our sewer plant's bio system could shut the little "bugs" down. Good news: Plant Superintendent Boettcher devises a delayed release plan to save the bugs. Phew!

4. **Downtown**

All new signs have been installed in the parking lots in the Central Business District, complying with revisions in the traffic control orders discussed by the Commission last month. We are not pleased with the visibility of the new signs designating the 4:00 a.m. to 6:00 a.m. parking exemption area and have made arrangements with the manufacturer to replace the maps.

The contract has also been awarded to the supplier for flashing overhead stop signs that will be hung on Broadway at Main and Broadway at Michigan.

Bids will be received this week that will allow us to analyze the privatization costs of plowing downtown lots. Reports and/or recommendations should be available for the Commission at the December 11th meeting.

5. **Traffic Control Order Trial Period Complete**

On your December meeting agendas you will be considering making permanent three traffic control orders that will have completed the 90-day trial period.

- A "No Parking" sign was installed on the east side of Three Leaves Drive at the City Wastewater Treatment Plant pumping station to prohibit cars from blocking the drive access.
- At 121 South Kinney, a "15-Minute Drop Off Zone" sign was installed at the request of a day care facility. Such signage, required by state regulation, allows parents to drop off and pick up children safely.
- The "No Parking" signs on the south side of Wisconsin Street from Brown to Elizabeth were removed at the request of the adjacent

property owners. Previous parking pressure on that street has been greatly alleviated in recent years.

6. **Progress on the Proposed 2007 Budget**

After receipt of the budget in September, the Commission has held a special meeting, several work sessions and a public hearing. According to the Charter, the Commission must pass a balanced budget by the last meeting in December which is scheduled for December 18, 2006.

While several adjustments were made to the 2007 Proposed Budget, we did not recommend any millage increase or any additional cuts to personnel or services above the decisions made for this operating year. If the proposal is significantly acceptable, only three primary issues remain for Commission discussion:

- a) Consideration of the parking special assessment for the Central Business District to finance maintenance activities downtown. This process is underway and the Commission will be holding its first public hearing on the matter at the meeting Monday, November 27th. The Commission may accept the roll at the meeting of December 11th.
- b) Establishment of a stable funding source to assure free brush pick-up following storm damage. An alternative service option was also presented that would retain user fees but at a reduced price achievable through condensing the retrieval period and increased efficiencies.
- c) Whether revenue enhancement in the form of newly established commercial fire inspection fees should occur.

Other fees such as Parks and Recreation charges or miscellaneous filing fees may be discussed as well.

We hope to present alternative budget resolutions at the first meeting in December so that debate can occur around the issues of greatest interest.

7. **Election Matters**

City Clerk Rob Flynn and the various members of his election team have completed their debriefing following this month's election and have already looked at making adjustments for the next big election in 2008. Mr. Flynn reports that 47 percent of City voters cast ballots this fall.

We offer congratulations to Rob for his appointment to the Legislative Caucus of the Michigan Clerks Association. It will be his job to watch and report on proposed actions of the Michigan legislature that could impact the election process for local communities. Currently the Clerks are concerned about attempts by certain factions to allow same-day voter registration that could cause several concerns for college communities.

8. **Technology Upgrades**

Using a series of in-house volunteers and a part-time employee, we should complete a total update of the City's website by the end of January. We have been continually monitoring the growth in usage of our website and listening to the requests of the residents for greater access and usability of the site. As you may already know, most of the forms, permits and applications required by our municipal offices are currently available online. Our tax information is being updated daily and assessing data is now made current each week.

As we continue the use of technology to increase our service provision to residents and achieve greater efficiencies, we have entered yet another new era. DPW Analyst Michelle Smith and Office Professional Tammy Bow have done some great costs and benefit analysis of the myriad of methods available to us to dispose of surplus property. This year's City auction of excess and out-of-service equipment, vehicles and property will appear on E-Bay. A direct link will appear on the City's website, and information on the auction will be distributed locally through Channel 26 and the local media.

9. **And, Then**

Winter tax bills should be in the mail on Monday. You may wish to be prepared to answer questions from constituents regarding an adjustment in the total millage collected. The Commission On Aging millage, which was approved by the voters on the November ballot, will appear for the first time on this tax bill.

The Assessor's Office has completed field studies for renovation and construction completed in 2006. Sales studies are nearing completion as well, allowing the Department to easily meet deadlines to complete the 2006 assessment roll. According to Assessor David Rowley the commercial sector has been more active this year than we would have expected, and residential sales have remained steady. Mr. Rowley reports approximately 400 residential sales this year, which means another 400 properties have become uncapped from Proposal A. The state has established the inflation factor at 3.7 percent for 2006, which means no one's actual

taxable value on capped property can climb more than 3.7 percent regardless of the increase in assessed value.

Leaf pick-up is scheduled to be completed by the Street Department this week, and Street Department Superintendent Bob Murphy assures us that all the plow trucks have been serviced and are ready to roll.

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