

TO: Mayor and City Commission

FROM: Kathie S. Grinzinger

SUBJECT: Status Report – November 2007

As I prepare to wrap up this short but protracted week I am reminding myself to be thankful in the spirit of the holiday around the corner. I continue to be energized by the dedication of our local elected officials particularly when we look to Lansing for an example of what leaderless politics can achieve. I am increasingly grateful for the people I work with; those with whom I share the burdens of citizen service and those who always keep our residents' well-being in the forefront. I am still thankful, today, that I have been given the opportunity to support this organization and the principles for which it stands.

Happy Thanksgiving.

1. This Week At The Borden Building

Just days after Greg Badershneider mentioned the possibility of underground cisterns during his monthly report to the Commission on November 12th; he was knee deep in more water and pipe. Another ten pipes have been filled in the last few days and an additional well located and plans made for its demise.

Work has begun this week on the retaining walls that were constructed on the south side of the building. The plan is to assure they retain their original appearance with their structural integrity improved.

We were able to meet with the Mt. Pleasant Housing Commission last week with the latest drawing of the parking lot to discuss what benefits the project will have for Riverview residents. We are hopeful some residents and staff members can make use of the new parking spaces on the north edge of their building. The extension of the Riverwalk Trail and its accessibility to residents of One Mosher Street should also be a welcome addition.

2. Latest Updates On The Unending Search For Resources

We have been involved for some time in discussions with the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) regarding the traffic tie-ups and accidents at Mission and Preston Streets. MDOT recently completed a computer model analysis of the intersection and determined that a dedicated right-turn lane onto Mission from Preston would provide the most expedient relief from the problem.

With the loss and eventual rebuilding of the buildings at the southwest corner, a window of opportunity has presented itself to investigate the possibility of street reconstruction with lessened impact. We are applying to MDOT for a safety grant that would help finance a right-turn lane. To increase the effectiveness of the measure we have also approached CMU with the idea of adding dedicated right-turn lanes from West Campus Drive onto Preston.

In the last few years we have been working diligently with one of our partners, Mt. Pleasant Little League, to upgrade the Pickens Field facilities. This month we will finish the installation of a "big league" donated scoreboard. We will shortly be presenting a case to the Mt. Pleasant Community Foundation for help in repairing and replenishing the building that serves both the City and the Little League for equipment storage but moonlights as the Little League's concession stand.

We expect our chances are better to receive funds from the two sources mentioned above than our chances are with the Recreation Trust Fund. We applied for a major infrastructure grant for a long-overdue rehabilitation of Island Park facilities including repair to the tennis and basketball courts, and upgrade and rebuilding of several outdoor facilities including the Farmers Market Pavilion. These projects were identified in the Parks Master Plan, carried through to the Capital Improvement Plan, and many were included in the proposed 2008 Operating Budget. It appears this may not be the year DNR Land Trust finances repair of existing infrastructure and we are no longer chilling the celebratory champagne.

Once final word is received regarding the disbursement of Trust Fund dollars we will regroup; determine what projects are top priorities for completion in 2008 with the funds available; which will move back into the queue, and what approach we will take with the funding agencies next.

We have received various bids on our specifications to build a septage receiving station for the Waste Water Treatment Plant. Our first analysis of those equipment, materials and installation costs are above our estimates and would lengthen our target payback period. We are now taking time to review our plans and meet with contractors with the goal of re-engineering the original design to reduce the initial investment. When we bring costs more in line with our business plan we will bring recommendations back to the Commission.

Press releases have been forwarded to the local media sources regarding our recent bond sale. As we explained, the refinancing of the water bonds will drop our interest rate from nearly 4.9 percent to an average of 4.1 percent with an average savings to the water fund of approximately \$13,000 per year. The models we have been using to estimate the millage necessary to finance the debt share of the Borden project set the interest rate at 5 percent. The actual rate will average 4.1 percent, which should reduce our payment by \$20,000 each year.

3. Being That It's Nearly Winter

All the City park facilities have been shuttered for the winter season except Chipp-A-Waters which is temporarily serving as a deer check station for the DNR. We welcome the opportunity to entice other visitors into the community and certainly can use all the points possible with our friends at the Department of Natural Resources. Our two full-time Parks, Buildings and Grounds employees will now prioritize the preventive maintenance lists for all other city facilities.

The Street crew will finish leaf pick-up next week and then shift to preparing for the ice and snow that is an inescapable fact of life in mid-Michigan. As our area experiences less snow and more ice we are doing more "dangerous storm" planning. Our in-house Emergency Management Team has begun incident planning for power outages and community-wide safety emergencies. We have just completed an inventory of the City Watch automated call system lists and are scheduling training for team leaders in using City Watch as an alert and notification system.

All manhole repair work on Pickard Street was completed early this month without incident. The job came in at just about half our estimate providing us the option of increasing the number of repairs we can manage within the budget. We will be approaching our contractor to see if fall prices could be held until spring.

4. Couple Notes About Downtown

Last weekend was the second "Girls Night Out" sponsored by the Downtown Business Association to introduce downtown shopping to a new audience. According to Downtown Development Director Michelle Sponseller, 350 gift bags were snatched up in the first 45 minutes. Several retailers claimed they did more business in the four hours of this promotion than they sometimes do for the entire month of November.

It is impossible to drive anywhere near the center of town and miss the exceptional job our downtown landscape crew has done with the Christmas lights this season. Lights up generally foretell the advent of Dickens weekend. If you haven't taken the opportunity to get downtown for the Dickens celebration, don't miss the chance this November 30 and December 1 to ride in a carriage while the strolling carolers work the streets. I am partial to the Saturday lighted parade myself.

We are hoping for two new businesses downtown in the very near future. The Cobbler Shop, originally from Alma, has been working diligently on the former Someplace Special store and would like to open its doors during the holiday season. The old Fashion Corner has been sold to the Breidenstein family and after serious renovation will open as an addition to the Bird's entertainment mecca on Main Street.

The COW (Cell On Wheels) is not only a curiosity and annoyance to two of my favorite Commissioners but, according to Rick Mills, trying to identify what it is has been driving the

Sound Off “ed” crazy. The COW is a portable cell tower that was placed in the public parking lot near Riverview Apartments. Nextel and the City signed a one-year lease to place the COW in the lot as a temporary solution to Nextel’s coverage needs while a lease for a more permanent cell tower on the roof of the building could be settled. Nextel has been paying rent to the parking fund.

Several months ago Nextel was purchased by Sprint. The merger of Nextel and Sprint slowed negotiations on a permanent tower down to a standstill. In response to Sprint’s “no response” stance we notified the company that the lease on the COW would not be renewed. It should be gone by year’s end.

5. For Your Calendar

There are only three remaining regularly scheduled meetings of the City Commission. The 2008 Operating Budget is scheduled to be passed on December 17th. A number of memos have moved back and forth answering initial questions Commissioners posed, with yet another included in this mailing. To be sure the Commission has ample time to discuss, debate and review data, work sessions have been scheduled to follow the regular meetings on November 26th and December 10th.

We will be looking for consensus during Monday’s session on the proposals to deal with the revenue decline in the water and sewer funds. If Commissioners are not amenable to the solutions proposed by the administration, we will need to review alternatives so that adjustments can be made to the budget document prior to the last meeting if possible.

The November 26th work session would also be the appropriate time to list any other issues that need more research, greater explanation or prolonged discussion by the Commissioners. By letting us know what you may need at that meeting we can be prepared with the appropriate information by the session on December 10th.

During the meeting of December 10th the Commission will receive an amended budget resolution for consideration. While an operating budget is passed each December the Commission has two opportunities during the succeeding fiscal year to amend the budget so that it more accurately captures changes throughout the year. The December amendment is our final opportunity to project year-end costs and revenues.

We hope to schedule orientation for newly-elected Commissioners during the afternoon of January 3, 2008. Ms. Ervin will be contacting Kathy Ling and Jeff Palmer as well as the “senior” Commission members to determine the acceptability of the date and to gauge how many people wish to join us on our wonderful tour.

We will also be contacting each member of the Commission within the next week or so searching for a mid-February date to schedule an all-day retreat session. Please have your calendars ready when Jana calls.

Several of the senior staff members will be taking vacation time or will be required to be away from the office during the month of December, including the City Manager and the Senior Administrative Aide! We will keep everyone apprised of who the designated “go to” person is in the absence of one or more administrators.

KSG/je