



*Office of the City Manager, Chief Administrative Officer
Monthly Administrative Report
November 2014*

In October, the Police Department concluded the trial of Judy Higley-Zuehlke who is charged with the death of John Allen. Allen was found dead in his home on February 3, 2014. The trial took about two weeks to complete. She was found guilty on charges of second-degree murder, lying to a peace officer in a violent crime investigation, concealing the death of an individual and tampering with evidence.

The Department held its annual CAPTURE spaghetti dinner on October 14, 2014. The dinner is one of the major fundraisers for the CAPTURE secret witness hotline and once again was well attended and supported by the community. This year the Department served over 350 dinners and raised \$3500 in its effort. All monies raised go directly to CAPTURE and funds tips paid out to callers who offer information that leads to an arrest or solution of a crime.

Calls for service for September 2014 decreased by 8% from August 2014, but increased 9% from September 2013. Decreases from the prior month were seen in domestics (-27%), larcenies (-32%), narcotic complaints (-45%) and suspicious persons (-25%). October numbers are not available at this time. Trends typically show calls for service increase during the warmer summer months, and decrease as the weather becomes cooler.

The Department has increased its activity in the local schools, including a daily walk-thru by patrol officers, assistance with local lockdown drills and hosting procedural meetings with the PHASD's new Administration. The Port Huron Police Department continues to support the DARE program, and is the only Department in St. Clair County still maintaining this vital program. The program not only focuses on teaching our youth about drugs, alcohol and poor decisions, but also fosters a strong relationship between students and the Police.

The week of October 5-11th was Fire Prevention week, with this year's theme of "Smoke Detectors Save Lives-Test Yours Daily". Through various station tours, safety talks and school visits, the DPS-Fire Division provided safety messages to over 800 children and 187 adults this month. The Fire Division partnered with the Detroit Red Wings and the Comerica Cares Foundation to receive 130 smoke alarms to be distributed free of charge to city residents in need.

There have been 288 calls for service to date. There were two substantial fires on October 14th that saw the scrap contents in a commercial trailer destroyed at the HP Pelzer plant located at 2415-Dove, and a single family residence heavily damaged at 2725-16th Avenue later in the overnight hours.

There were no injuries to any civilians at either incident; however a firefighter did sustain a minor burn at the 16th Avenue fire while initially searching for two occupants believed to have been still inside.

Several fire hydrants are being tested by fire crews to gather data relevant to rated water flows, thus providing important statistical data used to develop efficient and effective pre-plans as well the ability to readily access this information when requested by project developers to satisfy insurance and fire suppression sprinkler engineering requirements. Our assurance of a fire safe community continues with our aggressive approach to public education and commercial fire inspections with 27 inspections completed this month.

In October thus far, we've had 132 open complaints. Part-time Inspectors have continued to reduce their hours/days of the week as the workload decreases with the changes in the season. Citizens, landlords, and/or tenants took care of abandoned autos on their own and we didn't have to tow any this month. We provided Community Development with grading/gravel request for certain alleys. They are in the process of fixing these alleys with grant money. We have begun preparing for over 200 landscaping tickets after sending letters to violators. These letters indicate violators can pay invoices in lieu of appearing and their case will be dismissed. A 2013 paint case against 1015 Court Street was closed after they complied with 99% completion after taking the owner to District Court and AHB.

After four years of non-compliance with broken/missing windows and unpainted trim, Sperry's was given until mid-October to show us concrete plans, new windows were arriving, or they were to paint/repair the existing windows by mid-November. We all received training on how to handle encounters with dogs. On October 14, members of the unit participated in the CAPTURE Spaghetti Dinner and on October 25th (Make a Difference Day) members of our unit volunteered their time picking up trash and raking leaves in the Olde Town District in conjunction with Blue Water churches and Operation Transformation.

We also reached out to the United Methodist Men's group of 828 Lapeer on behalf of two disabled citizens in need. The Men's group had offered their services to paint and fix small issues on area homes. In November, we will adjudicate over 200 grass violations and create a collections plan when violators do not pay. We have reached out to the City of Ypsilanti to see how they capture monthly/yearly statistics since they use BS&A much like we do. St. Clair County Community College had been asked if art students would be willing to create a logo for us, we hope to see their work in November/December.

The Clerk's office has been in election preparation mode for the month of October. They have processed over 1,500 absentee ballot requests, which is about 1% more (or about 200 voters) than four years ago. In 2010, the year the new Charter was adopted by the voters, we had a 27% turnout (or 5,648 voters) at the precincts on Election Day. We are expecting about the same this year.

The St. Clair County Parks Commission is proposing to construct wetlands along the St. Clair River adjacent to the newly constructed Desmond Landing recreational trail. The City of Port Huron has a permitted storm water outlet near the proposed wetland site. The Department of Public Works (DPW) Administration has reviewed a request from the St. Clair County Parks Commission to divert storm water flow into a proposed wetland area. Department staff prepared proposed language that would spell out the terms of an agreement between the County Parks Commission and the City of Port Huron to provide for this diversion of City storm water flow.

Engineering reviewed the bids received by the Blue Water Area Transportation Commission (BWATC) for orphan well closure in the south McMorran Lot. This project will be rebid in the future.

The Department of Public Works staff coordinated a meeting with representatives of the St. Clair County Road Commission, Port Huron Township, the Planning Department, and the contractor who is constructing the Holiday Inn Express on the Water Street Marina site. This is an effort to keep all the agencies involved moving with the developer.

The DPW administrative staff reviewed the rate consultant report to assure it provided accurate facts about the existing system and services.

The DPW Director chaired the Michigan Municipal League's Transportation and Infrastructure Committee meeting in Lansing.

The DPW staff has met with representatives of Blue Water Area Transit and its consultant URS to review the proposed design of McMorran Boulevard, Superior Mall, and the South McMorran Parking Lot. We provided copies of the City of Port Huron design specifications, detail drawings, and comments to the consultant's preliminary design drawings. The designer is scheduled to provide updated design drawings and specifications for our staff review by October 27, 2014. City staff is scheduled to provide our comments by November 12, 2014. URS will submit all of the final design documents to DeMaria for bidding. The proposed bid opening for the project is December 2, 2014 with construction commencing in March of 2015.

The DPW administrative and engineering staff met with the new Director of the Blue Water Center for Independent Living (BWCIL) regarding the status of the City's ADA ramp installation program. The BWCIL Director congratulated the City and its staff on the quality of the work we have done in this area. The director recommended that the City and his agency now put forth efforts to inform the community about the success of our efforts.

DPW Engineering staff continued working on various construction projects. The Nern Street Area contractor has completed base course of asphalt and lawn restoration in the Nern Street is ongoing. The final paving of all streets in the Nern Area Project area will be completed in the spring. Underground work is completed on Stone Street between Washington and Lincoln. The contractor completed pavement removal and concrete installation for the Thomas Edison Drive and Sedgwick Street project. The contractor has completed street improvements in the Northern Woods Phase I, Aspen Drive and Ramblewood construction areas. We met with Raymond Excavating and representative of the Blue Water Transit to coordinate services for residents that will be impacted by the Krafft Road Pedestrian Bridge replacement project. Blue Water Transit will distribute fliers to bus riders, and residents of the residential communities along Krafft Road. The contractor is scheduled to begin this work the first week of November. The engineering staff worked on the design of improvements to Sanborn Street between Stone Street and Gratiot and Stone Street from Pine Grove to Thomas Edison Drive. Both of these projects will be funded partially with federal transportation grants. Staff also worked on the design of improvements to the MOC back deck project and the Riverside Drive project.

The DPW street maintenance crews completed crack sealing on Minnie Street from 10th Street to 24th Street. They are currently crack sealing on 17th Street from Bancroft Street to Oak Street. Crews performed routine alley grading and asphalt patching at various locations. Staff mowed several City-owned vacant lots that are not included in the City's annual mowing contract. Street crews cleared leaves from the storm drains around the City. DPW crews completed barricading and lane closures for other City operations. The crews also provided traffic control measures for Port Huron High School's homecoming parade. Crews performed trenching and installed a scupper at the end of Elmwood Street to direct water to the river.

DPW traffic control crews replaced several accident damaged signs. Our electrician was called out for lightning damage to major street lights along Thomas Edison Parkway. The electrician responded to emergency repair requests on the MDOT owned Military Street Bridge. Crews fabricated several signs to replace age-faded signs.

The motor vehicle pool staff stayed on schedule with their preventative maintenance list. They repaired several vehicles that had issues that were identified during the yearly inspection of the snow removal equipment. The new utilities backhoe was put into service. No major breakdown of equipment occurred this month. Technicians continued outfitting the second detective vehicle for service. Technicians continue installing snow tires on the police cruisers.

The water distribution staff completed water main flushing along with the first and second round of hydrant winterization. They also assisted the City's contractor with the 20-inch water main tie-in on Kearney Street, repaired two fire hydrants, repaired a leaking valve, and shut off seasonal water accounts.

The Water Filtration Plant staff installed additional security cameras. The installation of these cameras completes the security camera system as recommended in the vulnerability assessment. Because of the cost, the installation of this system was implemented over multiple years. Staff and the Engineering Department completed the request for proposal for consultant services for the painting of north elevated water storage tank. The proposals are due back to the City for review on October 29th.

The City's contractor completed the biosolids storage tanks level sensor project at the Waste Water Treatment Plant. This project replaced the existing sensor equipment which had exceeded its design life and was not properly working. Staff also worked with the Engineering Department to complete a request for proposal for consultant services for design of the Gratiot Avenue sanitary pump station rehabilitation. These proposals were sent out on October 22nd and are due back to the City for review on December 10th.

During the month of October, the Human Resources Department accepted employment applications for School Crossing Guards, Seasonal Laborers and for the Records Supervisor for the Police Department. All posted positions are part-time with the exception of the Records Supervisor, which is a full-time position and this vacancy is due to the upcoming retirement of the Records Supervisor.

October marks the month in which we are required to mail out the annual creditable coverage letters to all of our retirees and employees. Additionally, other federally required notices were sent to our retirees and our employees due primarily to healthcare reform, include Notice of Privacy Practices, Notice on New Health Insurance Marketplace Coverage and BCBS Summary of Benefits and Coverage.

Open Enrollment packets were distributed to all active employees that offer employee participation in the following: Flexible Spending Plan (Medical & Dependent Care), Voluntary Term Life Insurance (Employee & Dependents) and Special Enrollment for the Extension of Dependent Coverage to Age 26 for those dependents previously missed during enrollment. Open enrollment runs through November 30, 2014.

Our United Way/American Red Cross employee campaigns were kicked off during the month of October. Each employee is asked annually to participate in our fundraising efforts for the United Way and/or the American Red Cross. Packets were sent out to all employees as well as our retirees asking for their help.

The Planning Department assisted several property owners with requests to rezone their residential properties in order to accommodate insurance or refinancing requirements. Recent locations included properties off of Lapeer Avenue. We also received requests from two dozen property owners in the Harrison Pointe Neighborhood to consider rezoning their neighborhood from R-1 (single and two family dwellings) to R (single family). Staff has been busy creating a mailing list of all property owners (700+) and sending out proper notifications of a public hearing that will be held at the Planning Commission Meeting on December 2nd. Council will receive the request for consideration at the December 8th meeting.

Port Huron received an invitation to complete a plan for the use of limited funding to demolish dangerous structures through the MSHDA Blight Elimination Program. Plans are due November 24th and require a partnership with a non-profit housing organization. There are several layers of requirements which (unfortunately) may hamper our ability to use the funds in our normal quick and efficient manner – but we will pursue the program and accomplish as much as possible with the limitations that are in place.

The Inspection Division issued over 100 permits in October and responded to several complaints regarding zoning ordinance violations, lack of permits or similar issues. Our Inspection Clerk, Cathy Tache retires on October 31st after 17 years. Cathy has provided wonderful, friendly service to our community and will be sorely missed. The Inspection Clerk position will be considered a part-time position (for now) and Ms. Jordan Pickelhaupt will be the new friendly face at our counter!

Rental Certification Division inspected over 160 units this month and responded to rental complaints from both tenants and landlords. Bob Cowdry, a part-time rental inspector left his position to accept a full time master plumber position with a private company. We will not fill his part-time position at this time.

The Community Development Division provided grant funds to three elderly residents in order to place new roofs on their homes this month before winter arrives, has provided grant funds and

assistance for exterior renovations at 1012 State Street and three new exterior renovation projects in the Mansfield Park neighborhood. Our staff and CDBG funds were involved in the Make a Difference Day event on October 25th. Grant funds allowed Jeff's Rubbish Service to haul roughly 15 tons of garbage set out on that day, Belle Tire picked up over 350 tires and our Forestry Division picked up several loads of brush and yard waste. A big "thank you" to Rev. and Mrs. Seppo from Operation Transformation and their volunteers for organizing and implementing this program in the Olde Town area.

The Recreation Department was very busy getting ready for the Halloween Stroll this month. The Halloween Stroll had 1250 children and their parents at Sanborn park. We had 33 non-profit organizations that came that day to hand out candy and we were very appreciative to Eastern Michigan Bank for sponsoring this event. The City of Marysville also partnered with us and donated staff and monies toward the event. It proved to be a great collaboration between the two communities. The Recreation Department also received a grant to attend the NRPA Recreation Conference this month. Many great ideas came from this conference and many new grant opportunities that the department plans on exploring to help with the Lakeside Park project.

The cemetery performed 13 cremation burials and 5 full burials in the month of October. This month was also our fall foundation pour. The staff dug and poured 43 footings (foundations) for head stones. As we prepare for winter, the entire water system was winterized. Fall also brings a time of fall clean up and MANY leaves. Our department has also been very grateful for the work of the community service workers. They have worked many weekends in October and will blow leaves the first three weekends of November.

Arborist skills training and certification was performed for all parks, forestry, and cemetery personnel. The staff removed all seasonal beach fences and scaled back permanent fences to allow for easier shoreline access at Lighthouse, Lakeside, Holland and Kraft Road beaches. Forestry crews have been busy working on the DTE tree grant and have planted 22 trees at the cemetery and seven trees at Lakeside and Allied Veterans Cemetery and involved in the Tree Celebration Program. Winterization of the water systems have been done at River St. Marina, Fort St. Marina, and Military/ Water St. park. Crews continue to mow and remove leaves at 65 different locations including parks, traffic islands, parking lots, and ball diamonds.

During this month the IT Department began the rollout of Office 2013. They also continued to work with the Water Office to prepare for the transition to monthly billing.

During October, the Income Tax Division continued their annual compliance efforts using the information received from the State of Michigan last month. This included sending letters to potential non-filers and those that may have underreported income. Additionally, annual returns were due from those taxpayers who filed an extension for tax year 2013.

The Accounting Division spent a large portion of their time during October involved with the year-end audit. The audit team from Plante Moran was here for the last week of

October. They also took care of their typical monthly work such as posting journal entries, updating various spreadsheets, balancing accounts, etc.

The Assessing Division conducted field inspections and verified reported sales for our sales study. The sales study is ongoing and will be used in determining 2015 assessments. They updated property files with deeds, sales history, etc.

The Treasurer's Office continued to be busy with the collection of water bills and property taxes this month. They began posting past due notices for delinquent personal property taxes and dealt with customer calls and inquiries as needed. They did the monthly accounting for BWATC and continued to work on some of their year-end reports.

The Water Office billed out over 3,000 accounts and sent past due and shut off notices to over 900 accounts. Two hundred fifty accounts were posted for shut-off with 67 accounts finally being shut off for non-payment. They finalized our transition plan to move from quarterly to monthly billing which included collaborating with BSA software and the I.T. department.

The City Manager spoke in length at the October 21st meeting of the Downtown Development Authority (DDA) about the need to have the Authority begin shifting its priorities and focus back to the development plan adopted in its formation. This plan focuses less on promotion and chamber-like activities, and more so on infrastructure and asset development.

Our concern is that there are several million dollars of capital needs in the downtown such as streets, parking lots and lighting that will need to be addressed in the coming years. These projects, as specifically noted in the development plan, need to be the focus of the DDA.

Over the coming months we will work to educate the DDA on what its role is and what tools are available to them. Most, if not all current members, have not actually seen a copy of the development plan adopted.

The City Manager, Mayor and Councilmember Ruiz met with members of the Museum Board on October 8th to discuss plans on moving forward in cost cutting measures. It was a very fruitful and honest discussion. We were able to understand exactly what some goals and challenges of the museum are, and what they need from us to move forward.

First, we will need to turn over legal ownership of all the collections to them. They are concerned that over the years they became a community drop-off for anything old and unwanted. They have thousands of square feet of storage space that holds what amounts to nothing more than junk. They would like to begin getting rid of unwanted or unneeded stuff. Unless they control it, the process would be cumbersome to come back to the City every time they wanted to get rid of one of their 300 teacups. They assured us this was not about making money, because most of this stuff has little value. It's about cleaning out space, to see just how much space they actually need.

The question was raised of whether or not the museum even wanted or needed a building the size of the Carnegie building. Perhaps a new location, or partnership is something they need to explore. This is concerning to us because then we are left with an empty building, that needs about \$500,000 of capital improvements.

The City Manager held a joint lunch between leadership at the Chamber of Commerce and Main St. Currently, Main St has a budget of about \$100k annually with the City paying more than half of their revenue. After reviewing their budget, expenses and operations it has become evident that they are duplicating many of the same functions the Chamber currently does, in addition to paying their own cost for utilities, phone, internet, office supplies, etc.

The City Manager, Main St leadership and the Chamber director believe these two organizations could combine, share office space and staff and reduce expenses greatly, also reducing the need to the current continued level of City funding. We will continue to explore this possible partnership over the next few months. If this comes to fruition it would allow Main St more time to focus on Blue Water Festival and other events.

The MEDC was in town to meet with the City Manager and the developers of Sperrys and the National Bank building to discuss possible plans and any possible role for the MEDC. They were impressed with both sites and the possibilities of redevelopment. We are hopeful that more details can be provided. We know that negotiations in regards to possible property sale of National Bank are well underway.

On October 25th the City Manager delivered the keynote address for the annual NAACP Freedom Fund dinner. About 350 people were in attendance. The speech focused on finances, public safety, education, parks and rec and infrastructure. Also discussed were future partnerships with faith-based organizations such as Operation Transformation and SONS Ministries.

The City Manager also addressed a crowd of about 140 volunteers at Make a Difference day in The Olde Town section of the City that same morning. He thanked the volunteers for their efforts and dedication to the City.

Sincerely,



James R. Freed
City Manager
Chief Administrative Officer