



*Office of the City Manager, Chief Administrative Officer*  
*Monthly Administrative Report*  
*March, 2015*

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In February, the police department continued its ongoing training by holding its annual in-service training academy for all police personnel. The training is conducted each February and focuses on police topics to keep the staff well informed of current trends in policing as well as maintaining necessary certifications. Topics included during the training period were firearms, CPR/first aid, legal update, dealing with emotionally challenged persons, ethics, defensive tactics, meth lab awareness, incident command, haz-mat and a scenario-based conclusion to the training to incorporate the many facets of police work. The department also has four officers in field training at this time, with the first two expected to be ready for solo patrol at the end of March.

The police department is preparing for its first major special event of the year -- the St. Patrick's Day Parade/Pub Crawl. The event is scheduled for Saturday, March 14<sup>th</sup>, 2015 and kicks off with the parade through downtown Port Huron. Event numbers can fluctuate greatly depending on the weather. The pub crawl event winds throughout the day, and leads to busier than normal bar crowds in the evening.

The City has experienced an increase in gas station armed robberies of recent. On December 11, 2104, officers responded to an armed robbery at the Admiral Gas Station in the 1900 block of Pine Grove. Just prior to the robbery, officers received a call of a female that was shot on the south end of Port Huron that turned out to be false. On February 8<sup>th</sup>, 2015, officers responded to an armed robbery at the Sunrise Gas Station in the 3500 block of Pine Grove. Once again, just prior to the robbery, officers were dispatched to a bogus call of a stabbing on the south end of town. The resulting investigation of the second robbery has led to the arrest of a 41 year old Port Huron man believed responsible for both robberies. In an unrelated incident, on February 16, 2015, officers again responded to the Admiral Gas Station on a report of an armed robbery. The suspect, a 21 year old Port Huron man, along with two other individuals, was identified and arrested two days later by PHPD. Great work by road officers, detectives and NET on both arrests.

Calls for service in February have remained relatively steady with previous months. In January, 2015, calls increased by 4.9% from December, 2014, and increased 1.7% from January, 2014.

The Fire Department answered 247 calls for service to date this month, including response to three (3) structure fires since last month's report. A fire in a bathroom waste basket at Michigan Metal Coatings, 2015 Dove, resulted in activation of the sprinkler system limiting the damage to the container and the walls of the room; 2618-13<sup>th</sup> sustained moderate damage to the kitchen cabinets from a fire originating in a microwave oven; and a residential home at 822 Howard Street sustained extensive damage from a fire caused by a juvenile playing with a lighter. The next door residence at 820 also sustained some heat damage to the siding. There were no injuries reported at any of these incidents.

Fiscal Year 2015/2016 budgets were prepared and submitted. Effective February 3<sup>rd</sup>, Firefighter Valerie Finn voluntarily separated her service with the Fire Department to pursue other career options while raising her family. We will also wish secretary Christine MacKay well in her retirement effective March 1, 2015 after 17 years of dedicated service.

Sixty-five (65) pre-fire inspections have been completed for the month as of February 24<sup>th</sup>. The department will take part in the annual "Walk-for-Warmth" event this Saturday, February 28<sup>th</sup>, by providing a fire apparatus in the walk as well a safety presentation for participants on home heating safety.

The Code Enforcement Unit had 21 cases brought forward to the Administrative Hearings Bureau in February. Staff attended portions of In-Service Training regarding ethics and diversity and Lt. Marcy Kuehn attended Staff & Command training at MSU. On February 25<sup>th</sup>, our unit attended training with Planning Inspectors regarding suspicious/illegal activity. We discussed how to stay safe and what to look out for in the neighborhoods. We also devised a plan to send some outstanding debts (mail returned, out of state owners/no contact) as Single Lot Assessments and sent all others a last chance invoice to pay what they owe before proceeding to collections.

Much of the work in the Clerk's office is a carry-over of work items listed last month. Request for Proposals for codification of the Code Book are due on February 27 and we hope to submit a proposal for Council consideration within the next month or two. They are also continuing to design the new security and ID badges, as well as inputting pertinent employee information. Staff has also started the necessary work for the May 5 election.

The DPW staff submitted final comments to URS regarding their review of the proposed design of McMorran Boulevard, Superior Mall, and the South McMorran parking lot. URS submitted all of the final design documents to us on January 16, 2015. DeMaria opened bids from contractors February 20, 2015, and construction is scheduled to begin March of 2015.

The Blue Water Area Transportation Commission awarded the orphan well closure project to M.L. Chartier, Inc. The City approved the proposal on January 16, 2015. The Contractor has moved on site and has located both of the wells. The contractor is continuing their efforts to properly abandon the wells.

The DPW Administration prepared budget documents for submission to the Finance Department.

DPW Director continued working on updates to the Capital Improvement Plan for fiscal year 2015-2016.

The DPW Director and the City Manager attended meetings with MDOT to discuss possible improvements to the 10th Avenue and Pine Grove intersection.

The Engineering staff continues to work on the design and processing documents for the improvements to Sanborn Street between Stone Street and Gratiot Avenue and Stone Street from Pine Grove to Thomas Edison Drive. Both of these projects will be funded partially with federal

transportation grants. Raymond Excavating was awarded the Washington Avenue project at the February 9, 2015 City Council meeting. We are currently processing the contract documents. The project will be started in mid April. Teltow Contracting was awarded Hickory Lane area street reconstruction project at the February 9, 2015 City Council meeting. The project will be started in early July and will be finished in October. Public meetings will be held in March for both projects. Engineering staff is working with Dean Marine to process the contract documents for Marina dredging this spring. The MDEQ permit requires that the contractor start dredging before April 15, 2015.

The Engineering staff has assisted the Recreation Department in reviewing proposals for improvements at Lakeside Park. A proposed agreement will be submitted for City Council at a future City Council meeting.

Staff prepared bid documents and advertised for the annual concrete repair program and to replace sections of odor control duct work at the Wastewater Treatment Plant.

The street maintenance crews repaired potholes with cold patch at various locations. Our winter maintenance crews were dispatched on 14 occasions, putting down a total of 1,639 tons of salt. Street crews closed several streets for water main beaks and have been shoveling the snow from the all the bridge decks.

The motor vehicle pool crew worked several hours assisting the street crews with snow plowing operations. The motor vehicle pool had one major breakdown of a hydraulic pump. Crews maintained the preventative maintenance list.

Traffic control crews repaired numerous damaged signs and assisted with snow and ice control operations.

The water distribution staff has been responding to calls from our customers stating that they do not have water. With the recent low temperatures, there have been quite a number of properties with frozen interior pipes. There also have been a few properties that had their water service freeze. Staff has assisted the property owners' contractor with exposing the curb stop box to allow access for the contractor to thaw the service. The distribution staff also repaired a valve that had a substantial leak and investigated a water main break near the intersection of Pine Grove and Holland Avenues. Our investigation determined that the break was on the water main that crosses the Black River serving Port Huron Township. In working with Port Huron Township DPW, the leak was isolated and the Township will be scheduling the repair of their crossing in the upcoming weeks.

In addition to the frozen plumbing discussed above, the water meter technicians have replaced over 20 water meters as a result of being frozen. When a meter is damaged because of freezing, the property owner is responsible for the cost of the meter and is billed accordingly.

The Water Filtration Plant (WFP) and Engineering staff have received draft plans and specifications from the City's consultant for the North Elevated Tank and miscellaneous pipe painting project for review and comment. The final bid documents will be competed and the

project advertised on March 24th. The Engineering staff began working on bid documents for the sodium hypochlorite day tank liner project.

The Wastewater Treatment Plant (WWTP) and Engineering staff have been meeting with the consultants for primary clarifier project, arc flash evaluation, and the Gratiot Avenue pump station project. The arc flash evaluation is almost complete and draft document has been delivered for the staff's review. The consultants are beginning the detailed design of the primary clarifier and pump station projects. Bid documents for both these projects will be completed in the next couple of months.

During the month of February, the Human Resources Department accepted employment applications for part-time School Crossing Guards and a part-time Cashier. They also accepted applications for a full-time Staff Accountant. Applicants were tested and interviewed for the part-time Cashier position and it was successfully filled on 2-16-15.

A profile was developed for the City Engineer/DPW Director position for recruitment purposes by working with the Michigan Municipal League (MML) staff. The advertising and actual recruitment process began on January 23, 2015 through MML. The League will accept applications through February 20, 2015. MML has asked to extend their deadline for accepting applications to March 5, 2015. In an effort to strengthen the applicant pool we have agreed with MML to do so. Resumes will be reviewed and finalists will be chosen following the closing of the application deadline of 3-5-15.

Several meetings were held with management during the month of February to discuss manpower, upcoming retirement vacancies and possible department reorganizations. Preliminary meetings were held to discuss the reorganization of the Parks/Forestry/Cemetery divisions following the separation of the Parks & Forestry Supervisor.

The budget was prepared and submitted to Finance for the Human Resources Department and the Health & Safety Division.

New hire orientation and Health & Safety training were conducted for a new Police Officer that started on 2-16-15. This new Police Officer will replace Mark Malott who will retire on 4-1-15.

The Planning Department finalized drafts for Brownfield Plan amendments for the Water Street Hotel Project and are awaiting State approvals. Roundtable discussions with local lenders and real estate professionals to hear about challenges and opportunities in purchasing a home in Port Huron have been scheduled. The staff has begun the first steps in the City's initiative to increase homeownership and leverage programs and funding in 2015 that will strengthen target neighborhoods through selective demolition, increased homeownership and improved amenities and marketing. Staff met with representatives of the County Land Bank to also discuss ways to expand partnership and acquire more properties through the tax foreclosure auction. A full report and program announcements will be made by early May when funding is secured.

Maps are being updated to reflect approximately 40 lot splits or lot combinations that took place in 2014. Staff met with several local developers regarding updates on incentive programs

(OPRA, Brownfield Plans, NEZ, State Programs, Historic Tax Credits), including Casey's and the Citadel Mall.

Community Development Division completed the required drafts of the Five Year Consolidated Plan and the Annual Action Plan. It is anticipated that both plans will go to HUD for final review and approvals by the end of March. Annual CDBG grant funds will be allocated sometime after July 1<sup>st</sup> Program Year. Three families became homebuyers this month with down payment assistance from our Urban Pioneer Program; one senior citizen was provided an emergency home repair grant, and two homeowners were given grant assistance to replace leaking roofs. Staff met with other local agencies to explore partnerships for the coming season such as our continued relationship with Habitat for roof repairs, demolition salvage material for the ReStore facility and local non profits that are renovating homes and selling to first time homebuyers. Final clearance was received from MSHDA to begin the new Blight Elimination Program. Offers were made on several structures and awaiting acceptance. The goal is to acquire and demolish 30+ structures within 24 months. An additional program is being developed to complement the demolition program for those structures that could be renovated and sold to homebuyers.

The Inspection Division responded to several structure fires, complaints regarding frozen water pipes, and insufficient heat issues. Staff received building plans for several projects, including the Blue Water Transportation Station on McMorrans' south parking lot. Permits will be issued after plan reviews, and construction is anticipated to start in late spring. The foundation is completed for Baker's student housing and the shell for the first floor has been constructed. The Water Street hotel also has first floor exterior wall completed. Staff issued 50 permits this month and collected approximately \$20,995 in permit fees.

The Rental Certification Division inspected 105 rental units. The next group of letters have been sent out to collect on rental citations that were issued. Through staff diligence and assistance from corporation counsel, over \$9,000 has been collected in 2014 compared to \$1,500 in 2013. Annual Operating Bills have been mailed to 5,631 billable units and they anticipate \$234,528 to be received by April 20<sup>th</sup>. A 10% late fee is assessed every 30 days thereafter.

The month of February in the Parks and Recreation Department has brought some great winter programs despite the terribly cold weather which included the Daddy Daughter Dance, Sock Wars, art classes, fitness classes and snowman building contests in the parks. Our Friday night Cabin Fevers have brought over 60 kids to the recreation center every Friday night and is a very popular program with the kids and parents. The first annual Palmer Park Pond hockey tournament was very well attended and was a great event. I would like to personally thank Fred Minnie and all the volunteers for all their hard work to make this event so great. They have also made a great ice rink for the neighbors and the public to enjoy even though their tournament is over.

Cemetery personnel have worked hard for burials due to the brutal weather conditions. They are digging through two feet or more of frost currently. With the winter, we have had a lot of work to keep cemetery sidewalks and roads open from accumulation and drifting for families to come and visit loved ones. It's been a big job. Cemetery personnel are in the process of designing an

entrance for the cemetery from Stone Street toward the chapel. The sign has been picked, we are still finalizing the rest of design, and hope to have all in place by Memorial Weekend. We are working on reorganizing cemetery equipment for better operations and clean up is something being worked on at this time as well.

Parks and Forestry crews have been busy with snow removal from parking lots downtown, also relocating snow piles to different locations to create room for future storms. They have been snowplowing, and removing snow quite regularly. Crews continue to follow up with parking lots by salting and keeping snow pushed back, so that parking lots remain safe and useable. Crews in Parks and Forestry currently are setting up and reorganizing the new forestry and parks rooms to help things run much smoother and get ready for the summer season.

The Information Technology Department was involved in a number of activities. Of note were working with the Finance Department on automating payment processing from Chase Bank; adding customer utility bill inquiry to our online services on the web site; and working with the Police Department to prepare for the transition to CLEMIS.

During February, the Income Tax Division shifted to primarily focusing on 2014 tax returns that have begun to be filed. In addition they are continuing to handle compliance work from prior years as time permits.

The Accounting Division continued to perform the typical month to month duties. These include processing payroll, expense checks and other usual monthly work such as posting journal entries, updating various spreadsheets, balancing accounts, etc. They have also prepared and submitted the Underground Storage Tank Report to the State of Michigan.

The Assessing Division has finalized all assessments, lot splits and combinations. Assessment change notices have been mailed out. The Board of Review has been scheduled for the second week of March. Personal property statements have been finalized and recorded. Assessment rolls have been completed and the required reports have been prepared.

The Treasurer's Office and Water Office continues to be extremely busy. They continue to collect winter property taxes and perform the monthly accounting for BWATC. Also, they have continued to work closely with the I.T. Department, Accounting Division and our banking partners in regards to the on-line, next day payments. We began accepting those payments on February 23<sup>rd</sup>. We will continue to monitor this process over the next several months to ensure that we work out any issues promptly.

Also, a resolution is being prepared for the March 9<sup>th</sup> City Council meeting to engage an actuarial firm to perform our OPEB actuarial valuation.

A meeting was held with various stakeholders regarding the Citadel Project cost estimated at 1 million +, 6 lofts, small performance theatre. Nate Scramlin (MEDC) discussed CRP program that potentially could provide up to \$250,000 as reimbursement after project is

completed. Project is “lite” on job creation and would have to show that there is a gap in funding.

Randy Maier mentioned a fund they have to encourage the Arts, but those \$ would have to go directly to the Theatre group IF they were under a formal contract to use the space and could give X number of years, productions or similar quantitative commitments. They would not give to a private investor.

Rob McKay from SHPO indicated they only provide tax credits and sometimes grant funds – but only for the building renovations – not for equipment. We already spoke with Witts yesterday and discussed OPRA designation for 6 years; building is in a NEZ zone and could receive NEZ Certificates on the proposed 6 lofts for a total of 9 years. Building is in the DDA. Witts received Wednesday approval for \$3,500 grant from county Brownfield Authority for site assessment costs.

Witts have asked for permit fees waived (\$7,000+/-). Told them we don’t have that authority, that request would have to go to City Council. We did not encourage a traditional Brownfield as the OPRA, NEZ and DDA would result in very little recapture. If they really want, we think we could do a new “Level I” brownfield that we are setting up for small projects that will run for under 10 years. Would need to have Ed and Ryan run the numbers and perhaps it would be o.k. (more for polite partnership than practical reasons).

A meeting with MDOT and the City was held regarding a traffic study of the Scott Street & Pine Grove Intersection. MDOT is looking for ways to make that intersection safer and have more efficient movement. They will be completing the study in the next month or so and will submit a report to us when they are completed. We were vocal about ensuring they looked at all the traffic lights along Pine Grove. Anything short of that would be silly.

A meeting between members of the MainStreet Board, City Manager, Mayor and Mayor Pro tem took place this past week to discuss the future of the organization and the role of the City. The meeting went very well and we were able to voice our support for collaboration and partnerships to promote and enhance our downtown. We also discussed the effects of having the DDA focus more on infrastructure and what funding changes that may mean for MainStreet. We all agreed to work together to make sure we don’t adversely affect the positive developments taking place in the downtown.

A meeting took place with Michigan Works regarding the renewal of their lease. Due to federal funding they will be forced to send out Request for Proposals to various possible sites. Their desire is to stay in the MOC, and to be frank we need their revenue. However, it is very possible that a better offer will respond to the RFP once it is issued later next week. We will work hard to earn a renewal on that lease. However, we wanted to keep you informed on the matter.

Sincerely,



James R. Freed  
City Manager  
Chief Administrative Officer