



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

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In March, the police department has begun to see calls for service increase as occasional warmer days occur. The first major special event of the year, Pub Crawl, took place on Saturday, March 14, 2015. The event is coordinated around the St. Patrick's Day holiday and brings large groups of people into the city visiting local pubs. This year the Port Huron Police Department was assisted in policing the event by the Michigan State Police and the US Border Patrol. Responding to concerns stemming from three felonious assaults during the 2014 Pub Crawl, pub owners were notified in advance to adhere to Liquor Control Commission occupancy levels and prevent over-service of patrons. An after action report indicated that the event was well attended by patrons. There were 32 calls for service from the pub venues during the event, of which resulted in 4 arrests. Calls for service included assaults, incapacitated persons, fighting in public, and destruction of property complaints.

The Port Huron Police Department teamed up with the Michigan State Police on March 20<sup>th</sup> for a joint effort to curb violent crime in the neighborhoods. The plan, drafted under the Data Driven Approaches to Crime and Traffic Safety (DDACTS) model, targets "hotspots" in the city that are affected by high criminal activity and/or traffic related issues. Officers working the details focus their efforts on the identified hotspots, which are selected based on crime reports and traffic crash/violation statistics. Officers then target criminal activity and traffic violations in these hotspot areas. MSP air support joined the effort to assist officers working on the ground with persons that may flee officers on foot or by vehicle. Future DDACTS operations are being planned in the city over the next several months.

Calls for service in February 2015 decreased by 19% over January 2015 and were also down 5% from February 2014.

The Fire Department responded to six (6) structure fires. Careless smoking caused extensive damage to two apartments at 2901-12<sup>th</sup> Avenue. An apartment fire at 1233 Wall St. #3 was caused by suspected methamphetamine (meth lab) production. A discarded cigarette butt in a pile of clothing is believed to have caused moderate damage inside of 218-17<sup>th</sup> St. Extensive damage was caused to a house at 315-17<sup>th</sup> Street. Investigation into the cause found a rodent nest with insulation chewed from wiring in the basement ceiling. A garage fire at 1033 Division Street appears to have been caused by a juvenile playing with a grill lighter. Port Huron Fire crews also provided aid to Marysville Fire Department for an explosion and resulting building fire located at 50 Gratiot Boulevard (South Park Welding). Two employees of the business sustained non-life threatening injuries and the structure was heavily damaged by fire. The cause remains under investigation.

The Fire Division coordinated the breaking of ice in the Black River on Monday, March 16<sup>th</sup>. A request for quotes was initiated once again from capable vessels. Purdy fisheries was the low bidder. A tug from Purdy Fisheries was able to relieve the solid covering of ice from

the St. Clair River to nearly the I-94 overpass bridge. These efforts again prevented flooding to residences along the Black River.

Forty one (41) pre-fire inspections have been completed for the month as of March 23<sup>rd</sup>. Fire Marshal Warren has completed the final fire inspection for the Convention Center as well as plan reviews for the 405 Water Street office complex. In addition, he has been actively involved in monitoring the progress at the Baker College student housing and Water Street Holiday Inn construction projects. The 2015 Citizens Fire Academy application period opened for this year's program to run Wednesday evenings from 7-9 pm April 15<sup>th</sup>-June 10<sup>th</sup> at Central Fire Station.

As of March 24<sup>th</sup>, the Code Enforcement Unit had 98 new complaints opened. They sent out 150 "last chance" letters to collect monies due for fines/fees or cost of grass cuts/clean ups during 2014. They received over \$8,000 by doing this. Afterwards, they worked together with Corporate Council to get a system in place for debt collection; a majority of which will be sent to City Council as Single Lot Assessments. The Request for Qualifications for Lawn Maintenance Service (bids) were mailed out to our current landscaping companies and a copy was posted on the City website. Lt. Kuehn attended staff and command training and her staff attended CPR training offered by the Fire Department through Human Resources.

In April, the Code Enforcement Unit will begin looking for houses that are in need of paint and will work with Community Development to send them paint vouchers to get them started. Part-time Inspectors will increase their hours to 28 a week as soon as the weather calls for it.

The Clerk's office hosted the quarterly meeting of the St. Clair County Clerks Association at Goodfella's Grill. The meeting was attended by 40 municipal clerks with discussions mainly involving the upcoming election and the replacement of election equipment by the State in the coming year. The State has about \$25 million in Help America Vote Act (HAVA) funds available to assist with this; however, an additional \$25 **million** is necessary. We are hopeful our State legislators will allocate the additional funds to purchase new tabulating equipment as the current machines are 10 years old.

Other items worked on during the month included taking new photos of MOC employees and issuing new ID badges as part of the ongoing security efforts, processing 750 absentee ballots so far for the May election and providing ongoing assistance to the Beautification and Sister City commissions to name a few items.

The DPW staff met with BWATC and DeMaria staff to discuss staging and coordination during the construction of the Blue Water Transit Center. The Director attended the ground breaking ceremony. Construction on Phase I is scheduled for the end of March. We are working to schedule a meeting with BWATC, DeMaria, and DTE to coordinate work within the project site.

The Blue Water Area Transportation Commission awarded the orphan well closure project to M.L. Chartier, Inc. Methane gas was found in the first well. The contractor successfully

completed the abandonment of both orphan wells. We received the final bill for the closure of the wells. The total cost is \$158,187.50, the City's share of this cost is just over \$88,000.

The lease with Michigan Works will expire soon. The DPW Administration prepared a response to a request for proposals to lease the 6<sup>th</sup> floor of the MOC to Michigan Works.

DPW Director completed working on updates to the Capital Improvement Plan for fiscal year 2015-2016. The plan was submitted to the Finance Director for review.

The Michigan Department of Transportation has submitted a draft Road Safety Audit (RSA) report regarding the 10th Avenue and Pine Grove intersection. We are reviewing the draft report.

The DPW Director reviewed alternatives for improvements to the Quay Street river walk. These improvements would include pedestrian access from Military Street Bridge to the Fort Street docks along the waterfront.

The Engineering staff continues to work on the design and processing of documents for the improvements to South Boulevard from Electric to 31<sup>st</sup> Street. We have been asked to determine if the warranty from the contractor will cover the repair of a roof leak at the Tennis House. The Washington Avenue project public meeting was held March 25, 2015. The Hickory Lane Area Project preconstruction meeting was held on March 11, 2015. The project will be started in early July and will be finished in October. The Engineering staff held a preconstruction meeting with Dean Marine to schedule marina dredging before April 15, 2015. City Council approved the agreement with MDOT to bid the Stone Street Project. This work will include improvements to Stone from Pine Grove to McPherson. The construction costs for this project will be funded 80% with federal funds. MDOT opened bids on this project. The City conducted a meeting with the low bidder, and work is scheduled to start by the end of June.

The Engineering staff continues to assist the Recreation Department in processing contract bid documents for the improvements at Lakeside Park. The project is scheduled to begin in early September and be finished in May of 2016. Staff is also processing bid documents for the upgrade of the basketball court at Palmer Park.

The street maintenance crews repaired potholes with cold patch at various locations. Our winter maintenance crews were dispatched on five occasions, putting down a total of 485 tons of salt. Street crews closed several streets for water main breaks and delivered sandbags to the canal for possible flooding.

The motor vehicle pool crew worked several hours assisting the street crews with snow plowing operations. The motor vehicle pool crews maintained the preventative maintenance list and did some extensive work on the gator to get it ready for the upcoming season.

Traffic control crews repaired numerous damaged signs and assisted with snow and ice control operations. They also assisted MDOT in getting the Military Street Bridge opened and closed for changes in the scope of work.

As a result of a recent retirement, a new Utilities Service System Supervisor was selected. This selection then caused a vacancy in the Water Distribution Foreman position which was also filled with an internal candidate.

The water distribution staff continued again this month responding to calls from customers stating that they do not have water as a result of a frozen water service. Staff has assisted the property owners' contractor with exposing the curb stop box to allow access for the contractor to thaw the service. As of Tuesday, March 24<sup>th</sup>, all known locations affected by frozen water services have been thawed and now have water. The distribution staff also repaired a couple water main breaks.

The water meter technicians, with assistance from Port Huron Township DPW, completed the installation of automated meter reading equipment at approximately 40 township properties that are direct water customers of the City. There are approximately 70 properties within the City that do not have automated meter reading equipment installed. Starting next month, the old meter reading equipment will be retired and those properties will receive the appropriate read charge along with estimated billing until they have the automated meter reading equipment installed. Also, the 8-inch master water meter to serve the Water Street hotel development project that was approved for purchase at the March 9<sup>th</sup> Council meeting has been approved. It is estimated to be about six weeks until delivery.

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. City staff has reviewed the draft version of the arc flash evaluation documents/findings and is in the process of providing comments back to the consultant for incorporation into the final documents. The Odor Control Ductwork project documents are advertised and the bid opening date is April 14<sup>th</sup>. Staff also completed an in-house communication upgrade to one of the remote sanitary pump stations. This upgrade will reduce future cost of a leased telephone line by utilizing the City-owned network to transmit data from the pump station back to the WWTP.

The Water Filtration Plant (WFP) and Engineering staff completed the request for proposal documents for the sodium hypochlorite day tank liner project. The proposals are due back on April 14<sup>th</sup>. The North Elevated Tank and miscellaneous pipe painting project documents are advertised and the bid opening date is April 14<sup>th</sup>. Staff received quotes for the removal and relocation of the electrical service at the Krafft Road meter building in preparation for its demolition. This building (approximately 12' x 12') serves no purpose and to make needed repairs to the roof and electrical would be more costly than its demolition. In addition to this savings, the annual electrical bill will be reduced greatly as there will be no need to heat a building during the winter months.

During the month of March, the Human Resources Department starting accepting employment applications for all of our Spring and Summer job openings. These seasonal job openings include Day Camp Leaders, Pool Maintenance, Parking Booth Attendants, Lifeguards, Playground Attendants, Laborers and School Crossing Guards.

Additionally, several full-time job openings were posted internally to fill vacancies created by retirements of the following positions: City Assessor, Streets Foreman, Utilities Supervisor and Streets Equipment Operator. Testing and Interviews were conducted for a Staff Accountant. Interviews were also held for the Parks & Forestry Supervisor. Both full-time positions have been successfully filled. We continue to accept applications for the full-time Cemetery Supervisor position and hope to fill that by the middle of April. Additionally, Interviews will be conducted for the Streets Foreman on April 2, 2015.

Several meetings were held with management during the month of March to discuss manpower, upcoming retirement vacancies and possible department reorganizations. Additional meetings were held in an effort to finalize the reorganization of the Parks/Forestry/Cemetery divisions, which included meetings with the Utility Workers Union and Supervisory Union.

We continue to work with MML on the recruitment process for our next City Engineer/DPW Director. The final applicant pool has been narrowed down to four applicants. Background checks are currently being conducted by MML. The interview process is scheduled to take place in Port Huron during the week of April 13, 2015. Candidate names will not be released until after all background checks are complete and confirmation of interviews are in place.

The Planning Department met several times with representatives from McLaren Hospital to discuss potential expansions plans on hospital property and the process required to add expansions to the hospital's Master Plan and zoning requirements. A request to amend the Hospital's Master Plan is scheduled to go to the Planning Commission in April and possible re-zoning in May of property that the hospital already owns. The rezoning would be from "Residential" use to "Institutional" use. No details or site plans are available yet. Planning staff also has met several times with investors regarding downtown projects such as the Citadel Building (Witt Family) and will submit OPRA applications to City Council in April and May for their consideration.

Still awaiting final decision from HUD Washington Office regarding whether they will allow amendments to the original 2010 BEDI Grant/Section 108 Loan application for the Sperry Project, or whether they will require resubmittal. Additional documentation has been sent to both the Detroit Field Office and the Washington Office. The program expires September, 2015. HUD will determine whether the scope of the project and jobs created still meet with competitive scoring that was done in July, 2010.

Staff is working with family members interested in starting a community garden near Garfield School and a second one in the Historic Court Street area.

The Community Development Division has provided seven Urban Pioneer grants to families to purchase their first home in Port Huron last month. Inventory is underway of several neighborhoods and the housing structures, alleys, sidewalks and green spaces in preparation for design of specific rehabilitation programs once CDBG funds are released in early summer. All staff persons, including rental and building inspection staff are traveling their assigned districts to provide addresses of structures that may be suitable for the annual Project Brush-Up (free

paint vouchers) and in preparation for cleaning up alleys, replacing missing street signs and eliminating commercial signs/temporary signs that do not meet city codes.

Staff met several times with Police Department DARE Officer and City Recreation team to develop ideas for summer kids camp that would provide one day a week of community service within the designated park's neighborhood – perhaps planting and watering flowers in a senior citizen's yard, planting flowers or vegetables at the park where they meet each day, craft projects for shut-ins or bike safety issues etc.

They are also working with the County Treasurer Office in anticipation of Property Tax Foreclosure list release next week. Using the Blight Elimination Project funds, staff hopes to identify several properties to acquire through our non-profit partnerships and use the demolition process that will result in lot splits and side yard combinations; and housing rehabilitation/resale grants to encourage homeownership.

The Inspection Division has issued 55 permits and collected approximately \$13,300 in revenue. The permit for the Blue Water Transportation Station was also issued, the permit fees of approximately \$43,000 plus plan review fees were waived as per the purchase agreement approved by Council two years ago. There may still need to be minor modifications made to the design work on the McMorran Boulevard portion.

A temporary Certificate of Occupancy was provided to the Convention Center for a period of 30 days and it is anticipated that all final inspections will be in place within two weeks.

The Rental Certification Division has decided for the time being to not replace the third part-time inspector who left last year. Several larger complexes (such as Northport Towers) will need to be recertified later this year, but it seems it would be more efficient to simply provide additional hours for a few weeks to complete those tasks as needed rather than hire another individual. Over 145 inspections were initiated this month. Our trade inspectors continue to also conduct rental certification inspections as their schedules permit.

March has been a time of many new things in Parks and Recreation, starting with the announcement of our new Parks and Forestry Supervisor which is Ben Pionk. Ben has been the Cemetery Supervisor for the last year and half and has been with the department 10 years. We are really excited for his new ideas and enthusiasm that he brings this department.

The Recreation Department is gearing up for our summer brochure and hiring all the summer staff. If you know people that are great with children or like to work doing park maintenance, have them check the City of Port Huron website for available positions. The dance recital also was this month with over 70 children in the program and hundreds of parents and grandparents there to watch their performance at Port Huron Northern. This month has also brought many more programs for summer with the Port Huron Schools and many grants to run them. It is very exciting to see the number of children we will impact this year.

The cemetery has been busy getting ready for spring cleanup. The chapel bathroom was remodeled in the cemetery by the cemetery staff and it looks great. We had 13 services in the

cemetery this month. The tree crew has been working very hard this spring to take down trees and trimming and in the parks division. We are revamping many processes to make the operation more efficient. The staff in this department should be commended for their efforts in keeping this department running smoothly during this transition of supervisors.

The Information Technology Department essentially completed the migration of the desktop environment from Windows XP and completed the 100<sup>th</sup> installation of Office 10.

During March, the Income Tax Division continued to focus primarily on the thousands of 2014 tax returns we have received so far. They are currently up to date on the processing of both refund returns and tax due returns (no back-log currently exists). They have each completed the annual security and safeguard training course required by the State of Michigan.

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 begun the budget process, which includes checking all of the budget worksheets for such items as wage amounts, proper calculation of fringe benefits, equipment rental and all other budgeted amounts.

Following the completion of the March Board of Review, the Assessing Division reported all final assessments to the St. Clair County Equalization Department and the State Tax Commission. They also prepared our master list of IFT properties and began work on the 2016 property tax year.

The Treasurer's Office and Water Office continue to be busy with collection of rental inspection fees, income tax payments and water payments. They also continue to perform the monthly accounting for BWATC. During the month of March, they settled our Real Property tax collections with the County. We should receive payment from the County for delinquent real taxes in May. Because of the cold weather early in the month, we received numerous calls from homeowners with frozen water service and/or frozen internal lines. We shut off over 140 accounts during the month for non-payment.

The City Manager has been hosting several meetings with outside experts and staff to discuss possible solutions and develop options for Council to choose from for the rubbish/trash fund. Currently, that fund has blown through a \$1.3million fund balance since 2006, and is projected to have a deficit and no fund balance next year. The General Fund does not have the resources to subsidize ongoing operations. Things we are looking at are recycling, limiting the amount of trash, regulated bins and reduction in cycles for leaf and brush cleanup. We will need to look at how we can deploy these options without violating our contract. We are hopeful our contractor will work with us to find a solution. We need about a \$300k gap filled.

We have been working on developing an outline of a budget to bring to Council for budget workshops. Things are very tight this year, and our concern moving forward is the growth of the unfunded liabilities payments in comparison to stagnate revenue growth. Over the course of the next 24months we believe about a \$1million gap will open up. Our concern is

how to we close that gap without operating on fund balance. Buyouts for early retirement and elimination of positions, reforms and increased privatization will need to be on the table.

To be frank, there is a window of opportunity in the next 12-24months to address the projected growth of the payments for unfunded liabilities. If we wait and don't act, we fear that sudden changes over just one fiscal could pose an adverse affect on economic growth. We also know that any meaningful reductions in cost take time to realize savings. We need to have those costs savings realized and in place in 24months, not just embarking on the process. We don't have enough fund balance to wait and try to solve it and using fund balance to operate should be perceived by Council as a "red line". If we use time wisely to make strategic moves now, we could avoid rapid fluctuations in core services.

A messaging strategy will need to be developed as well to inform the community about the challenges and the scope of savings needed. Its difficult to give a patient medicine if they don't know their sick...meaning, how will we explain a reduction in rubbish/trash services if no one knows about the problem? It's a difficult and fine line to walk. We don't want to scare people with doom and gloom, but we also need to be candid about the challenges we face. The solutions are not appealing, but are necessary.

Sincerely,

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James R. Freed  
*City Manager*  
*Chief Administrative Officer*