



Message from the Mayor

With the end of a very busy Summer season in our community, it is a good time for an update on recent events and what to expect as we move into Fall & Winter.

Generous Gift to our City! = Municipal Marina Expansion

We've received some unbelievable news that will result in the expansion of the City's municipal marina operations. Through the amazing generosity of the William J. Deputy Endowment Fund, the Pleasure Isle Marina adjacent the City's municipal marina is being donated to the City of New Buffalo. The City will be receiving 26 slips, a parking area, and boater services building. This marina is valued at \$3.1 million.

William, better known as Bill to many in the community, was a lifelong boater. His family were owners of Godfrey Marine, a recreational boat manufacturer located in Elkhart, IN. Bill joined the family business in the early 1990s while continuing to live in New Buffalo, MI.

During that time, Bill was a strong supporter of the New Buffalo community and actively involved in the harbor commission and the New Buffalo Yacht Club. He mentored and helped put kids through college. His philanthropy was meaningful and included his time, talent, and treasure, depending on the need.

His family determined the best way to honor Bills legacy in his chosen hometown of New Buffalo was to donate Pleasure Isle Marina to the City of New Buffalo. Pleasure Isle Marina is a successful operation which will benefit the New Buffalo community for many years to come.

Bill was a lifelong friend of City Councilman Bob Spirito who initiated talks with the Deputy Family regarding the potential donation. On behalf of our community, I would like to thank the entire Deputy family for this generous donation. It shall serve as a constant memorial to Bill's enjoyment of boating and commitment to the New Buffalo community.

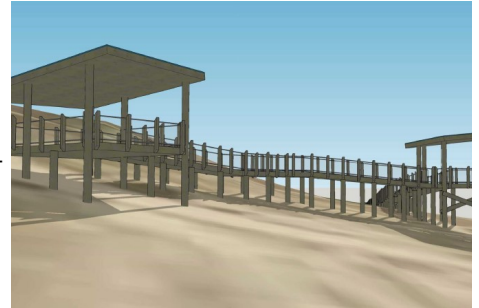
Municipal Marina Fire

The removal, painting and raising of the docks has been completed. Unfortunately, there was a fire in the marina building on August 27th, started by an exhaust fan in the building. City staff quickly reacted, and power was restored to the slips the same day as the fire. With the facility unusable, the City secured a temporary restroom trailer prior to Labor Day weekend. The City is in the process of determining the extent of the damage and the best way to rebuild. Insurance is expected to cover the building repairs as well as temporary costs incurred to keep the facility operational through the end of the 2020 season.



Dune Walk

Design work has begun on the new Dune Walk project. The new project will rehabilitate the existing walkway and add a second, fully accessible walkway. This will open up the dune structure to be enjoyed by people of all abilities. The project will be put out for bidding in the winter. Construction is anticipated to be completed by Memorial Day 2021. This \$440,000 project will only cost the City \$110,000 as a grant of \$220,000 was secured from the Land & Water Conservation Fund, and The Pokagon Fund approved a generous \$100,000 grant for the project.



Short-Term Rental Update

The City approved a moratorium in May in order to evaluate the number of short-term rentals and their impact on the community. This process will help balance the impact tourism has on our economy and supports local jobs, all while ensuring a year-round sustainable population that can support important institutions in our community such as the New Buffalo Area Schools. The Plan Commission and City Council will be hosting a joint meeting on Monday, October 12, 2020 at 6:00 p.m. via Zoom to discuss options moving forward with short-term rental regulations. Details will be provided. In the interim, the City maintains a list of licensed rentals and their maximum capacity that can be viewed at:

https://www.cityofnewbuffalo.org/media/news30/current_registered_rental_list.pdf

Marquette Greenway Update

The Marquette Greenway is a 53-mile, non-motorized trail which will connect Chicago with New Buffalo. Much of the trail is in place, but many sections along the way are still being planned. This includes the stretch from the Indiana State Line to New Buffalo. The project team for this stretch of the trail include our City, New Buffalo Township, the Berrien County Road Department, MDOT, and the Southwest Michigan Plan Commission.



Originally, there were two options for the land needed to construct this path. Extra right-of-way (R-O-W) from a road diet along U.S. 12 through the Township or an easement along the Amtrak R-O-W in conjunction with U.S. 12 R-O-W. The Township has decided not to participate in the road diet after a trial run earlier this Summer when a temporary road diet was implemented by MDOT. This was accomplished by repainting the lines on the roadway to narrow the highway into one lane in each direction with a center turn lane. This leaves us with the Amtrak R-O-W option.

The project team is now looking to work with both MDOT and Amtrak to assemble the necessary land for the construction of the trail. With over \$3 million in grant funds already committed to the project, we are determined to find a route for the project and keep that money in our community. Through funding from the U.S. Department of Agriculture and a generous donation from The Pokagon Fund, New Buffalo Township has entered into an agreement with Abonmarche to complete the necessary design work to present to Amtrak to consider for the needed easement to construct the project.

GRSD Update - New Meter on Lift Station 79

The City has been dealing with resolving Galien River Sanitary Authority (GRSD) billing/metering problems for the past few years. The last major remaining issue identified was better metering of City sanitary sewer usage by the Galien River Sanitary District to make sure the City is being charged correctly for usage. In years past, the City wasn't being billed based on a direct metering of the flow at Lift Station (LS) 79 on Buffalo Street as material exited the City on its way to the plant. Instead, it was calculated by subtracting the Township's usage from the meter and assuming all remaining usage was the City's. This was not an accurate way to measure the City's flow and determine billing charges and resulted in inflated bills to the City that were later agreed to be in error. The City worked with the GRSD to get a dedicated meter at LS79 which will accurately measure the City's flow and hopefully generate correct charges moving forward.

Road Improvements & Road Millage Proposal

As many of you are aware, our community's roads are in need of improvements after decades of disinvestment. In 2017, a study of road conditions was undertaken to determine what the City would need to do to turn this tide. The majority of our roads were found to be in "poor" or "failed" condition. Based on an analysis using the Road Soft program from Michigan Tech, it was determined that \$10M was needed to bring 85% of our roads to "good" condition.



Funding available for roadway improvements has fallen behind needs across our state. Due to reductions in state revenue sharing, local road millages are increasingly common throughout the state of Michigan. There are currently approximately 644 other Michigan communities that levy local road taxes.

The November 3rd election has a road millage on the ballot for residents to consider which will create a dedicated revenue stream for our community's roads.

The New Buffalo City Council is proposing a 20-year, .25 mill road millage to fund these needed improvements. Voters in the City will consider the proposal during the November 2020 election.

If approved by a "Yes" vote, the millage would allow the City to secure a bond to improve the community's roads in just over two years and to initiate a long-term maintenance program designed to maximize return on investment.

Under the terms of the millage proposal, property owners would pay approximately \$13 for every \$100,000 in taxable property value. **Due to the recent expiration of a .31 mill school millage, the total effective property tax rate for City homeowners would still be lower than it has been in past years.**

Parks Millage Proposal

Residents of New Buffalo have a long history of supporting parks and recreation activities in our community. In 2006, residents of the City of New Buffalo voted to enact a 5-year, .5 mill city parks millage that would be dedicated to improving and maintaining the community's parks. Residents voted to continue the millage in 2011 and again in 2016. In the past five years, the 2016 parks millage has been used to

make over 20 different improvements to our community's Park system including:

- New playground equipment at the beach
- Improvements to Oselka Park baseball fields & playground equipment
- Upgrades to Lion's Park and a new roof on the pavilion
- Repairs to the beach parking lot
- Sunshades at all of the parks
- New picnic tables and trash cans
- A new modular walkway to make accessing the beach easier for persons of all abilities



During the November 2020 election, voters in the City will decide whether to renew the existing millage for 5 years at the current rate of 0.4599 mills. If approved, the renewed millage would generate approximately \$112,000 annually for local parks. Property owners would pay approximately \$25 per \$100,000 in taxable property value annually for the next 4 years.

Recreation Authority

Speaking of recreation, the strong working relationship that has developed between the City, New Buffalo Township and the New Buffalo Area Schools has been on display as together we have evaluated the potential of starting a joint recreational authority.

At the end of 2019, representatives from each entity met to discuss the potential forming of a Recreational Authority to serve the needs of the broader New Buffalo community. The group determined there is enough potential to engage a larger group of community stakeholders to elevate the opportunity to the next level of dialogue. Originally, the intent was to discuss the interest in determining the viability of a recreational authority in March. However, with the onset of COVID-19, that was put on hold until recently.

On August 31, all three organizations had a joint meeting of their Boards/Council to ascertain the interest of creating a working group to develop a framework for the creation of a recreational authority to serve the area. The group decided to move forward in creating an authority.

With this model adopted, each entity will still control their existing park resources. The Recreational Authority will be used for projects that have a broader area-wide impact and benefits across traditional jurisdictional boundaries.

North Whittaker St. Flooding

The City has systematically and incrementally taken steps to address high lake level issues and the subsequent flooding along north Whittaker Street between the bridge and the public waterfront area. Previous actions included the installation of a temporary concrete barrier to prevent water from going over the banks of the Galien River as well as stopping Galien River backflow through storm sewer outlets into the roadway. Next, damage done to the road due to standing water will be repaired, and a means to shed stormwater from the roadway to the adjoining park area will be created. These actions should pre-

vent future flooding. A low bidder to complete these next steps has been identified through a competitive bidding process and by the time you are reading this, the work should be completed and the ride through the area greatly improved.

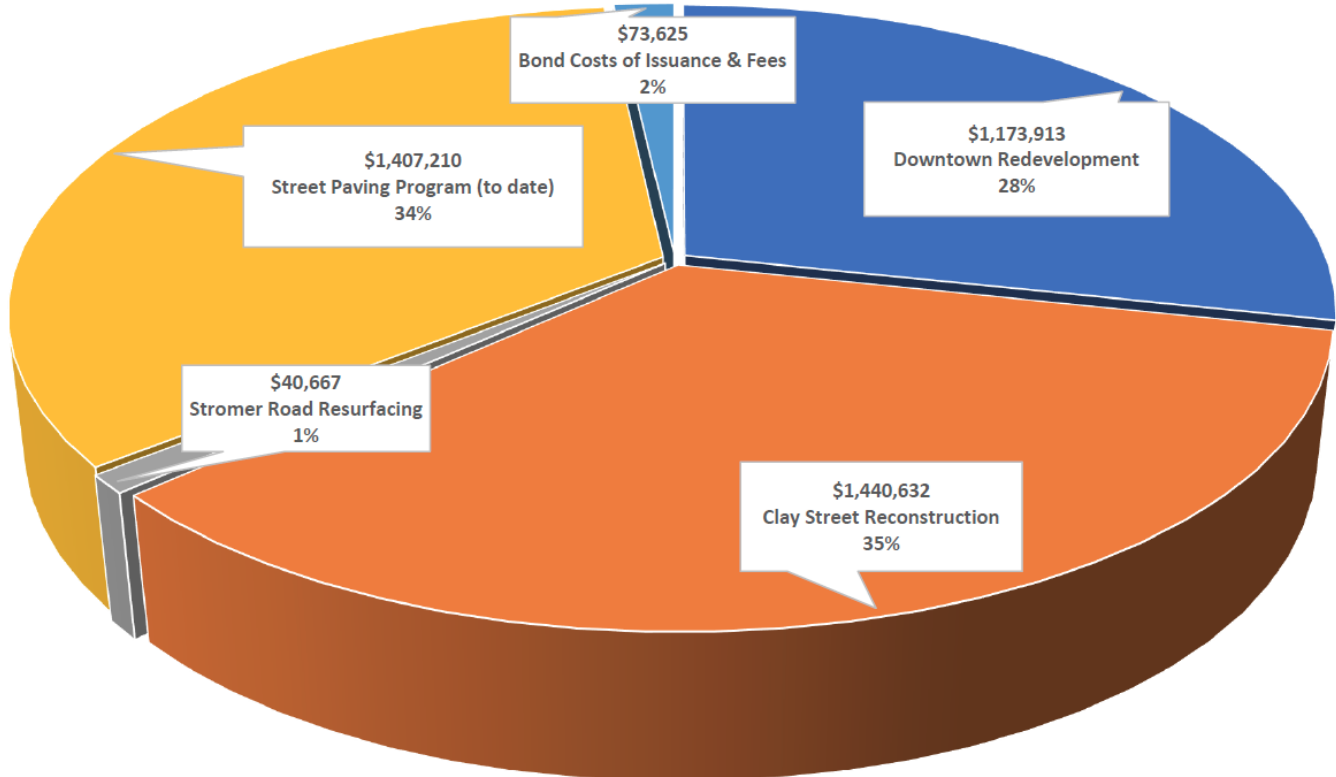
Marquette Drive

Despite the poor condition of Marquette Drive, the City cannot pay the costs of needed improvements because public funds cannot be used for work conducted on a private road, and Marquette Drive is a private association road. The City has offered to lead the effort to make the road improvements if the owners agree to reimburse the City through a special assessment. If 70% of the property owners along this stretch of road agreed to this proposal, work would have been undertaken to improve the roadway. Unfortunately, only 9 of the 38 property owners replied they were interested so we are unable to do anything further to assist at this time. There will be a mailing to property owners again in the Spring of 2021 to determine if the interest level has increased.

2017 Bond Update

As we near the end of the 2017 bond fund expenditures, it's a good time to show where the funding was allocated (see graph). As tax increment financing revenue is captured by the Downtown Development authority, those funds will be used to repay the City for the portion of the bond proceeds spent within the community's downtown redevelopment.

2017 Capital Improvement Bond Usage Summary (as of 9/14/2020)



■ Downtown Redevelopment ■ Clay Street Reconstruction ■ Stromer Road Resurfacing ■ Street Paving Program (to date) ■ Bond Costs of Issuance & Fees

World Class Schools



New Buffalo Elementary was recently recognized as a 2020 Exemplary High Performing National Blue Ribbon School! Only 367 schools across the nation were selected to receive this award! This distinguished award is determined by the school's overall high academic performance as measured by the M-STEP state assessment. Congratulations to all students, parents, and staff members on reaching this huge accomplishment! Go Bison!



I'd like to thank the City Council and our staff for their commitment to serving our community. Even through these difficult times we continue to make progress and make our community a great place. And, to our residents, I hope you find these regular updates helpful to better understand what is happening in our community. If you have any questions or need additional information, please do not hesitate to contact City Hall at (269) 469-1500.



Sincerely,
Lou O'Donnell IV
Your Mayor