



CITY OF HURON  
CITY MANAGER'S REPORT

December 10, 2021

Matthew Lasko, City Manager

## ECONOMIC/COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

**Firelands Scientific:** The City has received final site plans from Firelands Scientific related to a substantial expansion of their facility in the Huron Corporate Park. The site plan will be considered and reviewed at the upcoming Planning Commission meeting. This is truly an exciting project and we are appreciative of the Company's willingness to expand operations in the City. The expansion includes, but is not limited to additional growing space, offices, warehousing and parking along with landscaping enhancements.

**Buckeye Sports:** The City has received plans from Buckeye Sports for the construction of their water/marine craft facility in Lake Erie Parkway. This will be a wonderful addition to the City and the corporate park and will result in development on the last remaining parcel within the Corporate Park. We are hoping to see construction commence soon and want to wish them a big welcome to the community.

**Ardagh/Sawmill Pkwy:** Construction continues on the approximate 300,000 square feet worth of additions to the expanded facility. The City has approved the vacation of about 300-400 feet of roadway at the eastern end of Sawmill Parkway based on a recommendation of approval from the Planning Commission. That vacation agreement has now been fully executed. Related, the city is finalizing the process of receiving a dedication of land from Ardagh which will be partially utilized for the installation of a turnaround primarily to aid emergency vehicles in their maneuvering the eastern terminus of the Parkway. We hope to have the new plat recorded shortly.

OHM continues to progress with final design and construction drawings in hopes of bidding out the construction in early 2022.

Staff plans to introduce a CRA Tax Abatement to Council on December 28<sup>th</sup> for the project. The Company will be seeking a 15-year abatement. However, it should be noted, the Company has agreed to ensure the abatement is such that both Huron Schools and EHOVE will receive the same amount of taxes they otherwise would have received without the abatement. This structure will be memorialized via two separate school compensation agreements with each entity that will also need to be considered by Council. EHOVE has already approved its compensation agreement and Huron Schools will be considered their compensation agreement on December 21.

**ConAgra:** Based on the recent Council resolution authorizing staff to begin negotiations with NAI Harmon Group from Toledo, a kick-off call is scheduled to occur during the week of October 11<sup>th</sup>. Action steps and updated timelines will begin to become clearer over the next few weeks. The city has engaged the assistance of Cushman Wakefield of Cleveland, a global commercial real estate service company, to assist the city in providing an updated broker price opinion (like an appraisal) for both the land as-is and with certain public infrastructure improvements in place. We received the draft appraisal yesterday and are currently reviewing the results of the analysis. This will provide a great reference point during site control negotiations. Additionally, the City

and NAI Harmon have begun the process of putting a framework together for a development agreement which would outline, amongst other items, responsibilities for infrastructure investments and timelines for development/construction to commence.

Council referred the application for rezoning of the ConAgra property from I-2 General Industrial to MU-GD Mixed Use Granary District to the Planning Commission at its last meeting on November 9, 2021. Planning Commission will be holding a public hearing on the request at its December meeting on December 15, 2021. If approved, the matter will be referred to City Council for a public hearing which will be set in January of 2022.

The city has entered into an agreement with KS Associates Inc., from Elyria to undertake an analysis of the existing seawalls and provide recommendations and cost estimates for repair or full replacement. Crews will minimally be undertaking diving exercises for two (2) days along with a great deal of additional field work with the final report to be delivered to the City no later than the end of December. Understanding these costs along with other infrastructure needs and costs will be instrumental in negotiating a final development agreement with NAI Harmon Group.

Finally, the City has made a request of both Huron Schools and EHOVE to consider school compensations agreements related to the development as part of a Tax Increment Financing package to aid in the financing of the public infrastructure on the site – which includes roadways, utilities and seawall restoration/construction. These are critical requests in order for the public improvements to be financed to support the development. We are hoping each entity will consider these requests at their next scheduled Board meeting and truly appreciate their consideration in advance.

**Sawmill Creek:** On July 13th, the City voted to pursue the annexation of nine (9) parcels currently located in Huron Township – and more easily recognized as the Sawmill Creek Resort, Conference Center and Golf Course. On July 16<sup>th</sup>, Huron Township consented to the annexation and agreed to move forward. The reasoning behind the proposed annexation is to provide local subsidy to the project via a financing tool commonly referred to as a “Section 41 Tax Increment Financing.” The type of proposed financing can only be undertaken by a municipality and cannot be undertaken by a township – hence the need for the proposed annexation. The final major hurdle needing to be accomplished was consideration and approval of the TIF by the Huron School District. We are happy to report that on July 20<sup>th</sup>, the School Board voted to approve the 30-year, 75% TIF. We are so grateful for the support of the School Board and the Administration and believe we set forth a truly mutually beneficial package that will both ensure a long-term predictable revenue stream to the district while also ensuring adequate revenues to both complete the Sawmill Creek Resort project and fund a capital infrastructure fund to address the western gateway to the City and the intersection of Cleveland Road and Rye Beach. This is truly a tremendous public private partnership involving the city, Township, School District and Cedar Fair. There is still a great deal of legislation needing to be brought forth to effectuate the annexation and TIF, which will be occurring over the next several months including but not limited to:

- Development agreement

- Service payment agreement
- School compensation agreement with Huron Schools
- School compensation agreement with EHOVE
- TIF Ordinance
- Final Annexation Agreement
- Bond issuance for Sawmill Creek redevelopment

Most recently, Cedar Fair is in the process of executing the deed sets and will be sending to the City in the very near future. Once this step is accomplished, the City will be able to move forward immediately with consideration of both School Compensation Agreements and also consideration of the final TIF Ordinance.

Additionally, Cedar Fair agreed verbally to an annual service payment of \$450,000 on top of what is currently being collected from the property. Based on the agreed upon School Compensation Agreements, this will equate to a new \$112,500 annually for Huron Schools and \$6,750 for EHOVE. The remainder, \$330,750 a year (or nearly \$10M over the life of the TIF) will be utilized to retire the debt to renovate the project and to undertake public infrastructure investments around the property.

## INFRASTRUCTURE/STREETS/UTILITIES

**Leaf Pickup:** To date, City crews have completed seven (7) total trips through the City for annual leaf pickup. Due to the delay in leaves falling from the trees, the City will continue to make a few additional passes through the City weather permitting.

**Sidewalks:** The City, in partnership with Huron Township is exploring a sidewalk installation project that would link the current eastern sidewalk terminus (Gateway Boulevard) all the way to the entrance of Huron Green. This project is instrumental for enhancing walkability and connectivity between multiple subdivisions and Huron's multiple amenities but will more importantly create a safe connection for those traversing Cleveland Road. OHM has completed their proposal for design which is approximately \$40,000. If Council and the Trustees desire to move forward, 2022 would be used a planning design year with construction to occur in 2023. It should be noted, the draft 2022 budget does include the City covering half of the design costs for the project.

**Rt. 6 Streetlights:** Installation of the new streetlights as part of Route 6 Phase I is substantially complete. There are several of the new lamp heads that malfunctioned during testing which have since been removed. Once new heads are received, those will be installed as quickly as possible. Additionally, all wooden poles have since been removed. Ohio Edison crews still need to remove steel poles on the west side of the bridge. Finally, Ohio Edison has reinstalled the streetlamps across the bridge. As mentioned before, the City will continue ongoing

conversations with Ohio Edison to ultimately have the poles abandoned so as to permit the City to install similar heads that exists throughout the corridor.

**Rt. 6 Striping/Signage:** Crews have finalized new signage installation to account for the slightly revised traffic pattern for Rt. 6 – resulting from significant public feedback. A final punchlist walkthrough is still planned with the City, construction crews and ODOT. The City anticipates presenting legislation to Council on December 28 adopting the final striping plan and amending our traffic code so as to permit our safety forces to begin enforcing the final striping plan.

Finally, staff anticipates finalizing the Rt. 6 Safety and User guide during the week of December 13<sup>th</sup>. Once completed, this will be available online, in hard copy form and we will send out links via social media as well. A big thank you to our planning and engineering staff for their efforts on this helpful piece.

**Maritime Assistance Program:** Unfortunately, the City and the Huron Joint Port Authority (HJPA) were notified this week that our grant application through the Maritime Assistance Program was unsuccessful. Due to eligibility requirements, the fact that the HJPA did not operate a functioning port seemed to be a major hurdle. The good news is, the project was urged by ODOT to be submitted in hopes that this opens up the lines of communication between ODOT, City and HJPA regarding potential amendments to the program that could eventually result in the originally proposed project being eligible in future funding rounds.

**Safe Routes to Schools:** The City is exploring submission of multiple applications for the Safe Routes to Schools program administered by the Ohio Department of Transportation. The grant application deadline is set for March 4<sup>th</sup>, 2022. Currently, the city is exploring making reapplication for sidewalks/multi-use path along Jim Campbell Boulevard and additionally, installation of sidewalks along Berlin Road heading southward to the city limits.

**Street Resurfacing:** The City has received a proposal from OHM to undertake an update to our pavement condition report and is currently reviewing. We hope to undertake this work in early 2022 to develop a plan for resurfacing some roads in 2022, but more importantly, undertaking a more aggressive road resurfacing program in 2023/2024 which would consider the issuance of general obligations bonds to undertake extensive repair/replacement throughout the city. This potential bond issuance would coincide with the payoff of a previously issued series of bonds around 2015.

**Stormwater Management:** The City and OHM staff recently met to review a proposal to undertake a stormwater management plan for the City. The City continuously is engaged by residents related to stormwater issues they are facing across the City. The ultimate plan would be to undertake an exhaustive process to map the existing stormwater system throughout the City, undertake hydraulic modeling to determine capacities of the system, and then put together a capital improvements plan to systematically make upgrades to the system which will denote cost and priority. Staff, in consultation with the utilities committee and finance department hopes to undertake at least part of this plan/process in 2022.

## ZONING/CODE/PLANNING

**Condemnation and Demolition:** Staff is currently working with SSEG to explore ways to increase the expediency and efficiency of the City's condemnation and demolition process. Although not needed often, when it is, time is usually of the essence. We hope to have recommendations for Council considering in the upcoming weeks.

**Tree Assessment:** Similar to the sidewalk assessment program, the City is exploring a tree assessment program for property owners who need to remove dead, dying or diseased trees from their property. The cost of removing a tree can be very expensive. Through the assessment program, property owners would have the option of, in essence, financing the removal through an assessment on their real estate taxes. Additionally, we are proposing to amend the code to ensure the services of a certified arborist are engaged to determine the health of trees being removed. Additionally, it may be worth considering a requirement be included to replant a new tree in its place to ensure long term health of the City's tree canopy.

**Signage Code:** The City is also undertaking a comprehensive review of our signage code – related to both permanent and temporary signage. This review is aimed at simplifying our code for greater clarity while also taking into consideration some recent court rulings at the state level regarding enforcement capabilities. We hope to have a draft for consideration in early Spring of 2022.

## PARKS AND RECREATION

**Costal Management Assistance Grant:** on October 15, 2021, the City submitted two (2) pre-applications to ODNR for their Coastal Management Assistance Grant Funding. Upwards of \$500,000 (which requires a 1:1 match) is available to communities within a limited coastal area to help fund projects related to coastal planning, public access, water quality, land acquisition, habitat restoration and research. On November 2, the city was notified by ODNR that we are being encouraged to re-submit both of our applications for full consideration. The City submitted two (2) pre-applications:

- A request to secure funding to increase public access to the developing beach behind the water plant and
- A coastal planning grant that would cover the area of Lakefront Park eastward to the Huron River also encompassing the northern portion of main street.

With Council approval, staff is preparing to submit both formal applications to ODNR on December 13<sup>th</sup> and will keep Council and the community apprized as to the results of those funding applications. A big thank you our planning, parks and recreation, law, and engineering departments for all their efforts on the formal grant submission.

**Ice Skating Rink:** The new ice-skating rink for Fabens Park has been received and City crews have begun installation. It is placed on top of the existing tennis courts. Staff will continue installation efforts over the next few weeks in anticipation of colder temperatures come January/February. Once the rink is ready, the City will ensure the community is aware through multiple channels of notification. A big thank you again to all the donors to the project and staff who is working on installation and eventual maintenance and prepping through the upcoming winter months.

**Winterfest:** A huge thank you to the Chamber of Commerce, all volunteers and the City staff (primarily those in Parks and Recreation and our Safety Forces) for all their efforts on putting on a tremendous Winterfest event on December 4<sup>th</sup>. Feedback has been tremendous, and I know organizers have already started thinking about ways to add to and expand the event next year.

## FINANCE

**2022 Budget Preparation:** The finance committee unanimously approved the budget and recommended its consideration to City Council, with a few additional considerations. The budget was sent to Council at the end of November and will be presented at the public hearing on Tuesday, December 14<sup>th</sup>. A link to the currently proposed budget book is provided below:

<https://stories.opengov.com/huronoh/published/NRBeyu58b>

**Township Partnerships:** The City is very appreciative for the various financial partnerships between the City and Huron Township, specifically the joint Fire and Recreation agreements. The City received notice the Township has verbally agreed to contribute to the Huron Joint Recreation District in 2022. Staff would like to thank the Township trustees for their support.

**Monthly Financial Report:** The November financial report was emailed to the Finance Committee and Council. Please let the Finance Director know if you would like to see any other information in the monthly financial report.

**American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA):** Staff will present a preliminary spending plan to the Finance Committee at Monday's (12/13) Finance Committee Meeting at 5 pm in Council Chambers. The agenda packet was sent to the committee and Council with the ARPA spending plan. The following link will direct you to the ARPA spending plan, as well.

<https://stories.opengov.com/huronoh/published/YTvWGM0YO>

## WATER DEPARTMENT

### Active Projects:

- The annual valve exercising continues.

- Plant expansion construction has begun – removal of earth cover over sedimentation tanks 4 and 5 completed.
- Intake water door improvements have been completed, installed and tested.
- Removed aged 480v chemical control panels throughout the plant. Disconnected 480v breaker and lockout – equipment no longer utilized.
- Manual readings of water meters with failed transmitters completed. Approximately 300 meters required manual reading due to battery failures in the Zenner radio transmitters.
- AFSCME negotiations are nearly complete. Expect to pass CBA in the near future.

**Rye Beach Tower:** The City was contacted last month by Lake Erie Shores and Islands about possibly repainting a portion of the tower to reflect the organization's new logo. The cost of the project would be entirely born by LESI. The City is still collecting additional details and will keep Council apprised as more information is gathered.

**Ohio BUILDS Grants:** The State of Ohio announced the final \$109 million in grant awards (as part of a larger \$250 million funding pot) this week. Unfortunately, the City's \$5 million application to aid in the cost of a new 2-million-gallon elevated water tower was not successful. It would appear Erie County fared poorly in the process, securing less than \$50,000 among its jurisdictions. The City will continue to explore other means if financing the project through additional grant opportunities or through organic growth of the water utility/system to additional customers.

## PERSONNEL

**Annual Report:** The City plans to reinstitute the production of an annual report. Hopefully to be published and available in February, the report is meant to provide the public with a summary of department outcomes and accomplishments for 2021 and a snapshot of the City's financial position. We feel it is very important to both celebrate the accomplishments and hard work of our various departments and staff while also increasing the avenues that we can communicate to the public about the work of the City.

**Director of Operations:** The first round of application acceptance for the position has closed. Although the City will continue to accept applications for the position until filled, we have begun the interview process with qualified candidates. We will continue to keep Council apprised of the process as we inch closer to hiring for the position.

## CONTRACTS

2021 will be busy with renegotiation of several multi-year agreements/contracts that expire this year. Agreements/contracts to be reviewed and renegotiated for 2021 include:

- OHM Advisors (Engineering) – **Completed.**
- Erie Soil and Water Conservation District (Engineering) – **Completed.**



- Chief Building Official and Inspection Services (Building) – **Completed.**
- Prosecutor (Court) - **Completed**
- HJRD Annual Agreement (Recreation) – **Completed.**
- Huron Township Fire Protection Agreement - **Completed**
- Seeley, Savidge, Ebert & Gourash Co., LLP (Law) - **Completed.**
- FOP – Patrol Officers (Police) – **Completed.**
- FOP – Sergeants (Police) – **Completed.**
- IAFF (Fire) – **Formal Negotiations in Progress.**
- AFCSME – **Formal Negotiations in Progress.**

The Garbage contract with Republic is set to expire in the summer of 2022. The City met with representatives of Republic this week to begin laying out a calendar and plan for ongoing discussions in 2022. The City anticipates integrating the Utilities Committee and Finance Committee in these discussions as they progress.

## UPCOMING MEETINGS

### December

**Finance Committee Meeting:** Monday, December 13, 2021 at 5:00pm in the Council Chambers.

**Building and Zoning Appeals:** Monday, December 13, 2021 at 6:30pm in the Council Chambers.

**City Council Meeting:** Tuesday, December 14, 2021 at 6:30pm in the Council Chambers.

**Planning Commission:** Wednesday, December 15, 2021 at 5:00pm in the Council Chambers.

**City Offices Closed for Christmas Holiday:** City offices will close at 12:00pm on Thursday, December 23, 2021 and will reopen on Monday, December 27, 2021.

**City Council Meeting:** Tuesday December 28, 2021 at 6:30pm in the Council Chambers.

**City Offices Closed for New Year's Holiday:** City offices will close at 12:00pm on Thursday, December 30, 2021 and will reopen on Monday, January 3, 2021.