



CITY OF HURON  
CITY MANAGER'S REPORT

April 9, 2021

Matthew Lasko, City Manager

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

**Ardagh:** The Planning Commission approved the site plan for all 3 phases of future development of Ardagh. The Design Review Board approved phase 1, with a broader design package anticipated for phases 2 and 3. Phase 2 and 3, which is the major addition, is contingent upon a vacation of ROW request from the developer to the City. They have requested, and we have begun evaluating, a request to vacate roughly 350-450 ft. of Sawmill Parkway. This will ultimately require review and approval of Council.

From a construction standpoint, site clearance has commenced on the additional seventy (70) acres of land along with removal of western portions of the parking lots in front of the existing loading docks.

The City also is in receipt of a Community Reinvestment Area tax abatement request which is currently being reviewed for completeness. Upon verification of completeness, the request will be considered by the Tax Incentive Review Council.

**USGS/Harbor North:** The Design Review Board officially approved the design and landscape package for the new USGS facility. Anticipated completion date is still slated for early to mid-summer 2021.

**Stride Mobility:** The company continues to move forward with construction activities on its new facility on Sawmill Parkway. Construction is on schedule and is anticipated to be completed in the upcoming months.

**ConAgra:** The City will be moving forward with issuing a Request for Qualifications and Proposals in the upcoming weeks for the site. To broaden the marketing strategy and to reach a deeper developer pool, the City anticipates partnering with The Montrose Group, LLC out of Columbus – a highly respected and proven economic development consulting firm.

## INFRASTRUCTURE/STREETS

**Sawmill Parkway:** The City continues to finalize the financing and funding plans for Sawmill Parkway prior to finalizing construction drawings and ultimate bid documents. Based on all the funding streams involved and ultimately seasonality of the roadwork construction season, the project is anticipated to occur in Spring of 2022. A summary of the funding thus far for the approximate \$3.4-\$3.5M project include:

- \$412,500 from OPWC which has already been awarded (just waiting on final agreement with OPWC)

- \$1,000,000 from Jobs Ohio – the City has received a conditional offer letter from Jobs Ohio and submitted a formal application for funding. We are hoping to get State Controlling Board approval in April.
- The City has been made aware that ODOT Jobs and Commerce is reserving \$250,000 for the project. This will still need to be approved by our local MPO and a grant agreement will need to be entered into between ODOT and the City.
- The City has formally responded to EDA's Letter of Further Clarification and provided all required/requested additional documentation to date. The City hopes to hear back on potential final funding determination in the upcoming weeks.

**Berlin Road Project:** Bids have been received by the City. Prior to bringing a contract to Council for consideration, the City first wanted to wait to see if our application for low-interest financing would be approved by OWDA. The City will know the results of the application by late April with the contract anticipated to be presented to Council for consideration in early May.

## ZONING/CODE

**Personnel:** Erik Engle, the recently hired Planning and Zoning Administrator, will begin employment with the City on Monday April 19<sup>th</sup>. In this role, Erik will be tasked with overseeing the day to activities of the planning, zoning, and code functions of the City. We look forward to Erik's arrival and believe he will be a valuable addition to the team.

## PARKS AND RECREATION

**Paddle Shack LLC/Scooter Ding Ding:** Doug Steinwart is working with the Law Department on agreements with Paddle Shack LLC and Scooter Ding Ding. Paddle Shack LLC is a local company that leases a storage building at Nickel Plate Beach and rents out beach-related gear, and Scooter Ding Ding is an electric scooter business looking to have presence at the Huron Boat Basin and Nickel Plate Beach.

**Fish Cleaning Station:** Staff is working with engineering and ODNR officials on a potential agreement for a fish cleaning station that would come before Council. One of the next steps will be working with the Erie County Sewer District to determine how to handle waste. ODNR is working on a preliminary draft for review.

**Donations:** Practical Gardeners Club of Huron is donating a tree to be planted at the Huron Boat Ramp in commemoration of the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Club. Three (3) benches were donated near or on the Huron River – Marleen Behrens in honor of Linda McGory, Cassie Monica for family, and Carmeuse Lime.

**Safety Town:** The City has started taking reservations for Safety Town. This year, Safety Town is divided into two sessions to allow us to serve children entering Kindergarten and 1<sup>st</sup> Grade who missed last year during the pandemic. Safety Town will be held at Shawnee Elementary June 14-17 and June 21-24. Registrations for "extended camp" are full for the first session and are limited for the second session.

**Parks:** The parks are getting busier as the weather warms up, with Fabens Park in full swing and the Boat Basin welcoming spring boaters. The parks' restrooms are scheduled to open the week of April 12<sup>th</sup>.

## FINANCE

**Electric Substation Bond Issuance:** On 2/23/21 Council approved to issue \$1.5 million in revenue bonds for the outstanding substation debt. \$1.5 million was issued on 3/30/2021 after using \$2.1 million from the AMPT sale to pay down the outstanding notes of \$3.5 million maturing on 3/31/21. Approximately \$100,000 of the \$1.5 million issued was used to pay the cost of debt issuance and interest on the 2020 notes. The \$1.5 million bond issuance was awarded to JP Morgan Chase with an interest rate of 3.23%, for a 20-year term, which amounts to an average of \$100,000 of debt service payments per year (lower than budgeted).

**Water Shutoff Moratorium:** The moratorium on water shutoffs expired on March 31. After sending 3<sup>rd</sup> notices and tagging doors of delinquent accounts, **39** accounts remain delinquent (down from 114 delinquent accounts from three weeks ago), totaling **\$8,664** in outstanding bills (1.4% of total billed). Most accounts currently outstanding are repeat delinquent customers. Although stated on the notices, door tags and suggested to customers calling, no customers have been interested in setting up a payment plan. Therefore, staff **recommends not to extend** the moratorium beyond March 31. Staff will notify Council if delinquent accounts are higher than average during the current billing cycle. Shutoffs will not occur in the current cycle until mid-May.

**American Rescue Plan (ARP):** The \$1.9 trillion bill was approved and signed into law on March 11. The City is estimated to receive approximately \$1.35 million. Here is what we know as of April 8<sup>th</sup>:

- The State is expected to receive the funds in May and has 60 days to disburse funds to the local governments. The City is expected to receive 1 of 2 disbursements by July (50% of total award). The second disbursement will not be received until 12 months after the first disbursement.
- The City will have until December 2024 to use these funds.
- The Auditor of State's Office released accounting guidance this week on proper recording of the funds. The Office recommends creating a separate special revenue fund, like the accounting used for the CARES ACT funds.

- Official U.S. Treasury guidance has not been released on permissible uses. Although the bill generally defined allowable uses for the funds (e.g., revenue loss and economic assistance), Treasury guidance will provide a better roadmap for the City as a local ARP strategy will be developed.

Staff will keep the finance committee and council apprised of Huron's final allocation, along with a listing of eligible uses when official guidance is released.

## WATER DEPARTMENT

### Active Projects:

- Engineering nearing completion for tub settler project. Once completed, the City will move forward with advertising for bids for the construction of the project. We anticipate this to occur in the upcoming weeks.
- Rye Beach water tower repair schedule for 5/3/21

### Issues Alert:

- Filter #1 Media Disruption – It was recently determined that Filter #1 was performing poorly when compared to Filters 2 through 5. Filter 1 was inspected, and media disruption was found to be the cause of the shortened filter runs. They are in the process of obtaining quotes for new filter media for Filter 1 only, and this would be an in-house installation.
- Sedimentation Basin #5 Rake System – The rake chain snapped in winter temperatures. Walker will be providing new parts, with City staff responsible for demo/removal of broken items, and Kirk Brothers installing the new parts.

## PERSONNEL

**Extension of Emergency Sick Leave:** Congress passed the Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA) in 2020 requiring employers to provide employees with 80 hours of paid emergency sick leave (in addition to the employee's normal sick leave) for specified reasons related to COVID-19. The FFCRA was effective April 1, 2020, through December 31, 2020. In January 2021, the City extended this policy through March 31, 2021, under the City's home rule Charter. The American Rescue Plan gives employers the option to extend the FFCRA through September 2021, with other eligible reasons such as obtaining the COVID-19 vaccine. The extended policy is voluntary for employers and can be effective from April 1, 2021 through September 2021. Staff is currently preparing a revised policy to put in front of Council for approval at the April 27<sup>th</sup> meeting.

## 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)
- Prosecutor (Court)
- HJRD Annual Agreement (Recreation) – **Completed.**
- Huron Township Fire Protection Agreement (Fire)
- Seeley, Savidge, Ebert & Gourash Co., LLP (Law)
- FOP – Patrol Officers (Police)
- FOP – Sergeants (Police)
- IAFF (Fire)
- AFCSME

It should be noted we are likely to hold off on consideration and negotiation of both FOP agreements, IAFF and AFCSME until end of Q2 to have a better understanding of any COVID related impacts (or lack thereof) to the City's budget.

## UPCOMING MEETINGS

### April

**Council Strategic Visioning Session:** Saturday, April 17, 2021 from 9:00am to 12:00pm in the Captain's Room at the Huron Yacht Club.

**Council Meeting:** Tuesday, April 27, 2021 at 6:30pm in Council Chambers.

**Planning Commission/Design Review Board:** Wednesday, April 28, 2021 at 5:00pm in Council Chambers.

### May

**Extended Council Work Session:** Tuesday, May 25, 2021 from 5:00pm to 6:30pm in Council Chambers.