



CITY OF HURON
CITY MANAGER'S REPORT

October 20, 2023

Matthew Lasko, City Manager

ECONOMIC/COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

ConAgra: Based on recent Planning Commission approval of the conceptual site plan, the City held another meeting with the development team to talk through next steps. Ridgestone has engaged their own engineering firm to complete the necessary submittals to planning commission for plat review.

Two Rivers: The public hearing at City Council related to Phase I PUD has been completed. At the next Council meeting on Tuesday July 11th, the Council will consider the PUD request as well as the Development Agreement for Phase I. If approved, developers can move forward with plans to commence construction on the twenty-seven (27) homes comprising Phase I. Additional Phases of the project will require Planning Commission and Council approval.

Norfolk Southern Holdings: The City hosted Solomon Jackson from Norfolk Southern approximately a week ago to talk about their holdings and the future of the Carmuese Plant. Per Norfolk, the lease with Carmuese expires in early 2024 and neither party desires to renew it. As such, Carmuese continues to work on site cleanup as required by the lease. Upon vacation, Norfolk Southern will be working with the City to ultimately facilitate the sale and development of their waterfront acreage.

Oster's: The City continues to work diligently with our non-profit partners to continue relocation efforts for residents at the park. We believe approximately twenty-one (21) households have physically relocated. Also, five (2) trailers have been moved to new locations for residents with two (2) more trailers remaining to be moved in the next few weeks – with one of those likely to occur this week weather permitting. In recent days, additional households have located housing to eventually move over the next couple weeks as well. In total, there are only six (6) occupied units remaining on site with only three (3) of those still needing to identify housing for relocation.

The City has commenced demolition activity on vacant units on site, more specifically, those homes owned by the City, Osters Mobile Home Park, LLC, or Robert P. Day individually. To date, ten (10) mobile homes have been demolished with another two (2) pending for now. The City has also contracted out the asbestos survey for the residential home on site as this will be needed prior to bidding out the demolition of that structure. We should have the report shortly.

Residential Development: It is our understanding that several sites in Huron and Huron Township are of interest to Triban Investment and their potential clients. During the week of July 31, we were updated that the company is working on several LOI's for potential land purchases. We will keep Council up to date and the identity of these site become known and the likelihood of development is better understood.

Lakeway Manufacturing: With a recent corporate acquisition completed, the City is in receipt of plans for the facility requesting approval of a major expansion. The company, set to present it to the Planning Commission later this month, will be seeking approval of a nearly 11,000 square foot addition estimate of \$1.5M in value. We are appreciative of the company commitment to Huron and plans for future growth.

Townhomes: The Planning Commission last week approved the site plan for the eventual construction of fourteen (14) market-rate townhomes to be constructed on the private vacant lot on the west side of Main Street across from the Comfort Inn. This type of development is supported by both the Vision 2020 Masterplan and the soon to be recommended downtown/Mainstreet Masterplan.

Huron Chamber of Commerce: The Huron Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors has been in ongoing conversations to become an affiliate of the Greater Sandusky Partnership. Due to financial constraints at the Chamber, the Board has been exploring ways to ensure the long-term viability of the Chamber to ensure ongoing representation and advocacy for its members and the broader business community. At the Boars meeting in September, it was unanimously voted to allow GSP to begin drafting necessary documents to lay out a proposed framework for consolidation. The Board agrees this is a beneficial result to ensure the future operations of the Chamber and benefits to its members. I will keep the Council updated as these talks continue.

Shawnee Elementary School: The City and staff continue to get regular inquiries from the public related to the intended use of the now sold Shawnee Elementary School. Although we cannot say with absolute certainty the intended use, quick and easy research seems to suggest the site has been purchased by a company that operates in the Charter School field. If true, the addition of alternative educational choices for our students and families is positive. However, there is also evidence that incoming charter schools tend to draw students in part from local school districts – which can prove financially damaging in this instance to Huron City School and Firelands Montessori and even nearby districts. If any additional information is made available to the City, we will share this with the Council and the broader community.

INFRASTRUCTURE/STREETS/UTILITIES/IT

Rt 6 Phase II: Staff and Council hosted a second work session related to the second phase of Route 6. This work session aimed to finalize the preferred conceptual design of engineers and City staff as well as reviewing the possible options that were considered and will cover rough costs for certain options. Regardless of the preferred option, and final design decision will need to be approved by ODOT District 3 based on results of traffic studies and past precedence.

Sawmill Parkway: A walkthrough was carried out with City Staff, OHM Project team and Smith Paving to create a final punch list. This final list was agreed upon and we hope that all points will be addressed by the end of October.

East Side Sidewalks: The City was notified by Governor DeWine's office on June 9th that the Ohio Department of Transportation awarded the City of Huron and Huron Township \$650,000 for the east side walk project. The funds were awarded through ODOT's Highway Safety Improvement Program and were highly competitive since it was a statewide program. This award is in addition to the previously awarded \$120,000~ from Erie County.

We truly believe our multi-jurisdictional partnership and collaboration with Huron Township was instrumental in this award. A big thank you as well to Stu Hamilton and really OHM Advisors – as OHM Advisors prepared the application. This project is slated for 2024 construction.

The City has been granted the required easements to complete the segment of sidewalk on the northside of Rt6, between Gateway and Anchorage. We would like to thank our residents and Beachwood Cove HOA for working with the City to allow us to install this critical portion of the sidewalk. It is intended to bid this out at the same time as the main sidewalk project.

Pavement Condition and 2023+ Resurfacing: At our October 24th Council Meeting, the Council will be considering a change order for the design of this project. This will convert the design from comprehensive asphalt resurfacing to selective concrete reconstruction. Based on recent conversations with OHM, we are anticipating being able to bid the comprehensive selective reconstruction and patching of the Old Homestead I and II and Chaska neighborhoods in either November or December of this year.

Berlin Road Sidewalks: The City continues to receive requests to consider sidewalk installation on Berlin Road – south of Shawnee School. We unsuccessfully applied for Safe Routes to School funding in 2022. And with the school ceasing to exist moving forward, this source of funding is not an option. The City will look to research other funding opportunities and placement of this project in a future capital planning year. We will also need to engage the railroad to determine what hurdles exist to install a pedestrian crossing over the rail tracks.

Bike Lane Repainting: This project went out to bid on April 24th, 2023, and closed May 11th, 2023. We received two bidders, but unfortunately both were outside the 10% allowance of engineers estimate. Both bids were rejected. Staff will analyze why the delta between the estimate and bids was so wide.

General: Reminder, there will be a lot of utility work over the summer months, and we wanted to alert our Residents. We will have two fiber internet providers starting to install their fiber for their "Fiber To The Home" (FTTH) offering. This is a wonderful expansion of service providers for the city giving Residents not only choice, but also hopefully driving down the cost. The three companies are OmniFiber, Buckeye and Frontier.

We will also see our OHM partners throughout the city for the remainder of the year collecting our Stormwater asset inventory.

If you have any questions regarding ongoing Utility work in your neighborhood, please reach out to Stuart Hamilton at 419-433-5000 x1104 or email stuart.hamilton@huronohio.us.

Huron Public Power Third Transformer: On January 17th, 2023, an RFP was released to purchase, deliver, ramp up and test this third 69kV transformer. The RFP closed, and we received a single respondent. We have issued a request for clarification on some technical details, and if these are answered satisfactorily, we will bring back legislation to award it to the Council soon. Legislation was presented to Council at the April 25th meeting for approval to purchase from Niagara Power Transformer. The bid price was \$1,039,837.00, with 100% due at time of receipt.

Huron Public Power Expansion: The City is getting close to bidding out our first expansion project for Huron Public Power. This project will allow Huron Public Power to be extended northward down Rye Beach Road, under the railroad tracks and across the entrance to Sawmill Parkway. By doing so, the City will be able to pick up additional customers along Sawmill Parkway on a case-by-case basis should property owners be interested in switching their power provider to Huron Public Power.

Huron Public Power Rate Study: Staff engaged Sawvel and Associates of Findlay, OH to carry out a rate study for HPP. This cost-of-service study will look at our distribution and capital costs, along with our revenue history and projections to ensure this utility is efficient and can keep expanding to serve other businesses and start serving residents.

Website: A review committee comprising of four staff members was formed in the spring to review options for partners to replace our current website. The committee requested presentations for eight providers for a preliminary round review. Six vendors presented and the committee narrowed these options down to three for a deeper dive. In August, the final three carried out in-depth presentations and took question and answer sessions. After final voting, [Revize](#) of Troy, Michigan was selected. We will enter negotiations on modules and pricing and hope to return to Council for approval to move forward in early October.

Staff decided rather than to try and put this project out to bid, we would investigate multiple options and find the best fit for the job rather than the best response to an RFP. This is common for technology type projects as an RFP is not able to capture all the nuances needed, regardless of how well it is written. A robust vetting process of a solution and how each will fit our needs is more thorough and ultimately will return a more tailored solution.

ZONING/CODE/PLANNING

Coastal Management Assistance Grants: Staff were informed that City was awarded the Coastal Management Assistance Grant from the Ohio Department of Natural Resources in the amount of \$35,000. Reminder this is a 1:1 matching grant. Funds will be utilized to engage the community and stakeholders in a lakefront masterplan primarily in the vicinity of the former Showboat property westward through Lakefront Park. The City will be issuing a Request for Qualifications in the upcoming weeks to select the desired architectural firm to lead the efforts.

Main Street Corridor Plan: Staff presented the final draft of the Main Street / Downtown plan to the Planning Commission during the week of October 16th. The Planning Commission voted unanimously to recommend the plan – as currently designed – to the City Council. The City is currently working with OHM to select a final date to make a presentation to Council for hopeful plan adoption.

Designated Outdoor Refreshment Area: As part of the main street/downtown plan – we heard from many folks about the desire to have a designated outdoor refreshment area, also referred to as a DORA, in Huron. DORA's are governed by the State of Ohio and have recently been approved in Sandusky, Milan, and Port Clinton. Staff has met internally to begin discussing the possibility of such an area within the City and begin to understand the potential safety and operational challenges of such a district. We are still very early on in the process and ultimately, if moving forward, will be subject to significant public and stakeholder feedback.

PARKS AND RECREATION

Tennis Courts: Fencing has been installed, nets have been assembled and installed and the courts have been striped. Area grading and seeding is complete. A punch list walkthrough was carried out on the 11th of October. These courts look great.

624 Berlin Road: The City completed presentation of the final plan during a joint presentation to City Council and Planning Commission on August 22nd. The plan was very well received. The City is now currently looking for opportunities during the 2024 budgeting process to move some of the recommendations forward as early as next year including parking improvements, fishing piers, benches, and landscaping/plantings.

FINANCE

September Financial Report: The September financial report is linked below. Income tax revenue was up 7%, or \$225,000, from September of 2022. This increase continues to mostly be due to the Ardagh expansion. However, income tax increases from Sawmill Creek Resort and Mucci Farms play a factor in this growth, as well. The unencumbered general fund balance at the end of June was \$2.2 million, or 36% of annual expenditures. Major revenue sources are showing growth in 2023 compared to 2022. Most notably, interest earnings are more than budgeted at the end of September, and up 366% from 2022. Nickel Plate Beach parking revenue had a strong August and September as total revenue for the year exceeded budget by \$5,000.

<https://stories.opengov.com/huronoh/published/wYFAKCr4o>

2024 Budget: Budget meetings are scheduled for five consecutive Mondays from October 23rd through November 20th, at 4 PM in Council Chambers.

WATER DEPARTMENT

Recent Activity:

- Huron Water Filtration Plant received a good report from the OEPA limited scope site survey. There were no violations and recommendations were made for sludge lagoon rehabilitation and additional clearwell storage.
- Smith Paving completed work removing the north sludge retention dike.

Active Project Updates:

Alternate Intake/Sludge Lagoon: A proposal was received from Kleinfelder to undertake the design for this project. Clarifications were returned to them recently and staff are waiting for an updated proposal. A grant loan combination was applied for this project through OPWC for an amount not to exceed \$262,500.

West Side Water Tower: On June 16th, The City was awarded \$5M from Governor DeWine's Ohio BUILDS water and wastewater infrastructure grant program. This is the largest allowable grant in the State of Ohio, and we believe it to be the largest single grant the City of Huron has ever received. We are thankful to our State and Local partners that help make projects like this possible.

South Main Street Water Line Replacement: Based on recent conversations with OHM, we are anticipating being able to bid this project in November or December of this year which will also include the complete resurfacing and select curb replacement of Forest Hills Drive, Hickory Road, and Valleyview Drive. The City has also been asked to consider, as part of this project, installing a crosswalk at Valleyview Drive to connect to the sidewalks on the east side of Main Street.

PERSONNEL/ADMINISTRATION

Board and Commissions: The City recently sent out letters to all Boards and Commissions who have members whose terms are set to expire. The City anticipates doing this annually moving forward. The intent of the letters is to let the Boards and Commissions whose terms are set to expire and detail who incumbents or interested parties can make an application to the City if interested in a particular Board or Commission.

Finance Specialist Position: The Finance Specialist position has been posted for a few weeks. Six applications were submitted, with three being interviewed. The Finance Director is confident one of these applicants can fill the position. However, most of these applicants must give a four-week notice. The Finance Director is in the process of hiring a part-time employee to fill the gap, so the department does not fall too far behind on payroll and accounts payable.

The City is sad to receive the resignation of Alex Hoyt at the Water Filtration Plant. We wish him all the best with his future endeavors.

Communications: As part of the 2024 budget process, the City is looking at adding a position to the administration that would partially be focused on communications (both internally and externally). This Council has elevated the level of transparency of the City the last 4 years but is always looking for ways to diversify how we connect with residents and stakeholders. Elements of such a position include but are not limited to managing press releases, ground breakings, ribbon cuttings, social media accounts across departments, new stories, newsletters, annual reports, e-newsletters, and website administration. As such, the administration will be looking to add this position to the 2024. More details will be forthcoming during the budget meetings over the next few weeks.

AGREEMENTS

N/A

CONTRACTS

- OHM Advisors (Engineering) – **Expires 12/31/23.**
- HJRD Annual Agreement (Recreation) - **Expires 12/31/23.**
- Dispatch Agreement – Erie County Sheriff – **Expires 12/31/23.**
- City Prosecutor Employment Agreement – expires **12/31/23.**
- Personnel Officer Employment Agreement – expires **12/31/23.**
- Erie Soil and Water Conservation District (Engineering) – **Expires 1/31/24.**
- Seeley, Savidge, Ebert & Gourash Co., LLP (Law) – **Expires 6/3/24.**
- Dynegy Electric Aggregation Agreement – expires **7/30/25.**
- Dynegy Electric Standard Large Stable Service Agreement – expires **08/2025**
- School Resource Officer – **Expires 8/31/26.**
- Republic Services – **Expires 12/31/26.**

UPCOMING MEETINGS

October Meetings:

- Finance Committee Budget Meeting – Monday, October 23rd at 4:00pm in the Council Chambers.
 - City Council Meeting – Tuesday, October 24th at 6:30 in the Council Chambers.
 - Records Commission – Thursday, October 26th at 9:00am in the main conference room.
 - Finance Committee Budget Meeting – Monday, October 30th at 4:00pm in the Council Chambers.
- More details will be forthcoming, but please mark your calendars for Winterfest 2023. The event is currently scheduled for Saturday December 2nd.