

(For March, 2018)

Around the City with City Manager David Thayer

As previously mentioned, a major plank in our economic development plan is bringing people to our community. Whether as new permanent or part-time residents, or as long or short term visitors, we need their purchasing power to fuel our economic engine. One theme we are following closely is to improve the city's surrounding aesthetics to appeal to one's eye. A by-product of that effort is we are creating a more desirable place to live for our current residents.

As we address blighted conditions, we understand that you have to provide a reasonable method to dispose of undesirable items, and the city is engaged in providing those venues.

Last year with our large collection program held at the DPW garage, in 3 collections, we hauled away 82 tons of unwanted or unusable goods. We have set the dates for 2018. They are Saturday, June 2, 2018 from 8 a.m. to noon, and Saturday, September 8, 2018 from 8 a.m. to noon. I want to establish going forward that we will provide these collections on the weekends following Memorial Day and Labor Day holiday weekends.

We have also set the dates for our Spring and Fall brush and leaf pick-up. Those dates are the weeks of April 30th and October 15th. Leaves that are bagged and brush that is less than 4" in diameter and less than 8' in length with the butts aimed at the street will be picked up on the designated day set for that area of the city.

Last fall, we identified 51 junk vehicles in and around the city. We successfully had many removed, some were licensed and made operable, and some we are still working on. This spring, we will re-energize our efforts in having additional junk vehicle issues addressed. We did set up a program with Tru-Recycling, that if you have a valid title for the vehicle, they will come and haul it away for you and give you a check for its scrap value.

We will continue our efforts to remove dangerous, uninhabitable, dilapidated buildings from our city. It is a big and expensive task, but one that must be done. On an irregular basis, the State offers a grant program for local units of governments to help assist with demolition costs. One of the conditions normally imposed is that property must be publically owned. I have several qualifying properties identified, and am ready to move forward with a grant application when the opportunity presents itself again. Meanwhile, the city will continue to try and identify funds to address this issue.

We are amending our noxious weed ordinance. The previous language required the city to annually publish in the newspaper the requirement that one must cut their grass. Then, on June 1st, July 15th, and September 1st, if it was not cut, the city would have it cut with the cost attached to the property. To me that approach did not work. Going forward, on the 15th in the months from May through September, the Police Chief will notify the landowner in writing that a nuisance exists when the grass exceeds 8" in length and must be cut within 10 days. If the nuisance is not abated, then the city will have it cut with the cost attached to the property. In previous Cities that I served using this approach, I found 80% of landowners cut their grass.

The moral of the story is, if we all take pride in our city, we will be successful abating the blight that we all dread seeing.