

(For May 2018)

Around the City with City Manager David Thayer

Blight was a lively conversation for years before I arrived in Iron River and continues to be so today. We are making some progress on several different fronts, but not at the pace some of our community members expect.

There are 13 houses that have been or will be torn down this year. We have identified another 10 City owned units that need to be demolished and are hopeful another round of state funding will be become available for housing demolition grants. We are trying to get ahead of the foreclosure cycle that leaves inhabitable houses behind by aggressively implementing our Property Maintenance Ordinance. During this summer, we will inspect properties and provide notice of violations of the Code to the homeowner. Hopefully, we can inspire them to make the necessary improvements. If the notice falls on hollow ears, we will issue citations for the violations. I am sure after our round of inspections, we will find additional homes that are beyond repair. In those cases, we will start the process to have those buildings razed.

The old commercial building located at 111 E. Genesee Street was acquired by the City in late April. We have taken the multiple steps required to prepare the building for demolition. It is my hope the building will be razed, and the property restoration completed by mid-June. This blighted building has been a center of conversation by many for years and finally the issue will be resolved.

This year we went from winter to summer. With that seasonal change, our properties are greening up. My review as I drive around town is that most residents take pride in their yards and keep them mowed and groomed. However, there are some that just do not see the reason to do so. Previously, the Noxious Weed Ordinance required the City to publish, for two

consecutive weeks in the Spring, the requirement that one must cut their grass. We amended the ordinance last winter. Now the amended ordinance requires the City to provide written notice to the landowner of a violation of the ordinance if their grass exceeds 8 inches in height and gives them 10 days to abate the nuisance. With failure to do so, the City will come and mow the grass and bill the landowner for doing so. My previous experience is that by giving written notice, 85% – 90% of homeowners mow their grass within that timeframe. I hope that holds true here as well.

Last summer, we identified 32 disabled vehicles that violated our ordinance and have had some success resolving the issue in each instance. Again, this summer we will step up our efforts to identify additional vehicles that violate the ordinance and have them removed or have the violations corrected.

We hold the large item pick-up for unwanted items twice a year at the DPW garage and had witness, in part, great success in having yards cleaned up. For those that have not taken advantage of this disposal service, they are still responsible for removing blight and we will be issuing citations to those that do not clean up their yards. As a reminder, the City brush yard across from the school on Garfield Avenue is open seven days a week for leaf and brush disposal.

As a City, we continuously look for ways to assist our citizens in finding convenient and safe ways to dispose of their waste. Thank you to the many that do.