

(For October 2018)

## Around the City . . . . . with City Manager David Thayer

As a result of negotiations, when the three communities consolidated in 2000, it was resolved that the City Council would be represented by a mayor, who was elected citywide, and four councilpersons elected from a specific geographic area of the new city known as a precinct. As time moved forward, it became difficult to recruit enough certified election workers to staff four voting precincts and to have candidates come forward and run for the office of City Council from each precinct.

To address these issues, City Council directed the City Attorney and myself to work with the Attorney General's Office to draft language to amend our City Charter. The Council's vision was to have four councilpersons elected at large like the Mayor is currently elected. We engaged the Attorney General's Office and agreed to amendatory language to the Charter to accomplish the Council's intent.

Before any amendment can be made to the Charter, the city electorate must approve the amendment. The following is the ballot language that Council is presenting to the electorate for their consideration:

**Proposed Amendment to Sections 1.04, 2.02(a), 2.02(c), 7.01 (e), and 7.02  
of the Charter of the City of Iron River.**

**“Shall the Charter be amended to provide that the four (4) City Council members, each elected from one of four precincts, shall serve the City at large effective January 1, 2019 and thereafter council members shall be nominated and elected at large on a citywide basis?”**

If the amendment is adopted, the Council will continue to be elected on a non-partisan (no political party affiliation) basis. The four current Councilpersons will continue to serve their elected terms. For the two seats whose terms expire December 31, 2019 and are being filled at the 2019 election, any citizen eligible to vote in the City can file a petition to nominate themselves as a candidate for the office of City Council. They can live anywhere in the City and can have any registered voter residing within the City sign their petition. At the general election in November, the two candidates receiving the most votes will be elected to serve. The two councilpersons whose terms expire on December 31, 2021 would follow the same process for filling those seats as experience in 2019.

By expanding the pool of eligible candidates, hopefully we will always be assured that we will have a full Council elected to serve the City.

With the elimination of candidate precincts, we can establish voting precincts as prescribed by statute. State law limits voting precincts to no more than 2,999 residents. Since we have population of 3,029, we could create two voting precincts. Voters from both precincts would cast the same ballot unless the County divided the City into two different County Commissioner districts. Our staffing requirements would be cut in half, from 12 to 6 certified election workers. Our election costs would be reduced as well.

Change is constant and as our population declines, this change is an inevitable consequence.