

(For December 2019)

Around the City with City Manager David Thayer

When I was in graduate school earning my MPA, a wise professor once shared to future municipal managers that if you keep the garbage picked up and you plow the snow from the streets, that should give you time to work and implement your agenda. What he failed to say is that it is difficult to do those tasks with limited resources.

With the first task, we seem to be getting it right. We have a dependable trash collector and we have established a semi-annual large item collection program. We are also chipping away at the blight problem. The second task seems more challenging to master. The Director of Operations for the Marquette County Road Commission stated the storm that hit us over Thanksgiving weekend was the worse he has seen in over 25 years. Before we were able to clean up from the first storm, a bigger storm hit us, both dropping heavy wet snow. The City maintains 41 miles of streets and 21 miles of alleys. In 2010, we had 10 full-time DPW employees with 2 part-time snowplow drivers. Today, we have 5 full-time DPW employees with the same number of roadways to plow. I believe our crew did an outstanding job, given the conditions.

There are several factors that goes into the decision to dispatch our crew with their safety being the number one consideration. They have to eat and sleep just like anyone else that performs public service. They are not pawns in another man's chess game. When weather conditions exist, we work seven days a week, 5 a.m. to 5 p.m. without consideration of overtime cost. We cover major arteries on a 24/7 basis. When we have 48 hours in advance to plan special duties for clean-up, we come in at 2 a.m. Hopefully, for the rest of the winter, snowstorms will come in one at a time, and they drop less than 6 inches, not the 24 inches we experienced over Thanksgiving.

When I was working for the Michigan Legislature, I was overly impressed how just one letter to their representative would impact their vote and even cause legislation to be introduced. I still believe

there are great ideas in our community we would like to hear about. We have created a new venue for our constituents to share their comments regarding their government by sending an E-mail to suggestionbox@ironriver.org. This is not a chat box or a bulletin board, just a location to send a message, an idea, or a concern. The E-mail will not receive a response unless a response is required based on the content. The purpose of this project is for us to become informed of what is on our citizens minds, what they think about our progress, and what they would like to see us do. I am hopeful that we will receive some good ideas to work with.

Enjoy the time with your family and friends over the holidays. It is a time to let go of hard feelings and build new bridges. MERRY CHRISTMAS.

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