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From the Manager

Spotted Around Town: My family had our water meter replaced, and I wanted to give a shout out to the person who did the work, John Franson. My husband Joe, pictured here with John, said that he was right on time and extremely polite and friendly. John thoroughly explained about back pressure stops and other related information. Here's some more information John from Lane Berg. "John started with the City in 1999 in the Street Division and then transferred to Utilities. He has worked in the Customer Service side of the Water System operations for a long time now and has truly excelled at it. John is very knowledgeable about water meters, from installation to meter reading to field testing our industrial meters on-site. John is a perfect fit for customer service and can turn any situation into a positive outcome with his exceptional people skills and ability to uphold City policy and ordinance requirements tactfully." An interesting point is that John's wife, Vicki, works in our Finance Division. Vicki Franson deserves her own lengthy shout-out, and so we'll look forward to that at a later date!



Some Housing Updates: We know that housing continues to be a very pressing issue in Eau Claire, including both the supply-side creation of attainable housing for all income levels and household compositions and the more social service side of ensuring that people have emergency shelter and access to mental health services. Here are some updates...

- **Housing Conference:** Materials from Housing Opportunities Commission’s recent conference can be found here: [Housing Opportunities Commission | City of Eau Claire, Wisconsin \(eauclairewi.gov\)](https://eauclairewi.gov/housing-opportunities-commission)
- **Housing Coordination Roles:** The Council allocated ARPA funding to adding housing coordination capacity. With help from reconfiguration of positions and the ARPA funding, we created the City’s Performance Management Team, which is being tasked with a number of projects, including housing coordination, community engagement, fiscal stability analysis, and the systematic study of every municipal function. As it relates to housing, our goal is to identify and define challenges rapidly and then convene the right decision makers to analyze the best available data to make decisions quickly to address the challenges. The tasks that this team is working on, chiefly at this point by Billie Hufford, include:

- Staffing the Housing Opportunities Commission and supporting their work plan;
- Attending meetings throughout the month with different partners (weekly Gap’s Committee, unhoused bi-weekly discussion, monthly Wisconsin Affordable Housing Action Network, Housing Round Table, Dairyland Housing Coalition Meeting, and others)
- Running an internal monthly “EauStat” housing meeting, which is a comprehensive dive into housing supply and people experiencing homelessness with different departments to talk about strategies. At these meetings, we are tracking data related to the numbers of people who are experiencing homelessness and numbers of units being created.
- Managing the Housing Needs Assessment.

With the addition of Dr. Vang, we will have more hours dedicated to housing as we start looking more closely at EDI and housing and as we undertake planning for the distribution of the remaining \$4 million in ARPA funding. By folding the Housing Manager position into multiple positions, we are able to dedicate more hours than one full-time employee would.

6. Sojourner House and HOT Team

- **Sojourner House**
 - Numbers for November (capacity is 53 overflow is 68)
 - 1376 shelter nights
 - 46 guests/night average
 - Highest was 56
 - Lowest 41
 - Our “normal” range through the month was 44-48
 - We began our move Wednesday, November 30th to shelter in the new addition while the existing structure is renovated. This was completed on Friday and all bunks and kitchen equipment are now in the new space.
 - Renovation of the existing structure will begin this week. This next phase will be completed by the middle of March. We are about 4 weeks behind from our original schedule due to issues with the design/build/delivery of the elevator.
- **HOT Team Update**

- **Steps Underway:** Some of the projects we are currently investigating are as follows...
 - Community Expectations and Security: A number of partners, departments, and businesses are experiencing significant challenges with disruptive behavior. We are hoping to outline community expectations and consequences, and then to better communicate this with the small number of individuals who cause most of the concerns.

We are also investigating the possibility of hiring a security firm to work with departments and partners to ensure that expectations are followed.

- Eau Claire Academy: On the supply side, Multiple potential partners have reviewed the potential of the Eau Claire Academy to address some office space, facility, and, potentially, housing needs. We continue to try to determine if there's a path forward with partners.
- Veteran Housing: Also on the supply side, the Housing Authority has received an allocation of ARP HOME funds, which have specific parameters as to how they can be spent. We plan to issue an RFP to solicit proposals for development of this housing.

Trash Story Part II: Continuing the story of trash, here's more information that we're discussing in our EauStat meetings. Below is the Eau Claire City-County Health Department's current process for city ordinance violations involving refuse or garbage issues in City Ordinance Title 8 Health and Safety, Chapter 8.32 Management of Waste and Recyclables.

- Complaint received via call, via [online form](#), or email via ehealth@eauclairecounty.gov. Some complaints come to the Health Department from other staff who have received a call or observed an issue. Often calls originate from a concerned neighbor.
- The Health Department and the City work together to determine which office should follow up based on the type of complaint, the location, type of refuse, and severity of the hazard. Typically, the City follows up on items placed on the boulevard and the Health Department follows up on health and safety concerns on private property.
- Complaints that involve refuse on the property go to the Health Department's refuse program inspector for follow up. Complaints range from overflowing garbage containers to accumulation of trash, appliances, building materials, or household items and appliances. The Health Department and City view complaints as an opportunity to educate the public and work collaboratively with residents to resolve the issue in a timely manner.
- The inspector follows up on a complaint either the same day or on their next working day.
- The inspector goes out to the address to complete the first inspection which includes verifying the complaint and documenting the violation(s) with a time stamped photo.



- An initial letter is written to the property owner and the tenant if it is a rental property. The letter includes information on how to correct the violation, a photo of the issue and a due date which is one- to two-weeks out. Additional information is sent along with the letter which includes information related to the violation. The initial letter focuses on collaboration to correct refuse violations and encourages residents engage with the Health Department or City.
- Additional re-inspections are conducted until the refuse violation is corrected. Each time a reinspection is conducted, a letter is sent out to the property owner with a new due date. Due dates are typically one week after the inspection. There are no fees associated with the initial letter and the first reinspection. A reinspection fee of \$125 is be charged for any additional re-inspections conducted after the first reinspection.
 - The majority of refuse issues are corrected after the initial letter or first reinspection.
 - To date in 2022, the Health Department has completed 452 refuse inspections this year and has closed 172 refuse files. These inspections include 197 initial inspections and 255 re-inspections.
- If after the third reinspection, the violation is still not corrected, additional action will be taken such as a Public Nuisance Order. The Public Nuisance Order is an official document giving the property owner 15 days to correct the violation. If the violation is not corrected, the Health Department, along with the City Streets Department, will go onsite to clean up the refuse accumulation and charge the homeowner for the clean-up.

Merger Talks: The Leader Telegram had an excellent article describing current discussions underway with Altoona with regard to EMS and Fire Service. [Eau Claire Fire Department talks potential for merger with neighbor | Front Page | leadertelegram.com](https://www.leadertelegram.com/story/news/local/2022/11/22/eau-claire-fire-department-talks-potential-for-merger-with-neighbor/1000588936662/) Here’s a quote: “Fire departments in Eau Claire and Altoona are in early talks about the possibility of a merger or other way to deal with rising costs both are experiencing. A few meetings between fire chiefs have happened this year on the topic, plus a gathering that included other leaders from both cities this fall to discuss the idea, according to Eau Claire Fire Chief Chris Bell. “If we merge fire departments it would be an all-inclusive fire and EMS department,” he said. The terms of the partnership have been discussed quite a few times in the past, and rising costs for both municipalities have led to a revival of the topic.

Banker With A Beer Episode 126: Our very own Steve Nick appeared in a recent episode of the podcast series, Banker With A Beer. Take a listen here <https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/banker-with-a-beer-a-podcast-series-by-northwestern-bank/id1491825768?i=1000588936662> as Steve discusses how legal work plays a role in revitalizing downtown projects and beyond. Find out Steve’s thoughts on the best local butchers, approaches to smart growth, and the “white whale” (the most interesting project) that got away...

Council Calendar:

- Monday, December 12th: Regular Council Public Hearing/Discussion night
- Tuesday, December 13th: Regular Council Meeting
 - Presentation of Health Insurance Renewal Rates and Options
- Monday, December 26th & Tuesday, December 27th Meetings – Cancelled
- Monday, January 9th: Regular Council Public Hearing/Discussion night
- Tuesday, January 10th: Regular Council Meeting
- Monday, January 23rd: Regular Council Public Hearing/Discussion night
- Tuesday, January 24th: Regular Council Meeting

Additional Dates:

- Tuesday, December 13th, Council/Staff Outing
- Friday, December 16th: Eggs and Issues Holiday Legislative Breakfast
- Wednesday, January 25th: Eau What a Night
- Wednesday, February 22nd: 29th Annual Chippewa Valley Rally

Employee Spotlight:

Here’s our next spotlight. (Give a shout-out to a City employee using this form: [Spotlight Form](#)).

Today we highlight **Shelly Collins-Fuerbringer!**

Co-workers said this about **Shelly**: ““Shelly keeps this library together all with a smile on her face. Her dog is just as pleasant!”

More about Shelly...

- **Position:** “I am the Deputy Director of Public Service at the Public Library. Before taking this job in March 2020, I was the Youth Services Manager for over 20 years. All told, I’ve worked here just shy of 24 years.”
- **What people may not know:** “My husband and I love St. Bernard’s! We have had five since 2010 and currently live with three; Sebastian (7), Hank



(2) and our newest addition and first female, Gracie (4 mo). It is definitely a 'lifestyle' that is not for everyone, but we think they are the most amazing, lovable breed. The first question most people ask is how much they weigh, so it is approximately 155, 145 and 47 respectively. We encourage visits from anyone thinking about taking on a giant breed dog!"

- Favorite activities: "No surprise that I like to read, but I also really enjoy collecting houseplants (you can't have too many!) spending time with our five grandchildren, baking, camping (photo is from camping this summer near Lake Superior – our very favorite spot) and working outside. We have a path through our woods that we have been decorating the past few years for Christmas and each year we make something new to add to the mix. This year I just finished making two seven-foot tall toy soldiers and am starting in on nine Peanuts characters singing."
- Best part about working for the City: "I think the thing I appreciate most about the City is the progress that has been made in the years I've worked here. I am especially in awe of the downtown development – my vantage point from the library has changed tremendously since I began work here in 1999. The Library used to be a bit of an island, and now we are just one of many amazing destinations downtown for the community to enjoy. My personal favorite thing is that I have two choices for ice cream that are within a five minute walk!"
- Life philosophy: "I guess I have a couple. One is to always search for the silver lining. The last couple of years have tested that belief, but it still holds true. The other is something that a book rep said to me that has stuck, 'when in doubt, leave out.' He was referring to purchasing books, but I find that is really solid life advice."
- Anything else? "I just want to take this opportunity to invite other City employees who haven't checked out our newly remodeled and expanded Library to make a visit. It is an amazing place!"

Police Updates

Calendar Parking: With meteorological winter upon us, the responsibility for keeping the streets accessible for snow removal is back. Patrol Officers and Community Service Officers have issued 2,536 warnings for calendar parking violations as of 12/04/2022. These warnings have been dispersed through the entire City. We will transition to issuing parking citations in the near future.

Community Crisis Fund: Quite frequently, our Police Officers interact with people experiencing acute crisis outside of traditional business hours when resources are not available. The Police Department has partnered with the Eau Claire Community Foundation and a local hotel to establish a Community Crisis Fund program. The intent of this program was to create a means for ECPD officers to provide a place to stay overnight for a person or family unit in an acute crisis. Examples of an acute crisis include:

- Residences or scenes where a death just occurred. Officers often respond to suicides, overdoses, or natural deaths in which the scene may need to be processed or the residence cleaned.

- Motorists with limited funds who are stranded. Sometimes the roads get so bad that vehicles will remain in the ditch for 24-hours before they are towed during a snowstorm.
- Victims of crimes who are unfamiliar with the area, have no local supports, but need a safe place to stay until they can contact family or get supports in place to get home.
- Victims of domestic violence or other interfamilial crimes that need a safe place to stay and other local resources (Bolton House or Beacon House) are at capacity. This need is especially prevalent where there are children involved.
- Victims of a disaster, such as a house fire, HAZMAT spill, flooding, storm, etc., when agencies are overwhelmed meeting multiple needs, including short-term lodging.
- Individuals who may be experiencing multiple active crises and need a place and opportunity to rest and establish new options.

This important resource was made possible by our Crisis Intervention Team, the Eau Claire Community Foundation and the generosity within our community.

Police Department Training: In order to ensure a safe and engaged community, as well as deliver the best police services possible, the Department places a priority on training and education. As we close out 2022, the Department's staff has put in over 10,000 hours of training. A notable aspect of Department training is the commitment staff make to the professional development of their co-workers. The Department has 35 State of Wisconsin certified instructors who work to become subject matter experts in a particular discipline and bring that knowledge back to their peers.

These officers provide training to staff on varying topics to include: use of force, emergency vehicle operations, crisis-intervention, de-escalation strategies, active threat response (mass shootings), fair and impartial policing, community-policing, engagement, peer support and others. In addition to training their fellow department members, these officers are periodically asked to instruct on both a regional and state level in these respective disciplines. In order to balance the Department's professional development needs with the necessity of being available for calls for service, as well as mitigate overtime, much of this training occurs during "payback time." This are additional hours built into a Patrol Officer's schedule (92 hours annually) that can be used for training and other focused efforts.

A Few More Photos: See the DECI shared some drone footage of the Clearwater Parade. The Recreation Department also received this thank-you from one of the community participants: "Thank you for providing this well organized and safe event for all of us to enjoy! We are proud to be a part of the local community and share our fun. Our group arrives as soon as we are allowed into the parking lot and really enjoy an evening of fun for all of our group."

