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## CITY MANAGER UPDATE TO THE CITY COUNCIL

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### From the Manager

**Budget Topics:** At the meetings this coming Monday and Tuesday, the Council will deliberate about the CIP, receive a proposed resolution regarding ARPA, and begin thinking about the 2024 Operating Budget.

Here's some related updates on what we've been working on:

Eau Claire County Humane Association: Regarding the outstanding ECCHA requested contribution, City staff continue to seek a resolution that provides parity between what City residents pay for ECCHA services, as compared to residents of other communities pay. We believe that, if a capital support payment is made to ECCHA, it should be counter-balanced by reduced fees in our annual contract. The City will share with the Council for consideration a version of the amendment that reads: "Motion to add a one-time \$250,000 capital support payment to the Eau Claire County Humane Association (ECCHA) in year 2026 in the 2024-2028 CIP, *contingent upon a mutually agreeable renewal of the current service agreement between the parties and acceptable to the City Council with a fee and service delivery structure that recognizes this capital support from the City of Eau Claire.*"

Affordable Housing Information: Here is some additional information related to the Affordable Housing Fund. The current-year Affordable Housing Fund is funded via ARPA and listed in the CIP at \$250,000. The Housing Opportunities Commission is updating the scoring criteria and an RFP is expected later in the year. The significant changes in the housing market and materials costs, have made it difficult to create affordable units with one-time smaller investments, requiring the HOC to rework the RFP. Additional funding is being invested in affordable housing initiatives outside of the CIP. These investments total \$1.3 million (including this year's \$250K) and include the following initiatives, which we hope may have more avenues to achieve sustainability since we do not know how lean future budgets will continue to be.

- A Community Development Corporations, with seed funding from ARPA (\$500,000) will allow, we hope, the City to create an Affordable Housing Fund that has a greater impact, creates a

public/private funding mechanism, and is more sustainable without continued investments from the City.

- Creating a Land Trust (\$350,000) will, we hope, directly impact generational wealth and provide residents with a path to home ownership. It will also help revitalize existing neighborhoods.
- Additional initiatives support residents who are experiencing homelessness and help fill gaps until more housing solutions are identified, including acquisition of a day shelter and creation of a Street Ambassador program

In addition to these projects, staff will continue to look for ways to directly fund the Affordable Housing Fund, including through future TIF allocations, CDBG funding, and other grant opportunities. Some of these will be channeled through the CIP, as they are identified.

Related to the CIP, here are pictures from the CIP tour, at the Water Plant and Station 2.



Transportation Utility: In the second phase of ARPA funding, the Council appropriated \$60,000 for a “Transportation Utility rate case study,” however, this spending was contingent on the outcome of a Wisconsin Supreme Court case related to Transportation Utilities. As written in the proposal, “The City seeks to do the legwork to implement a Transportation Utility Fee (TUF), pending resolution of the Wisconsin Supreme Court’s hearing of the Town of Buchanan’s appeal of the Wisconsin Institute for Law & Liberty’s (WILL) case against the Town’s transportation utility fee.”



On Friday, June 30th, the Wisconsin Supreme Court released the decision with regard to the Transportation Utility case. While we are still studying the documents, the key take-away is that a TUF is considered a property tax subject to the levy limit. A TUF may be worth exploring as a mechanism to shift the tax burden from property tax payers, however the path forward is not clear, and staff do not recommend pursuing a TUF in the near future. A link to the decision is below:

<https://www.wicourts.gov/sc/opinion/DisplayDocument.pdf?content=pdf&seqNo=674589>

Due to this updated information, the City proposes shifting the \$60,000 previously allocated to the TUF rate case to the Neighborhood Services Division allocation.

Budget Calendar: Just as a reminder, these are the remaining dates for 2024 budget preparation. The schedule will be discussed during the Operating Budget work session on Tuesday.

- July 10th: Public discussion for 2024-2028 Proposed CIP
- July 11th: City Council amendment motions and adoption of the 2024 - 2028 Proposed CIP
- July 11th: City Council operating budget priorities and parameters work session
- July 17th – July 28th: City Manager reviews departments’ operating budget requests
- July 28th – September 29th: Finance prepares operating budget
- September 29th: City Council receives 2024 Proposed Operating Budget
- October 9th: Public Hearing #1 on the City Managers 2024 Proposed Operating Budget
- October 10th: City Council Operating Budget Work Session #1
- October 24th: City Council Operating Budget Work Session #2 – Amendment Discussion
- November 3rd: City Council Budget Amendments Due
- November 13th: Public Hearing #2 on 2024 Proposed Operating Budget
- November 14th: City Council action on 2024 Proposed Operating Budget and levy

**Fireworks Feedback:** City staff involved with the fireworks have been reviewing feedback on how the trial run of hosting fireworks on the High Bridge went this year. The Council can set out next steps in coming weeks with regard to how to plan a celebration for next year, or series of celebrations.

Excerpts of feedback from emails, social media posts, and staff who attended include...

Concerns:

- The fireworks were loud for neighbors, pets, wildlife
  - “...The city doesn’t seem very supportive in terms of addressing mental health, especially related to fireworks. Information for those who have PTSD or anxiety is buried on the city’s website and minimal effort is made to widely distribute it. One of the items it addresses is the use of ‘noise-cancelling headphones’. As someone with severe anxiety, I did use these, but given my proximity to this year’s event, I could still hear the loud bangs and feel the intense explosions.”
  - “The explosions were so bad that at points I couldn't even keep my eyes open because of how bad my head was hurting and now have raging migraines that still haven't gone away today. I feel like I have a concussion.”
- In some places, the tree line made viewing difficult (see attached for a picture posted by resident Tim Abraham in which the trees form a frame for the fireworks).
- Traffic downtown was busy, perhaps especially because of current detours.



Praise:

- The downtown parks and businesses were vibrant throughout evening:
  - “In the hours leading up to the fireworks, downtown was buzzing with people using the parks, trails, and businesses. In previous years the downtown area was like a ghost town on July 4th.”
  - “We enjoyed our time downtown this afternoon. Brewing Project had several food trucks and lots of people! Excited to head to a friend’s house in a bit and watch the show this evening!”
- Good viewing locations:
  - “Just wanted to give some positive feedback on the firework location and thank you for choosing the High Bridge. I attended a yard gathering with friends down near 2nd Street and it really brought a lot of people together. After the rain, we walked to Kessler Park and it was an amazing viewing opportunity from there. I had some family

watch from 13th street near the St James field and they stated it was great viewing from there as well, which was a surprise to me. Anyway, thanks again for bringing the fireworks to the neighborhoods and people, rather than having people travel to Carson. Even if the shooting location traveled throughout City neighborhoods each year to give others an opportunity, it seems like a nice idea. Although, I preferred the Westside location ;)"

- Improved safety and logistics from City's perspective:
  - "There were a few issues our officers assigned to the detail had to address on both sides of the river leading up, during, and following the fireworks, however, nothing major. With the new format, we had the flexibility to promptly respond to these issues rather than be restricted to traffic direction responsibilities."

Related to Fireworks, but not the official fireworks, residents have expressed a request that the City find more ways to reduce fireworks being set off in neighborhoods in the time period around and on July 4th.

Overall recap from Cory Tietz:

"Overall, I feel the event went well. I walked/drove all around Haymarket Landing, Phoenix Park, Forest Street Garden area, Madison Street Bridge, Owen Park, West Grand Avenue business district, Oxford Avenue, and the First Street area numerous times between 6PM and 9:45PM, intentionally stopping to talk to individuals and groups to gauge their perspective of this location. In multiple conversations, nobody said anything negative about the new event site. Beyond these areas, I also went to the Riverview Drive area to find various people along the street overlooking Dells Pond just north of the VFW, with similar activity along Sheridan Road, just east of the Central Maintenance Facility.

While I expect the forecast did hamper attendance, there was no shortage of groups playing games, grilling, and generally socializing with anyone who would engage. It is easy to say that Kessler Park had more people in the park than I have seen during my more than twelve years of employment with the organization. Ultimately, the atmosphere in these areas was great. With the flexibility to come and go as they please and bring their own food and drink, many people made the event into more than a fireworks show by creating an evening of activities and social engagement.

Business-wise, for those who elected to partake, I have to believe they benefited from it too. Aside from a packed facility within The Brewing Projekt, which had numerous food trucks in their lot, Kwik Trip, Little Caesars, Court'n House, and Olson's Ice Cream also seemed very popular among the spectators.

Public safety-wise, I am unaware of any significant problems or concerns from Community Services. I believe there may have been some fireworks lit within a ramp area, but from what I understand, it

caused minimal, more cosmetic damage that could be washed off. During numerous conversations with Sgt. Taylor from the PD and Battalion Chief Burkhardt from EC Fire throughout the evening, neither indicated any problems or challenges from their perspective.

While downtown traffic was sometimes hectic, I am unsure how to avoid that, especially with construction in the area and an influx of visitors that do not often come to the downtown area.

Ultimately, the event concluded as we had hoped, with no significant problems. The event planning team is meeting for a post-event review, including a discussion with the frontline staff who worked the event, hoping to get their perspective on how they feel the event went compared to years in the past. Are there things that we would change in the future should the event be back at the same location? I expect so. After these discussions, we will better understand how things went and be able to provide more feedback from our perspective.” Below is a photo of the Madison Street bridge as the crowd dispersed.



**Community Crisis Fund Story:** The Police Department shared this great story...

“In 2022, the Community Crisis Fund was created and made possible by the Police Department Crisis Intervention Team, the Eau Claire Community Foundation, and the generosity of our community members. This fund allows for our Police Officers to provide a place to stay overnight for a person or family experiencing an acute crisis. Below is a prime example of how this fund allowed officers to assist a family in need.

On Wednesday, June 15th, Officers Jake Roberts and Noah Young were dispatched to the area of Owen Park for a 'check persons' call regarding a child running around the park, near the river. Officers made contact with the parents who explained that they were in the process of moving to the area from a southern state. They had three children, all under five, and a dog in the car. Both parents were working on opposite shifts and would watch the children while the other was gone. They had been staying in hotels the last couple of weeks while they set up housing. They were unable to get into their newly signed apartment until the following day and, due to lack of funds, they were unable to afford another night in a hotel. They resorted to attempting to spend the night in their car at the park.



Due to the unique circumstances, officers asked if they could assist them by finding them a hotel room for the evening. They were hesitant to accept the donation due to not wanting a handout, but eventually accepted the hotel stay. Before departing, the children received stickers from the officers and in return, thanked them by giving them hugs. Pictured here are Officer Noah Young and Officer Jake Roberts.”

**Results from Updated Neighborhood Events Ordinance:** Billie Hufford, who worked hard with other City staff and with residents to revise our events ordinance, shared this update from the first event organized using the new ordinance: “Last year City Staff heard concerns from Neighborhood Associations about barriers to the NAs holding events. A team of NA representatives and City Staff worked on a new ordinance and process to eliminate barriers where we could. Over the Fourth of July weekend, the Northside Hill Neighborhood held the first Neighborhood Association Event under the new process. They grilled food, enjoyed music from a live band, and had a bubble machine, and they donated food to Sojourner House. More Neighborhood Association Events are being planned!”



**Updates from Library:** The Library shared this update...

Summer Programs: Summer Library Programs are well underway, and we've had more than 1,500 youth and 300 adults register to participate. This program encourages reading at whatever level the individual is at, along with summer activities such as visiting the Farmer's Market, visiting the Story Walk in Carson or Owen Parks, or telling someone about a book they love. (Pictured here is the bookmobile at the Farmer's Market!)

Meeting Room Usage: After reviewing meeting room usage over the past year (which includes over 2,000 reservations so far in 2023), library staff prepared a new meeting room policy to make the rooms more accessible for a wider variety of uses. They clarified language so it was easier for staff and customers to understand, and increased use of underutilized spaces. The Board of Trustees approved the new policy at their June meeting, and Library staff have updated the website software and will begin promoting the rooms in earnest in the coming weeks.



Strategic Plan: The Library's last strategic plan covered a period ending in 2021, and staff developed an 18-month addendum to focus on the move back to the renovated building and return to pre-COVID services. Earlier this spring, staff started working on a new three-year strategic plan, beginning with surveying the staff to get their feedback. A community-wide survey launched in mid-June, and runs through July 15th. City staff are encouraged to complete the survey, and share with local friends and family. In-person workshops to gather additional community feedback with both community stakeholders and the general public will be hosted in August... Stay tuned for details!

**Transfer Center Update:** For those interested, here is the most current rendering of what the transfer center will look like with the residential development completed above.

Developer construction updates include:

- Merge has hired Market & Johnson as the prime general contractor for the duration of the project.
- Project plans have been submitted to the state for review and approval, hoping they will be back by early to mid-July.



- After plan approval, construction bids will be acquired, and final financing will be determined.
- If the project stays on track, Market & Johnson is still hopeful to start construction this fall, having enough exterior work completed to open the Transfer Center to service in the summer of 2024, with Farwell Street being back open to public use before the 2024-2025 winter.
- This will be a wood-framed, panelized building, meaning the walls will be pre-fabricated at another location, shipped to the site via truck, and assembled via crane. Because of this, the exterior build process should be relatively swift compared to the traditional on-site build process.

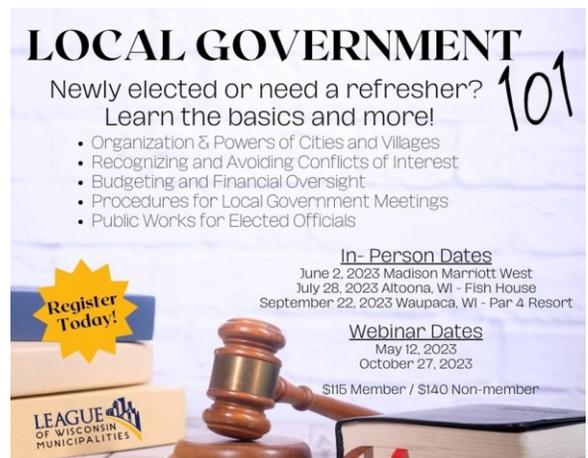
In terms of City/FTA Transfer Center updates, the project is nearing completion. Although some supply-chain issues have slowed progress, current projections have substantial facility completion in July of this year. After the current road construction projects are completed on Main and Gray Streets, the contractor will have to finalize some concrete work to connect the facility to the streetscape, which should be relatively swift. We hope to open one level of parking to the public at some point in late August or early September. The attached *Transfer Center Photos* file will offer some recent pictures of this project. As the project wraps up, we would be more than happy to provide a facility tour to anyone that would like it.

**Hmong Women’s Story Cloth Exhibit at Pablo:** Take time to go visit this exhibit through July 21st: “Launched in May, The Hmong Institute and the Wisconsin Women’s Council’s Resiliency: Hmong Women’s Mental Health Journeys During the COVID-19 Pandemic exhibit made its way to Eau Claire at the end of June. The Hmong women’s story cloth exhibit is on display at the Pablo Center at the Confluence on third floor in the Orgel Wealth Management Atrium now through July 21, 2023. The Atrium is open to the public 10AM-2PM. Monday through Friday or one hour before theatre events. More information is here: [womenscouncil.wi.gov](http://womenscouncil.wi.gov).

**Council Calendar** (With Tentative Work Session Dates)

- Monday, July 10th: Regular Council public Hearing/Discussion Night
  - Public Discussion of 2024-2028 CIP Budget
- Tuesday, July 11th: Council Meeting
  - Council action on 2024-2028 CIP Budget
  - 2024 Operating Budget Work Session 1 -- Priorities and Parameters
- Monday, July 24th: Regular Council Public Hearing/Discussion Night
- Tuesday, July 25th: Council Meeting
- Monday, August 14th: Regular Council Public Hearing/Discussion Night
- Tuesday, August 15th: Council Meeting
- Monday, August 28th: Regular Council Public Hearing/Discussion Night
- Tuesday, August 29th: Council Meeting
- Tuesday, September 5th: Joint Plan Commission and City Council Meeting for Zoning Overhaul Discussion
- Monday, September 11th: Regular Council Public Hearing/Discussion Night
- Tuesday, September 12th: Council Meeting
- Monday, September 25th: Regular Council Public Hearing/Discussion Night
- Tuesday, September 26th: Council Meeting

- ❖ *September 29th – City Council receives 2024 Proposed Operating Budget*
- Monday, October 9th: Regular Council Public Hearing/Discussion Night
  - Public Hearing #1 on 2024 Proposed Operating Budget
- Tuesday, October 10th: Council Meeting
  - City Council Operating Budget Work Session #2
- Monday, October 23rd: Regular Council Public Hearing/Discussion Night
- Tuesday, October 24th: Council Meeting
  - City Council Operating Budget Work Session #3 – Amendment Discussion
- ❖ *November 3rd – City Council Budget Amendments Due*
- Monday, November 6th: Joint Plan Commission and City Council Meeting for Zoning Overhaul Discussion
- Monday, November 13th: Regular Council Public Hearing/Discussion Night
  - Public Hearing #2 on 2024 Proposed Operating Budget
- Tuesday, November 14th: Council Meeting
  - City Council action on 2024 Proposed Operating Budget and levy
- Monday, December 18th: Joint Plan Commission and City Council Meeting for Zoning Overhaul Discussion



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**Additional Dates:**

- Friday, July 28th: LWM Local Government 101
- Tuesday, August 1st: National Night Out

**Employee Spotlight:**

Here’s our next employee spotlight! Today we highlight **Firefighter/Paramedic Josh Olson out of Station #8!** (Submit your highlight suggestion here: <https://forms.gle/f1PUPpFaWStsvH458>)

- When you started: “I was offered a job in 2008, but had to turn it down for several reasons. I later accepted a position with ECFD and started on July 12, 2010.”
- Training: “I got my A.S. in Fire Technology and A.S. in EMS-Paramedic from Southwestern College in Chula Vista, CA.”
- Hometown: “I’m from Beloit, WI. I moved around a lot when I was younger and settled in the Eau Claire area to work for ECFD.”



- Best part of the job: “I enjoy the people I work with and the connection that we have with others in public safety. I also enjoy working in a team-centered environment. The career is especially fulfilling when you and your team are recognized for having a positive impact on the community.”
- Favorite activities outside of work: “I enjoy spending my time away from work with my wife and two sons. I also enjoy spending time on the water with family and friends.”