



CITY MANAGER UPDATE TO THE CITY COUNCIL

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From the Manager

American Phoenix Update: Here is an update from Environmental Sciences Division Manager Matt Steinbach related to efforts to mitigate issues related to noise and/or odor in the East Hill Neighborhood.

Industrial Noise Investigation: Health Department staff recently evaluated community sound levels throughout several portions of the City of Eau Claire. The investigation was mostly prompted by an increase in the number of residents expressing concern about industrial noise near American Phoenix (API), a longtime tenant of Banbury Place. However, other industrial noise complaints are occasionally received from other areas of the city. The project was intended to evaluate the extent of sound being projected into surrounding neighborhoods from API, in addition to how the resulting sound compares to other areas of the city near industry. From mid-May through early-June, staff collected decibel readings and observational notes at 129 sites throughout the city during business hours. A total of 44 sites were also visited either overnight or very early in the morning to assess potential variability of readings throughout the day. Approximately 41 percent of the sites were in the vicinity of Banbury Place, with the other sites scattered throughout other residential areas adjacent to other suspected sources of persistent noise, such as near industry and/or traffic.

During and following the investigation, staff have consulted with management at American Phoenix regarding noise assessment and mitigation efforts at the facility. In late-June, Health Department staff participated in a meeting with American Phoenix management, UWEC Public Health program faculty/research students, and neighborhood residents to discuss potential additional noise evaluation in the area. Following the meeting, the Health Department has been coordinating with UWEC and API to collect additional follow-up information in the area. This included a more thorough source investigation during an API shutdown for observance of Independence Day. During this investigation, API management worked with staff to measure sound in various management scenarios, ranging from complete exhaust system shutdown to full system operation, as well as other interim steps. This investigation revealed that one element of the facilities dust collection system may

be a particularly significant contributor to the sound raising neighborhood concerns. API will utilize this information to further prioritize mitigation efforts. Additional baseline readings may be collected by UWEC students and/or Health Department staff in the coming weeks to further enable assessment of the impact of any future noise reduction measures that may be implemented by American Phoenix this summer-fall.

Community Meeting: Additionally, Community Development and Health Department staff recently attended a meeting of the Eastside Hill Neighborhood. This meeting was held solely to provide an opportunity for American Phoenix to engage with neighborhood residents about noise and odor concerns that have been expressed related to their facility. The meeting included a presentation from American Phoenix, an announcement of a new online complaint reporting tool, and a community question and answer opportunity. Residents shared a variety of anecdotes during the meeting. While some noted air quality as their primary concern, others noted that sound was their most pressing concern. API listened to these comments and explained their plans moving forward. API suggested that they may revise their strategy for the complaint reporting tool in response to feedback received at the meeting concerning the ease of completion. Health Department staff expect to remain connected to this situation and will provide further updates as they are available.

Information about the Premiere Resort Area Tax (PRAT): Council President Emily Berge, Aaron White, Kitzie Winters, and I met this week with Rep Rob Summerfield and Senator Jesse James to discuss the possibility of Eau Claire pursuing a PRAT. Here is more information about PRATs that Emily pulled together, and details are also here:

<https://www.revenue.wi.gov/DOR%20Publications/pb403.pdf> and here:

<https://www.revenue.wi.gov/DOR%20Publications/2500premierresortareatax.pdf>

What is a PRAT? “Wisconsin law permits a municipality or county to impose a premier resort area tax if the municipality or county meets certain criteria. The premier resort area tax rate is 0.5 percent except for the village of Lake Delton and the City of Wisconsin Dells whose tax rate is 1.25 percent. In order to impose a premier resort area tax, a municipality or county must enact an ordinance or resolution declaring itself to be a premier resort area. However, a municipality or county may not declare itself to be a premier resort area unless at least 40 percent of the equalized value of the taxable property within the municipality or county is used by tourism-related retailers.

Exception: A municipality or county may impose a premier resort area tax even if less than 40 percent of the equalized assessed value of the taxable property within the municipality or county is used by tourism-related retailers, if authorized by the legislature.”

Which communities have a PRAT?

- Village of Ephraim January 1, 2022
- Village of Sister Bay July 1, 2018
- City of Rhinelander January 1, 2017
- Village of Stockholm October 1, 2014

- City of Eagle River October 1, 2006
- City of Bayfield January 1, 2003
- City of Wisconsin Dells July 1, 1998
- Village of Lake Delton April 1, 1998

What can the proceeds be used for? “The proceeds from the tax must be used for infrastructure expenses within the jurisdiction of the premier resort area. Infrastructure expenses means the costs of purchasing, constructing, or improving parking lots; access ways; transportation facilities, including roads and bridges; sewer and water facilities; exposition center facilities used primarily for conventions, expositions, trade shows, musical or dramatic events, or other events involving educational, cultural, recreational, sporting, or commercial activities; parks, boat ramps, beaches, and other recreational facilities; fire-fighting equipment; police vehicles; ambulances; and other equipment or materials dedicated to public safety or public works.”

Note that Eau Claire would not meet the 40 percent threshold highlighted above, and thus would need to pursue the exception. This would be an extensive process with an uncertain outcome, however, if successful it would be a significant benefit to the City’s finances. The legislators asked that we talk to Visit Eau Claire and the Chamber to gauge their support and also draft a white paper on why Eau Claire would like to become a premier resort area.

Some Q&As: Here are a few Q&As that came through the City Manager’s Office recently.

Question: As a Council member, can I participate in an event that has some perks?

Answer: You can participate in an event with a broad invitation list, such as the type of event that the Chamber might hold for a new business or the new Council President recently. If there are higher-value perks related to the event, you can decline those or indicate you need to pay the market value for them if you want to participate, like tickets to the Express fan deck or a bar crawl or reception when the hosts are buying the drinks.

Question: When will the City remove my boulevard trees that are planned for removal?

Answer: The City’s four-person forestry crew plants about 300 trees starting as early as they can get the trees delivered. This year, that was in the third week of April. It takes about six weeks to plant in the spring. Sometimes it goes faster depending on whether it is street reconstruction or if it is individual addresses for Ash tree replacement. The crew expected to work on tree removals in June, however, due to the extreme dry weather, we had to shift the crew to watering newly planted trees. Had the new trees not been adequately watered, we would have lost a vast amount of them. We are just now getting the crew back to doing removals. We do try to group removals by neighborhood to alleviate excessive travel throughout the City (and it concentrates clean-up if we can do a series of removals on the same block). We have been trying to get approximately 500 trees or more removed every year in response to EAB. That generates 500 stumps to be ground, grindings to be picked up, holes to fill with fresh soil, and eventually new trees to be planted. We also try to maintain some semblance of a pruning cycle (especially on the younger trees that we can have a greater lasting

impact on their structure), clearance pruning for street visibility, and other departmental support such as plowing for the streets. When people ask the timeline of tree removal, we suggest it basically takes a year -- from the time the tree is down, the stump is ground, and the new tree is replanted.

Question: I read that the Altoona Police Chief banned smoking during concerts held at River Prairie Park. I have received comments and complaints from people here and there about smoking during events; specifically, during the V1 concerts at Phoenix Park, but we also have a number of regular concerts in Eau Claire where this could be an issue, though none are as dense or with as many people at the Thursday night Phoenix Park concerts. Can you tell me if Eau Claire has a provisions to also prohibit smoking during large gatherings in public parks (e.g. farmers market, concerts)?

Answer: Our code allows the City to post temporary “no smoking” signage in coordination with the event organizer. The City can also do so ourselves, but our preference is to work with the event organizer.

Notes from 2023 WI Act 14 Housing: The recently signed-into law bill sets aside funding for new housing programs. The parameters of how these will work are still in development, and it will take some time to sort out the mechanics. Here is a summary, though, that came from notes from WHEDA to the League on a recent webinar, and the bill itself is here: [Wisconsin Legislature: 2023 Wisconsin Act 14](#)

2023 WI Act 14 – Infrastructure Revolving Loan Fund - \$275 Million 2023 Act 14 creates a residential housing infrastructure revolving loan fund program. Under the program, a developer may apply to the Wisconsin Housing and Economic Development Authority (WHEDA) for a loan to cover the costs of installing, replacing, upgrading, or improving infrastructure related to workforce housing or senior housing. In order for a developer to be eligible for an infrastructure loan, the relevant local government must approve the developer’s application for the loan and must alter their local ordinances to decrease costs for developers.

2023 WI Act 15 – Main Street Housing - \$100 Million 2023 Act 15 creates a main street housing rehabilitation revolving loan fund program. Under the program, an owner of rental housing may apply to the Wisconsin Housing and Economic Development Authority (WHEDA) for a loan to cover the costs of an improvement to workforce housing to maintain it in a decent, safe, and sanitary condition or to restore it to that condition. An improvement must include remediating lead paint or asbestos. To be eligible, the housing must satisfy all of the following:

- Is located on the second or third floor of an existing two-story or three-story building with a commercial use on the first floor, if the space devoted to commercial use constitutes no more than two-thirds of the building’s gross square footage.
- Is located in a building that was constructed at least 40 years prior to the date of the loan application.
- Is vacant or has been underutilized.

2023 WI Act 17 – Housing Rehab Loans - \$50 Million 2023 Act 17 modifies the workforce housing rehabilitation loan program created under 2021 WI Act 221. Under the program, a person may apply to the Wisconsin Housing and Economic Development Authority (WHEDA) for a loan to pay for the cost of certain rehabilitation to the applicant’s home. Modifications include loan terms, repayment schedules, expansion of eligible rehabilitation, and the 0%-market rate interest rate. Note on veto change: Governor Evers struck certain language from this portion of the Budget to give WHEDA greater flexibility in offering grants and forgivable loans to homeowners.

2023 WI Act 18 – Commercial Conversion - \$100 Million 2023 Act 18 creates a commercial-to-residential conversion revolving loan fund program. Under the program, a developer may apply to the Wisconsin Housing and Economic Development Authority (WHEDA) for a loan to cover the costs of converting a vacant commercial building to workforce housing or senior housing. Loans may not exceed \$1M.

Trash RFP Language: As mentioned in the recent Council ARPA update, we are working to issue an RFP for the study of trash hauling systems. The language included in the RFP is as follows, and the RFP will include a request for hep with an engagement process with the Council, haulers, and members of the public.

Key Points for a Trash RFP

- Examine current City of Eau Claire trash operations and responsibilities, and compare with peer communities’ trash ordinance enforcement.
- Examine the private haulers’ routes and operations in Eau Claire and compare them to peer communities.
- Examine the number and frequency of complaints taken by Eau Claire and compare them with peer communities.
- Make recommendations on routes and operations that will reduce route mileage, improve customer service, and streamline City staff’s involvement in private trash operations.
- Make a recommendation on an organizational chart and structure for overseeing trash operations in Eau Claire.
- Examine fees and revenues related to trash and trash oversight in peer communities and recommend revenue sources to Eau Claire.
- Evaluate peer communities with restrictions to the number of trash haulers in their communities, or with exclusive single provider zones, or a single provider for the city, and make recommendations as to how an exclusive hauler system could work in Eau Claire.

Possible Priorities to Evaluate Trash System Models

- Incentivize waste reduction, such as through:
 - Building in waste education into a trash collection rate.
 - Allowing for composting citywide.
 - Investigating technology that weighs trash picked up to better price collection.
 - Using a pay-as-you-throw model.
- Reduce heavy truck traffic in neighborhoods.

- Address concerns of haulers related to changing technology and labor market.
- Consider constituent and hauler preferences for frequency of pick-up.
- Support “second chance” employer practices.
- Reduce complaints about hauler and constituent practices to allow City to carry out street sweeping and snow removal and to improve the cleanliness of neighborhoods.
- Cover City’s costs to allow for expanded trash delivery monitoring and improved customer service.
- Ensure a good price for constituents.
- Evaluate the cost and revenue associated with operating a brush site for the City and/or County.
- Allow for constituent choice in haulers.
- Guard against illegal dumping.

Refugee Resettlement Agency Progress: The World Relief Resettlement Agency recently wrote with an update about opening an office in Eau Claire. They don’t expect to receive final approve for the resettlement site until late August, but are going to begin recruiting for the site director and looking for office space.

Bus Operators go Above and Beyond:

You may have read [this story in the news](#)... It’s an amazing story, and it shows how remarkable our employees are – and it’s an example of a team effort, including from the Communications Center staff. ATU 1310 President Nathan Nispel shared this information: “The fireworks started early this July 4th holiday weekend for four Eau Claire Transit bus operators. ATU Local 1310 members Jerry Melsness, Daniel White, Josh Sudbrink and Roger Beaver found themselves in the center of one of the most extraordinary moments to take place at the downtown transit center. After a passenger unexpectedly went into labor en route to the site and before emergency services could reach the scene, the four heroes sprang into action. As Dan called 911, Roger gathered what medical supplies were available to him, and they joined with Josh to rush and assist Jerry. But after the baby was successfully delivered, the ordeal was far from over Jerry, having had no time to even put gloves on before he was thrust into action, handed the baby over to Dan and Josh so he could attempt to wash up. While still on the phone with 911 operators the two quickly realized the baby was struggling. With



instructions being relayed they were able to follow procedures to help stabilize the baby. This was such a remarkable act of rising to any occasion and clearly demonstrates the passion these men have for their jobs, as well as for their passengers. As President of ATU Local 1310, I couldn't be more proud, or in awe, of the quick thinking and calm under pressure displayed by my brothers. They would never ask for any recognition. They were just doing what needed to be done. We may never know what to expect when we clock in each day, but we take pride in delivering our passengers to their destinations, and this delivery will surely be the most memorable."

Demmler Park Story: Jeremy Gragert and Parks Supervisor Brendan Osborne helped facilitate a cool story that occurred in Demmler Park. In Demmler, by the community garden, there's a bench under a pergola. Twenty years ago, young resident Brendon Hertz completed this park improvement for his Eagle Scout project. When he was back in town, Brendon reached out to Jeremy to see whether or not he could repair the bench during his visit. Brendan Osborne shared this photo of the re-creation of Brendon Hertz's work, with his mom standing in for his dad, as he was busy during the photo shoot. Thank you, Brendon, Brendan, and Jeremy!



Thank you to Payroll Staff: A special thank you to the Payroll staff who work extra hard on the July 4th holiday week each year, as the holiday coincides with July 1st adjustments to our payroll. Our paper-based payroll makes this extra challenging.

Parks and Recreation Professionals' Day Shout-Out: Recreation staff asked that, in honor of the Parks and Recreational Professionals' Day, we share a shout-out for Christine Mohr, who holds together one of the most complicated operations of the summer – the Fairfax pool and aquatic program. Julie Booth shared this shout-out: "Christine's expertise in the recreation management field is AMAZING. She is a fabulous mentor/teacher to MANY staff, particularly the young, who are hired in their first employment experience. Christine values public service in the highest and proves that through the meticulous management of Fairfax Pool operation and the vast aquatic program she coordinates. Our community is blessed to have Christine at the helm of one of the City's most visited amenities!"

Two Events: Join in on either of these upcoming events...

Retirement for Al Bertrang: You are invited to a retirement gathering for Deputy Chief Al Bertrang on July 31st, from 2 to 4PM in the bay of Fire Station 2.

Writing the Disability Experience: In celebration of the 33rd Anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), UW-Eau Claire Foundation is hosting a panel & reception on Writing the Disability Experience. You will hear short pieces by folks living with various disabilities including: brain injury, blindness and hearing loss. Come learn from these writers and celebrate the inclusive community the ADA fosters. Sign language interpretation and captioning will be provided.

Monday
July 31, 2023
2 to 4 p.m.



ECFD Fire Station No. 2
216 S. Dewey Street
Eau Claire, WI

Deputy Chief Al Bertrang's
Retirement Cake-Ice Cream

Please join us in celebrating
Al's 26 years of ECFD service.

The event will be held from 2:30 to 4PM on July 26th in the Chippewa River Room of the Flesch Family Welcome Center. The event is free and open to the public.

Council Calendar (With Tentative Work Session Dates)

- Monday, July 24th: Council Public Hearing/Discussion Night
- Tuesday, July 25th: Council Meeting
- Monday, August 7th: Council Public Hearing/Discussion Night
- Tuesday, August 8th: Council Meeting
- Monday, August 21st: Council Public Hearing/Discussion Night
- Tuesday, August 22nd: Council Meeting
- Tuesday, September 5th: Joint Plan Commission and City Council Meeting for Zoning Overhaul Discussion
- Monday, September 11th: Council Public Hearing/Discussion Night
- Tuesday, September 12th: Council Meeting
- Monday, September 25th: Council Public Hearing/Discussion Night
- Tuesday, September 26th: Council Meeting
- ❖ *September 29th – City Council receives 2024 Proposed Operating Budget*
- Monday, October 9th: 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 (Department Directors)
- Monday, October 23rd: 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: 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

Additional Dates:

- Friday, July 28th: Eggs and Issues Economic Development
- Friday, July 28th: LWM Local Government 101
- Tuesday, August 1st: National Night Out

Employee Spotlight:

Here’s our next employee spotlight!

Today we highlight **Melissa Turnquist!** (Submit your highlight suggestion here: <https://forms.gle/f1PUPpFaWStsvH458>)

A co-worker said this about Melissa: “She is a true ‘team player’ who is always willing to help with everything.”

- Your position: “I am currently a Property Assessor II in the Assessing department for the City of Eau Claire. I have been working in the Assessing department for about 3.5 years but have been with the City for about 10 years.”
- What may not know: “I played collegiate volleyball at the University of Wisconsin – Eau Claire as a libero.”
- Favorite activities: “I enjoy hiking with my family, reading, and watching my kids do what they love. We spend a lot of time at the hockey rink, soccer and baseball fields.”
- Best part about working for the City: “I have been able to develop great working relationships within the City of Eau Claire. I really enjoy the flexibility and balance of my position. My position allows me to work in the field quite often visiting with home owners, listening to their concerns, and answering their questions which helps to build rapport between the public and the City as whole.”
- Life philosophy: “Always have a smile on your face.... You never know who may be having a rough day, so your smile might bring a little light to their everyday life.”

