

## **Railroad Crossing**

Last summer and this spring, the City of Evansville tried unsuccessfully to deal with Union Pacific Railroad directly to rebuild the severely deteriorated rail crossing on East Main Street. The City then followed statutory procedures to order the repair and to initiate a formal complaint with the Wisconsin Office of the Commissioner of Railroads (OCR). OCR scheduled a public hearing about the complaint for last week Thursday.

With a sudden flurry of emails and phone calls the day before the hearing, Union Pacific committed to the repair this fall. The work will be completed prior to asphalt plants closing, likely by November 1. As a repair (rather than rebuild) it will involve the installation of either rubber flangeways or gumwood with track panels. Union Pacific will coordinate the work with the City's Public Works Department and will conduct the repair in halves to keep the road open to traffic during the repairs. Union Pacific will bear the entire cost.

Following the commitment for repair, OCR postponed the complaint hearing. If the completed work is not satisfactory to the City, the matter will be put back on OCR's hearing calendar.

## **Brush Collection**

Curbside brush collection occurs the first full week each month during the spring and summer. Due to the Labor Day holiday, this month's collection schedule is September 10-14. Please cut brush to six foot lengths and place on the terrace parallel (lengthwise) to the curb. Yard waste (leaves, clippings, etc) must be bagged or in containers. Materials placed in the street have a tendency to clog stormwater drainage and cause flooding; please keep brush and yard waste on the terrace.

The last curbside brush collection will be the week of October 8-12. Fall leaf pickup will begin mid October and run through Thanksgiving. For this collection period, only leaves should be raked into the street at the curb line. Because of possible danger to employees, the public, and equipment, only leaves can be raked into the street.

The City Yard Waste Facility at 465 Water Street is also available for residents who prefer to drop off their brush and yard waste. It is open Saturdays from 9:30 am to 2:00 pm and Wednesdays from 5:00 pm to 7:00 pm, weather and daylight permitting.

## **Creek Walls**

With the kids back in school and less activity in the park, another section of the creek walls will be rebuilt this fall. This is an important, ongoing project to address safety issues, channel stormwater, and restore a key feature in our historic park.

The walls were built in the 1930's; they are essentially a single layer of dry-laid stone, backfilled with unconsolidated rubble, stone and earth, topped with a mortared cap, and faced with a thin veneer of concrete applied to the wall surface. The walls are built on raw unconsolidated earth rather than bedrock, a large stone slab foundation or concrete footers.

Since October 2007, we have been piecing away at the repairs, focusing on the worst areas first. As with the sections already rebuilt, the existing walls will be carefully dismantled, likely with a

backhoe, down to structurally-sound existing stone work or stable footing at or just below grade. The project will follow Secretary of the Interior “rehabilitation” standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties, recognizing the park’s pending listing on the National Register of Historic Places as a designed landscape.

The new walls, requiring approximately a quarter ton of limestone per linear foot, will be rebuilt along the original wall alignment. In some cases, original limestone is able to be cleaned and reused, but most of the rebuilt wall will consist of “new” limestone excavated nearby in Footville.

### **Committee of the Whole**

Over the last year, the City Council and department heads have met several times as Committee of the Whole. The focus has been on top-notch, quality service and quality of life to the citizens (residents and businesses) in a positive, courteous, and cost-effective manner. Additional comments have noted the need to go beyond adequate service and seek ways to improve and the need to see the entire organization beyond individual departments or committees.

Where much of the prior meetings have discussed an appreciation of past accomplishments, a meeting this Saturday, September 15, will look forward to future accomplishments. The agenda will build on the comments about going beyond adequate service. The discussion will take the premise that if we are free to wholly redesign City services, then what would they look like in five or twenty years? And if these will be the functions and services of the City, then what support is needed to achieve such innovation?

At this point, I cannot say what specific will be discussed or come out of the meeting. But I am confident that the City Council and department heads are committed to improvement: a vision for top-notch service, practical training, a focus on results, and nurturing an organizational culture which looks past the status quo.

### **Budget Presentations**

The City Council will hold a special budget meeting on Wednesday, September 26, at 6:00 pm at Creekside Place Community Center to allow department heads and committees to present their portions of the budget and the reasons behind their requests. The Council will react to the proposals and have the chance to ask questions for any additional information it may need. But the meeting really will focus more on presentation than debate.

In October, the Finance Committee will review the proposed budget, likely make a number of revisions, and pass its recommendations on to the City Council. The Council may make additional revisions to the budget and will approve a notice for its publication.

A public hearing will be held around November 13. The City Council will then consider, revise, and approve the final budget. The eventual budget solution will need to balance a variety of economic, social, political, and safety factors in determining the City’s priorities. The adopted budget will then be published and property taxes levied for payment in the coming year.

The budget process and other fiscal information such as tax rates and past budgets are posted on the city website at [www.ci.evansville.wi.gov/city/fiscal/index.html](http://www.ci.evansville.wi.gov/city/fiscal/index.html).