

## Mayor's Column for the November 16, 2011 Review

The Evansville Common Council meeting on November 8 was busy. There were a number of important matters on the agenda.

Following months of planning and effort, the Council unanimously approved the 2012 City budget. No citizens appeared at the public hearing that was held prior to discussion and action on the budget.

Our city will receive about \$85,000 less in state aid in 2012. A scheduled reduction in debt service and employee contributions to retirement offset the lower aid payments. The tax rate for 2012 for the city portion of property taxes is \$6.82 per \$1,000 of assessed valuation, a nickel less than the 2011 rate of \$6.87 per \$1,000. This budget does not dip into our healthy general fund balance. The conservative fiscal decisions by the Council over the past several years have provided the flexibility necessary to address the current economic and political environment.

Included in the 2012 budget is \$200,000 for a new ambulance. The city's two ambulances are on a seven year rotation cycle, with the new ambulance replacing a 14 year-old vehicle. A new police squad is in the budget, as well as a skidloader replacement for the water and light department and a new dump truck for the public works department that is a replacement for one that has been in use more than ten years.

\$40,000 is budgeted for continued restoration of the creek walls in Leonard-Leota Park. \$40,000 is allocated to begin work on a long-needed bathroom/shelter in Westside Park.

We were able to fund the new police and EMS radio equipment mandated by the federal government by 2013 in the current 2011 budget year.

The Common Council objectives of providing top-notch service, maintaining infrastructure, keeping city financial strength, and being good stewards of resident tax dollars are encompassed successfully in the 2012 budget. We are fortunate to achieve our city goals in this financially-stressed time. I recently read of a Michigan community that ripped out its street lighting to reduce costs—the poles were removed to avoid monthly pole charges. I know of a Wisconsin community facing a several million dollar budget shortfall with just \$16,000 in their reserve fund—their options are few and painful. I commend our Council and City Staff for our current financial condition.

Several reports were given at the November Council meeting. The Evansville Youth Center has completed the transition to local programming. The youth at the Center are enjoying varied activities, including monthly local bowling outings and service events like raking leaves for senior citizens and helping AWARE with their programs. More than 150 different students have used the facility recently and more than 40 percent of our sixth graders have registered to use the Youth Center.

The Economic Development Committee is working on two projects. Consulting firm Ady Voltedge has been engaged to undertake a retail market survey for our community. The research is currently underway and meetings with local stakeholders will occur in December to share results and seek additional input prior to drafting a community retail marketing plan. Our Tourism Subcommittee is working with the Wisconsin Department of Tourism on a new state tourism assessment program, a four-step process that is beginning this month.

The Park Board reported that this year's restoration work on the creek walls is nearly complete and that the work was in an area of serious deterioration. A concrete pad has been poured near the Baker Office Building at the Park entrance. The Antes Cabin will be placed at the new location and subsequently restored. The last remaining tourist cabin has been repeatedly vandalized in its current spot.

A resolution supporting civil public discourse by government, political candidates, and citizens, a companion resolution to one adopted at the annual conference of the League of Wisconsin Municipalities last month, was approved unanimously by our Council. It calls for respect, courtesy, and decorum in the public arena.

Alderman Dennis Wessels resigned effective November 30, 2011. Dennis served District 4 for nine years. His position will be on the April 2012 ballot for a one-year term.

WPPI Energy President Mike Peters will attend the December 13, 2011, Common Council meeting to introduce himself to City leadership and make a presentation on current WPPI Energy initiatives and operations. It is the goal of WPPI Energy to provide annual updates individually to City officials in its 51 member communities.

### City Announcements

Leaf pick-up continues through the week of Thanksgiving. Only leaves should be raked into the gutter. The City yard waste facility will be open two more Saturdays from 9:30 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. to receive yard waste other than leaves. The facility closes for the season on November 27.

In collaboration with the E-Cycle Wisconsin initiative of the Department of Natural Resources, there will be an electronics recycling drop-off for city residents at the Public Works Garage at 535 South Madison Street on Friday, November 18, 2011, from 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. Electronic devices such as computers, monitors, fax machines, televisions, and DVD/VCR players will be collected. No appliances (stoves, refrigerators, water heaters, etc.) will be accepted.

On November 18-19, the Chamber will sponsor Olde Fashioned Christmas. There will be carriage rides and other downtown festivities on Friday evening. Santa and Mrs. Claus arrive by fire truck on Saturday morning. The Evansville Community Theater has three presentations of "A Christmas Story" throughout the weekend (additional performances will be held Thanksgiving weekend). The St. John's Christmas Bazaar is

scheduled for Saturday. There will be children's activities and vendors from the Evansville Farmer's Market at Creekside Place on Saturday.

City offices will be closed Thursday and Friday, November 24 and 25, for the Thanksgiving holiday.

The AWARE Lovelights Tree Lighting Ceremony will be held December 2, 2011, at 6:00 p.m. at City Hall.

### Evansville Thanks

Our community is fortunate to benefit from amazing local volunteers. Hats off to the members of the Youth Center Board for facility improvements at the Center, programming enhancements, and especially their dedication to making a safe, inviting place for our kids. Board members Justin Brooks, Lisa James, John Otto, Rachel Kleven, Sandi Konkel, Mike Maves, and Greg Kuelz deserve our thanks.

Evansville thanks Dennis Wessels for his service as District 4 Alderman since 2003. Dennis has attended more than 300 City meetings during his years as Alder. We offer our best wishes as he enjoys his hunting hobby and continues his volunteer service in the school district weight room.

Our community thanks City Finance Director Lisa Novinska, City Clerk Judy Walton, and City Administrator Dan Wietecha for their efforts and dedication in developing a 2012 City budget that meets the needs of the community in unique financial and political times.