



This is the City Manager's week in review for the week of December 5, 2022.

City Council Meeting – The regular meeting of the City Council was held on Monday, and outside of board and commission appointments, Council had one item of business to attend to. City Council approved the appointment of an interim Public Works Director until a replacement is hired. Mr. Ricky Zoet was unanimously approved by City Council to be the interim Public Works Director. Mr. Zoet, Public Works Supervisor, has been with the City since 2019 and was promoted to Supervisor in 2020.

Public Art – I understand that there is potential for another sculpture to be purchased and donated to the City of Douglas using private funds. I'm working with Maryjo Lemanski to follow the public art policy and identify a suitable location for the sculpture. The public art policy provides guidance for the City to acquire and display artwork throughout the City on municipal property. Ms. Lemanski was instrumental in coordinating the procurement and installation of a Jason Quigno sculpture called "Seven Grandfathers" at the History Center. The sculpture is owned by the City, but displayed on History Center property by written agreement.

City Hall Exterior Repairs – The Department of Public Works is working with contractors to provide quotes for the repair of woodwork on the exterior of City Hall. City Hall was built in two sections dating back to 1875 and 1902. During this fall's exterior painting project, a number of wood siding and window trim areas were identified that need attention. The quotes will be provided to City Council for inclusion in the next fiscal year's budget.

Planning Commission Meeting – The PC met on Thursday at its regular meeting for December and took the following action:

1. 324 W. Center Street – Site Plan Review and Special Land Use Request for Mixed-use development with first floor residential – known as Centre Collective Commercial – approved with conditions
2. 324 W. Center Street – Site Condo review for a 20-unit single family residential development – known as Centre Collective Residential – approved with conditions
3. 485 Ferry Street – Site Plan Review and Condominium – known as Forest Gate – tabled.

Economic Outlook for 2023 – I attended a session about the economic outlook for 2023 for the state and West Michigan Region this week. The presenters anticipated that we would experience a mild recession in the last half of 2023. They expect interest rates will remain high to fight off inflation. Supply chain issues are stabilizing, and commodity prices are decreasing. Inventory is increasing except in the automotive industry. Manufacturing is coming back to the US. Housing purchase prices are down slightly, but housing rent costs are trending higher. We are experiencing historic labor gaps as there are more jobs available than job seekers. Labor shortages are driving employers to restructure their workforce. Employers are

experimenting with split shifts, shorter working hours to accommodate employee's family situations, retaining older workers, and trying to avoid worker burnout. During Covid a lot of workers migrated to the southeast of the United States. Large expensive cities saw employees leave areas like San Francisco, Boston, New York to relocate to more affordable areas. In Michigan, the Grand Rapids region is anticipated to continue to grow due to its relatively low cost of living. Allegan County is anticipated to grow its population by 4 percent over the next 30 years. The Allegan County employment outlook is optimistic as well with a projected 7.5 percent increase in employment over the next 30 years. Bottom line is 2023 could be rough for a bit, but the future of the region is looking bright.

Congratulations – Our Douglas family is growing. The City Treasurer and his family welcomed the birth of a beautiful baby boy this week. Congratulation to the Smith family!

That is all I have for now. Have a wonderful weekend.

Rich LaBombard
City Manager