



Council, Mayor To Pick Candidates in Search for New Police Chief

By Mark Tower

To select a new St. Ignace police chief, Mayor Paul Grondin and council members will each choose their three top candidates from the pool of 34 applications, and all those chosen will go through an interview process at a public meeting. At its meeting Monday, December 7, Council also set a public hearing for the 2010 city budget, approved its annual appropriation resolution, discussed soon-to-expire solid waste and health insurance agreements, and went into executive session to discuss progress on its employee contracts.

Mayor Grondin suggested the method of choosing interview candidates, which he said would assure that any applicant that a council member wants to look at will get an interview.

"I believe that this will give us a pretty broad look at the applicants," Mr. Grondin said.

He also asked that the three city police officers who have applied receive interviews. These are Sergeant Mark Wilk, Officer Merlin Doran, and Officer Richard Cullen.

Council members are free to choose fewer than three candidates, City Manager Eric Dodson said.

Selections will be reported to Mr. Dodson before the Monday, December 21, Council meeting and he will arrange the interviews.

Council has yet to determine the interview questions or how the candidates will be scored or qualified and has not ruled out the possibility of multiple interviews for some candidates. The interviews will begin in early January.

Mr. Dodson said references will only be checked for the final two or three candidates.

Councilman Paul Fullerton said at least an hour should be allotted for each interview.

"A half hour I don't think is enough," he said. "It's an important position to fill. We should allow ample time so we're not rushing this process at all."

Mr. Wilk, who was present at the meeting, pointed out that if current Police Chief Tim Matelski retires January 1, 2010, some changes to the current police schedule and organization will need to be made. Mr. Dodson agreed, saying he planned to discuss those changes with Mr. Matelski, and Councilman Don Gustafson asked for a report on the discussion at the next scheduled City Council meeting.

Budget Hearing

Public comments will be solicited during an 8 p.m. hearing Monday, December 21, regarding the proposed 2010 city budget, available at the city clerk's office.

The \$7,365,513 budget requires 16.16 mills, the same as in 2009, which will generate \$1,423,520 from an estimated \$87.8 million in taxable value.

Council members unanimously approved the appropriations Monday, December 7. Some changes may need to be made to the budget before it is passed, most notably from ongoing union contract negotiations with city employees and the replacement of the city's health insurance plan.

The city's charter requires that a public hearing be held to receive comments on the budget before City Council passes the budget and appropriations during its last meeting of the year, which will be the December 21 meeting.

Health Insurance, Solid Waste Bids

The city must find a new health insurance provider by the end of the year because the Municipal Employees Retirement System of Michigan (MERS) has stopped offering health insurance to municipalities. Its contract expires December 31.

"We are sifting through many proposals," Mr. Dodson told Council, "but details have not yet been ironed out."

The city is focusing on a "Blue Cross-style" plan, he said, hopefully similar to the plan currently offered employees. One possibility

is buying insurance through Michigan Employee Benefits System (MEBS), which offers a high-deductible plan. With high deductible plans, premiums are often lower. The city could pay all or some of the higher deductible from the savings in the lower premiums.

"There is a bit of risk involved" in covering the deductible, Mr. Dodson said. "It really depends on what your utilization is."

The contract with Waste Management will expire February 1, 2010, and Council has requested proposals from area waste haulers to set up a new garbage contract. The basic necessities the city has asked be included in these proposals are a 3-can or 1-can weekly option, twice-a-month curbside recycling, a once-a-year bulk trash pickup, availability of a transfer station at least two days/week, and free dumpsters during special events.

Council member Willie LaLonde said he would like a transfer station to be open longer hours, especially during summer months.

The deadline for bids is 5 p.m. Monday, December 21.

Council members voted to enter a closed session to discuss the collective bargaining of city employees in the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) union. These negotiations, Mr. Dodson said, are going well and will hopefully draw to a close in time for the final Council meeting December 21. If an agreement is

not reached before the end of the year, he said union employees would continue working on the old contract until a new one is adopted.

St. Ignace City Council meetings are open to the public, and are regularly scheduled for the first and third Monday of each month. The next scheduled meeting is 8 p.m. Monday, December 21, when Council will hear public comment on and consider the budget and proposed tax levy for 2010.

Hollyhock Performs Straits Buoy Work



The Coast Guard Cutter *Hollyhock* of Port Huron worked in the Straits Wednesday, December 2, decommissioning aids to navigation for the season, said Seaman Marc Loofgren of Station St. Ignace. The vessel traveled through Round Island Passage the same time the *Arnold* ferry, *Huron*, was taking Mackinac Island passengers to St. Ignace. The 225-foot *Hollyhock* was scheduled to moor overnight at the St. Ignace station.

City Will Open Bidding for Garbage Contract

By Mark Tower

The City of St. Ignace is requesting bids from waste hauling contractors, since its current contract with Waste Management

to provide residential trash pickup and other services in city limits will expire February 1, 2010.

Seeking bids was recommended by the Solid Waste Committee and City Manager Eric Dodson, who said several companies have approached him asking if the city would be interested in switching contractors.

The current solid waste contract provides city residents with the option of weekly pick-up of either one or three trash cans, a special rate for senior citizens, a once-yearly bulk trash pick-up day, a transfer and recycling station on Cheeseman Road, a twice-monthly curbside recycling program, and free dumpsters for various special events in the community.

The cost of the entire contract is about \$94,000 a year, Mr. Dodson said, and the waste hauler last requested St. Ignace amend the 10-year contract in 2007 with a 3% price increase, owing to a 3% Consumer Price Index (CPI) increase. According to the contract with the city, the contractor may only increase rates by a maximum of the CPI.

The city adds customer trash fees to their water bills and, after collecting an administration fee, pays Waste Management directly for serving city residents. The three-can rate is \$12.86 per month, the one-can rate is \$9.24 per month, and the senior citizen rate is \$4.96 per month.

The three-can rate is based on allowing either six 32-gallon bags or three 32-gallon cans weekly per customer, and the one-can rate is based on allowing one 32-gallon bag or one 32-gallon trash can.

Both Smith Sanitation of Rudyard and Republic Services of Onaway have expressed interest, along with Waste Management, in pursuing a contract with the city. Smith Sanitation, which now provides trash service in Clark Township, offers weekly



Russell Winberg of St. Ignace empties recyclable material from his house into a recycling dumpster Wednesday, December 2, at Waste Management's St. Ignace transfer station on Cheeseman Road. The station, owned by Waste Management, offers recycling and bulk waste services to residents as a part of the contract the waste hauler holds with the City of St. Ignace.

rates of \$3 for eight gallons, \$4 for 30 gallons, and \$5 for 55 gallons, though the rates may be different if a contract is pursued with St. Ignace.

The Solid Waste Committee, comprised of Mr. Dodson and councilmen Tom Della-Moretta, Merv Wyse, and Don Gustafson, identified several key elements that must be a part of any bid accepted by the city at the group's Tuesday, December 1, meeting.

The committee decided to shorten the contract from 10 years to five years and determined to ask for a transfer station close to town, at least twice-a-month curbside recycling, at least once-a-year bulk trash pick-up, and free dumpsters for special events like Car Show, Truck Show, Arts Dockside, Fish Feast, and others.

Mr. Wyse said separating the list of expectations from the service bids is important so the city can fairly compare different prices with different companies

that may have a varying scope and quality of services.

The issue of having a nearby transfer station for recycling and bulk waste may be complicated by the fact the the current transfer station on Cheeseman Road is owned and operated by Waste Management.

Mr. Gustafson said it would be important for a facility to be close to town and to have consistent hours for residents to drop off bulk garbage and recycling that cannot be disposed of in residential cans.

"I think it is wise for us to explore what our options are before we just decide to extend this contract with Waste Management," he said.

All requirements outlined by the city will be listed in the advertisement for bids. Mr. Dodson said he plans to also contact companies that have expressed interest. The city will ask for references from all contractors submitting bids.

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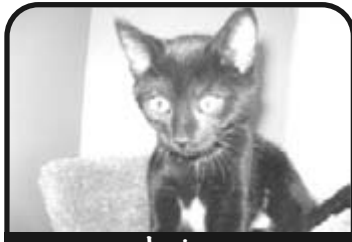
Ginger

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PUB



Tony

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of Buddy



Lester

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For All The Support



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Sweet Zoe



Natalie

Remembering
Sassy Lou
1993-2009



Annie

In memory of
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