

dialog

A newsletter for East Lansing residents • March 2017

PARKS & RECREATION

Northern Tier Trail Improvements to Begin this Summer

The City of East Lansing was awarded \$1,088,500 in Ingham County Trails and Parks Millage funding in 2016 to make improvements to the Northern Tier Trail and repair/replace pedestrian bridges along the trail system.

The funding will be used to enhance the sections of the trail that are in Ingham County, including improvements to the asphalt surface, complete trail replacement in some areas and ADA improvements.

The bridge work will include improvements

to four bridges and the complete replacement of two bridges - one in Albert A. White Memorial Park and one located between Abbot Road Park and the East Lansing Soccer Complex.

Construction is expected to begin this summer. Community members should note that there will be intermittent closures along the trail as the improvements are completed.

Additional details will be provided as they become available.



The Northern Tier Trail improvements will be funded with Ingham County Trails and Parks Millage funding.

COUNCIL

City Council to Consider FHT Report

The Financial Health Review Team (FHT), appointed by the East Lansing City Council in early 2016, presented its final report to Council this past January. Over the next six months, Council will consider components of the FHT report at its discussion-only meetings.

Development incentives were discussed at Council’s Feb. 21 meeting, which will be followed by discussion of legacy costs, citizen communications and services, infrastructure, City-owned real property and revenue options. It is likely Council will discuss the components of the report in the order listed above, with revenue options likely to be discussed at the May discussion-only meeting.

Much has already been written about the FHT revenue options. The team presented several options to maintain City services at the present level. One option the team identified was a City income tax coupled with a millage reduction based upon the estimated residential income tax paid. An income tax study prepared by Plante Moran at the request of the team indicates that a total of aboutcontinued on page 2

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MANAGER'S MESSAGE

Green Things Are Happening in East Lansing



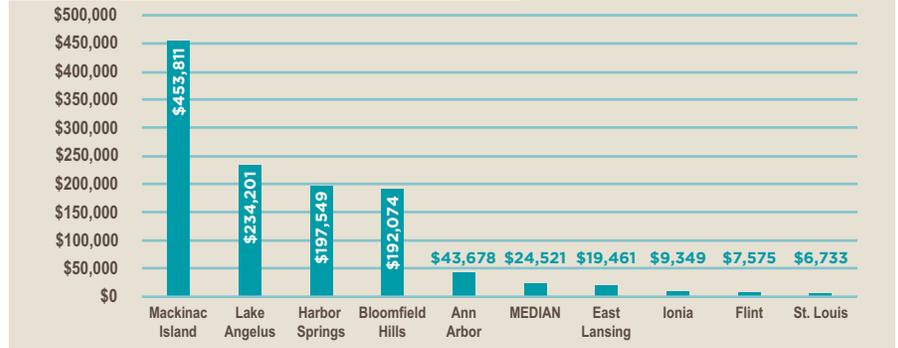
Green things are happening in East Lansing! We are honored to have been chosen as one of only ten communities across the U.S. to participate in The Resilience Dialogues.

The Resilience Dialogues partners with communities to explore their risks for climate variability and change. Through a series of facilitated online dialogues, subject matter experts and community leaders work together to take steps toward resilience. This is a tremendous opportunity to engage as a community with climate scientists and experts in the field as we work to understand the impacts of climate variability and change on our region and work to identify which information, tools and assistance programs are the most relevant for our community's needs.

In other "green" news, the City was one of only four communities in the state to be awarded Community Forestry funds for updating our street tree inventory and completing an urban canopy study. The City received \$17,000 through the competitive grant program, facilitated by the DNR and U.S. Forest Service, and the work is expected to be completed this summer. Additionally, the EL Going Green crowdfunding campaign was a success and, as a result, 40 new bike loops and additional recycling/refuse containers are in the process of being installed in downtown East Lansing. Check out the Curbside Journal for more green news and updates!

George Lahanas, EL City Manager

TAXABLE VALUE PER CAPITA



REVENUE OPTIONS

\$10 million could be generated from a standard 1% tax on City residents and a .5% tax on non-residents. An accompanying reduction in property tax millage would significantly offset the estimated income tax paid by residents.

The team also identified another option; a Headlee Override to reinstate the City's 20 mill charter authority. During the 2008 recession, property values dropped fast and property taxes are recovering slowly in Michigan cities due to the constitutional cap on the annual increase in taxable value. This has resulted in substantially reduced revenues for municipalities. From 2009-2016, East Lansing property values declined 5.7% and, currently, the Headlee-restrained millage in East Lansing is 17.589 mills.

The team's other revenue options include exploring a public safety millage for police and fire services through a public safety authority, exploring additional service consolidations with neighboring communities, continuously reviewing fees for services and permits and consideration of a 5% budget reduction for all City departments. The income tax, Headlee Override and public safety authority options would all require voter approval. The team's complete recommendations can be viewed at cityofeastlansing.com/FinancialHealth.

The economic challenges East Lansing has faced are not unique. Like many other Michigan communities, East Lansing's revenue sources have failed to keep up with current levels of services

and rising costs. A report by Great Lakes Economic Consulting entitled "Michigan's Great Disinvestment," available at www.savemycity.org, provides an analysis of how state policies have forced communities into fiscal crisis. The report states that "Michigan law contains structural provisions that limit cities' ability to collect taxes on existing properties, which has been made more challenging by state cuts in revenue sharing to local units of government. Cumulative cuts to statutory revenue sharing for municipalities from FY 1998 to FY 2016 are estimated to be a staggering \$5.538 billion."

The report also notes that low taxable value per capita is the leading cause of municipal financial stress in Michigan. In 2015, East Lansing's taxable value per capita was \$19,461, which fell below the \$24,521 median for Michigan cities and came in at 194 on a list of 275 Michigan cities ranked from highest taxable value per capita (1) to lowest taxable value per capita (275). A low taxable value per capita means property taxes alone cannot support a high level of services. Many Michigan municipalities with taxable value per capita similar to East Lansing's have adopted an income tax.

East Lansing's below-average taxable value per capita, coupled with a slow-to-recover housing market, Headlee restrictions, revenue sharing cuts and rising legacy and infrastructure costs have created significant challenges that cannot be fixed with budget cuts alone.

CITY CLERK

East Lansing City Clerk's Office Provides Election Information

With the May 2, 2017 Special School Election just around the corner, the East Lansing City Clerk would like to remind voters of some upcoming key dates and information.

The voter registration deadline for the May 2 election is Monday, April 3. Eligible voters can visit the City Clerk's office, 410 Abbot Road, to register. Voter registration and absentee voter ballot applications can also be found at www.cityofeastlansing.com/elections or can be requested by mail by calling (517) 319-6904 or in person at the City Clerk's office. Absentee voter ballots will be available at the City Clerk's office beginning March 20.

The City Clerk's office will have special hours on Saturday, April 29 from 9 a.m.-2 p.m. to issue and receive absentee ballots. The last day to have an absentee ballot mailed is Saturday, April 29 and the last day a voter can apply for an absentee ballot and have it issued in person is Monday, May 1 by 4 p.m. All absentee ballots must be returned to the City Clerk's office by 8 p.m. on Election Day.

Voters can visit www.Michigan.gov/vote to find out where they vote and to view their sample ballot. Additional election information, including a link to photo i.d. requirements and a precinct map, can be found at www.cityofeastlansing.com/elections.

"We encourage citizens to take note of the key dates for the May 2, 2017 Special School Election."

City Clerk
Marie Wicks

EAST LANSING PUBLIC LIBRARY

Support ELPL at Annual Books, Bites & Bids Event

The East Lansing Public Library (ELPL) will host its 6th Annual Books, Bites & Bids fundraising event on Friday, April 21 from 5:30-9 p.m. With the library's interior renovations completed, the event will be returning to ELPL this year, 950 Abbot Road.

The 2017 Books, Bites & Bids event will include a silent auction, heavy hors d'oeuvres featuring Grand Grillin' (the returning main food sponsor), drinks, live music by The Matt Borghi Group,

children's activities and more. ELPL is also excited to announce that Tim Busfield and Melissa Gilbert will be attending the fundraiser as special guests.

The silent auction will include a variety of exciting items donated by businesses, organizations and library patrons. Items will include a season ticket package for Lansing United, an entire Coca-Cola Christmas Village, a night's stay at the English Inn, Lansing Symphony tickets, a beautiful vase from Mackerel Sky, patron-

made painted pallets and much more!

A tax-deductible donation of \$30 per individual and \$60 per couple/family is suggested. Community members can RSVP and make their donation ahead of time at <http://bit.ly/2l1BHnH> or the ELPL Circulation Desk. Donations can also be made at the door. Funds raised will be used to purchase a Lending Library, a library vending machine of sorts, which will help ELPL to extend its reach to a remote community location.



IT'S YOUR BUSINESS

LOTSAs Stone-Fired Pizza Opens its Doors

LOTSAs Stone-Fired Pizza recently opened its doors in the 100 block of downtown East Lansing's Grand River Avenue.

Established in 2015, LOTSA is a fast-casual pizza chain that specializes in offering customizable pizzas and salads to its customers. With fresh ingredients and a fun environment, customers can watch their pizza go from dough-to-done in just 5 minutes.

Community members can visit www.lotsa.com to explore the menu and the wide variety of fresh pizza and salad toppings that LOTSA has to offer. There are plenty of unique things to try!



LOTSAs PIZZA

Address: 115 E. Grand River Ave.

Website: lotsa.com

Phone: (517) 305-4400

Store Hours:

Sunday-Wednesday, 11 a.m.-11 p.m.

Thursday-Saturday, 11 a.m.-3:30 a.m.



Significant updates will be made to the downtown parking system this year.

PARKING

Parking System Updates in Downtown

Community members are encouraged to take note of a number of recent, ongoing and upcoming updates to the downtown East Lansing parking system.

The M.A.C. parking garage, located under the East Lansing Marriott, will be closed through August for necessary renovations that began earlier this year. The work will consist of replacement of the concrete deck, LED lighting upgrades, pedestrian access-point upgrades and parking space reconfiguration to address ADA compliance.

Improvements are also being made to downtown East Lansing's gated lots. Old cashier booths and gate equipment will be removed and new gate equipment will be installed to enhance customer convenience and complete the transition to a cashier-less system. The parking system's old equipment is 10 years old and beyond its useful life, causing ongoing equipment failures and customer inconveniences. New pay machines will be installed at all parking exits and the ground level of each elevator, providing opportunities for customers to pay from their vehicle or on foot. There will also be cameras and intercoms installed, which will allow customers to communicate directly with parking ambassadors to work out any issues that may arise. Parking ambassadors will be dispatched out if problems arise. The gated lot equipment upgrades should be completed by the end of March.

In addition to these latest upgrades, new smart meters, multi-space meters and the Passport Parking Mobile Pay app were implemented throughout the downtown last year. To provide the community with assistance in utilizing the new parking system equipment, tutorial videos will be posted soon at www.cityofeastlansing.com/parking.

DEPARTMENT FEATURE

A Look Inside the East Lansing Public Library

The East Lansing Public Library (ELPL) is home to 28 full-time and part-time employees who work hard on a daily basis to bring enrichment, education and engagement to the community.

The interior of the 25,800-square-foot library was recently renovated thanks to a generous \$1.5 million anonymous patron donation, resulting in the creation of a new-and-improved space. Improvements include a larger/improved teen space, a larger Maker Studio, additional meeting rooms, a cyber cafe, upgraded WIFI, remodeled bathrooms, the addition of an inclusive bathroom and mother's room, early childhood literacy stations and a more open floor plan with improved sightlines. The library also features new, brightly colored furniture and a number of other amenities and touches, including a book drop "peek window" for young patrons and beautiful new light fixtures.

The library's collection is vast and varied. In addition to the 84,757 print materials

housed in the library, there are DVDs, books on CD, ebooks, music and much more. The library also offers a variety of children, teen and adult programs and events, including, most recently, the launch of a Social Justice Reading Group designed to engage children in the exploration of social justice issues through children's literature. Other library programs include the Drop-in Teen After School Program, Storytimes, Summer/Winter Reading Programs, early childhood literacy programs, film showings, book clubs, Maker Studio events, concerts and more.

The Friends of the East Lansing Public Library, a nonprofit made up of dedicated community volunteers, provides support to ELPL by giving money raised from book sales and fundraising efforts to pay for programs and collection materials. Marsha's Friendshop, housed in the library, is run by the Friends and features a collection of donated used books for sale. Be sure to check it out!



The East Lansing Public Library recently underwent a transformational renovation.

DPW

Bicycle Friendly Community

The League of American Bicyclists recently recognized the City of East Lansing with a Bronze Bicycle Friendly Community (BFC) award. The award recognizes East Lansing's commitment to improving conditions for bicycling through investment in bicycling promotion, education programs, infrastructure and pro-bicycling policies. The BFC program provides a benchmark for communities to evaluate these conditions and policies, while highlighting areas for improvement.

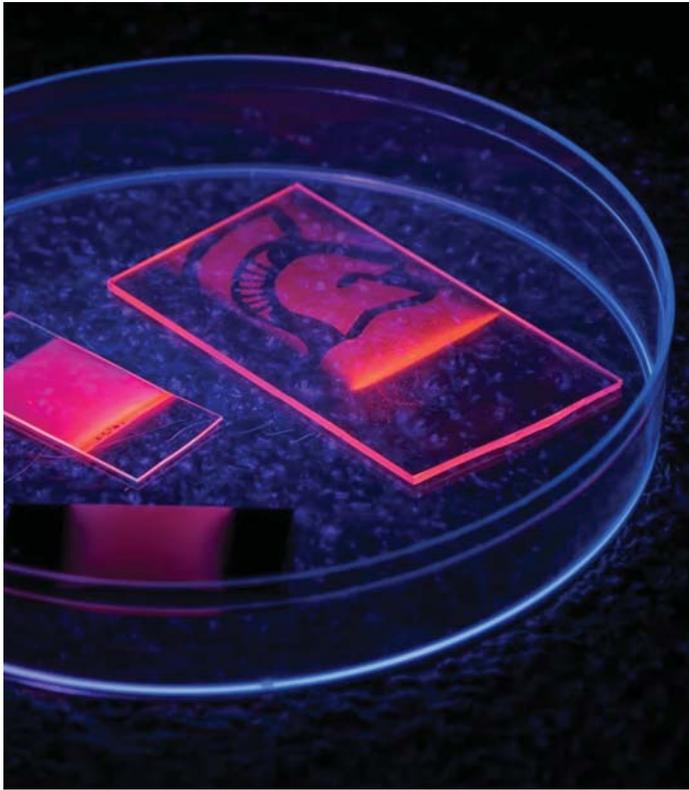
"We are honored to have received this designation," said East Lansing City Councilmember Shanna Draheim. "We continue to work to improve bicycle friendliness in the City, most recently with the addition of more than two miles of new bike lanes on either side of Harrison Road."

COMMUNITY EVENTS

Crystal Awards Reception

Community members are invited to the 2017 Crystal Awards reception, taking place on Thursday, April 27 at 5 p.m. at the East Lansing Hannah Community Center, 819 Abbot Road.

The Crystal Awards, hosted by the East Lansing City Council, serve to honor individuals, businesses, nonprofits and community groups that have gone above and beyond to make East Lansing a great place to live. Four unsung heroes, nominated by community members and chosen by a community selection committee, will be honored at the event. In addition to the program, there will be appetizers and live music. The reception is free and open to the public.



The MSU Science Festival, taking place April 7-23, offers something for everyone. All events are free and open to the public.

COMMUNITY

MSU Science Festival to Take Place April 7-23

Save the date for the MSU Science Festival, taking place April 7-23. In its fifth year, the festival will continue to share the wonder and excitement of science with East Lansing residents.

More than ever, people are curious about the science in their daily lives and the new, innovative ideas shaping the future. To address that curiosity, MSU researchers and partner institutions across Michigan will share their expertise on such diverse topics as autonomous vehicles, climate change, forest ecosystems, nanotechnology, clean water and much more.

Highlights will include a Statewide Astronomy Night on April 7; Gastropod-LIVE! - a live podcast show about food with a side of science and history - on April 8; East Lansing Expo Day, including guest speaker PaleoJoe, on April 8; Detroit Expo Day on Belle Isle on April 9; and Take-A-Tour Day on April 15. There will also be Science Cafe & Pub Nights, Dazzling Demos, Nights at the Museums and dozens of other science offerings sprinkled throughout 17 days in April! All events are free and open to the public. View the full schedule at sciencefestival.msu.edu.

GUEST COLUMN

ELPS Develops Bond Proposal for May Election

BY: ELPS ACTING SUPERINTENDENT DORILEYKO

East Lansing Public Schools (ELPS) has developed a bond proposal for the May 2, 2017 Special Election to address the needs of elementary facilities and provide 21st Century learning environments for students for years to come. The proposal seeks to build new facilities on the existing sites of the Donley, Glencairn, Marble, Pinecrest and Whitehills elementary buildings. Red Cedar would be remodeled to house preschool and flexibility for up to seven elementary classrooms. This \$93,770,000 bond proposal is projected to increase the current debt tax rate 1.795 mills.

All current elementary facilities were built between 1948 and 1963. These buildings were built for an industrial model

education system with a different set of social environments. Security was not an issue. Many students walked to their neighborhood school, so they were located next to roads with little concern for bus or parent traffic. Roof heights are low, heating systems are modified residential systems, building efficiency is low, electrical capacity is minimal and, in general, these buildings were built to be shorter term buildings than those built decades before.

As the district and Community Bond Committee looked to update these buildings to meet the needs of 21st Century education, with enhanced safety and security, the cost of remodeling approached the cost of new construction. Also, remodeling wouldn't solve site/traffic issues. In order to provide adequately sized teaching stations to meet the diverse



needs of our students, interior walls would have to be moved and additions would be required to create functional learning facilities. This bond proposal offers solutions that will provide equitable and flexible learning environments for decades to come in safe, efficient buildings that will last for generations on sites with safe pedestrian and traffic patterns. Additional information is available at www.elps.us.

DPW

Online Survey to Help City Update Water Line & Meter Records

East Lansing property owners who have yet to participate in the City's Water Service Line & Meter Confirmation Survey are encouraged to do so at www.cityofeastlansing.com/watersurvey.

With the help of property owners who have completed the survey, the East Lansing Department of Public Works (DPW) staff has begun updating the City's water service line and water meter records in order to plan for future meter replacement and identify water service pipes that may need repair or replacement in the future.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has been considering new regulations that could require the removal of all lead components from water distribution systems in the U.S. In an effort to be proactive about potential changes to federal regulations, the City is seeking to create an inventory of the type of pipe material used in water lines servicing East Lansing properties. Modern water service lines are typically made of copper or plastic.

Properties that have galvanized steel water lines entering the home have a higher likelihood of having a lead gooseneck connecting the home's water service line to the City's water main. Since the ownership of the water service line is split between the City and the property owner, any change in regulation may require action by both parties. The graphic below illustrates the ownership division between the City and property owner for both water and sewer service lines.

Property owners can find a link to the survey as well as steps that should be taken prior to completing the survey at www.cityofeastlansing.com/watersurvey. A magnet test and the pipe material descriptions provided on the webpage will help property owners to determine the type of pipe material they have. If unable to determine the pipe material, property owners can call DPW at (517) 337-9459 to ask questions and/or request a free inspection.

DPW

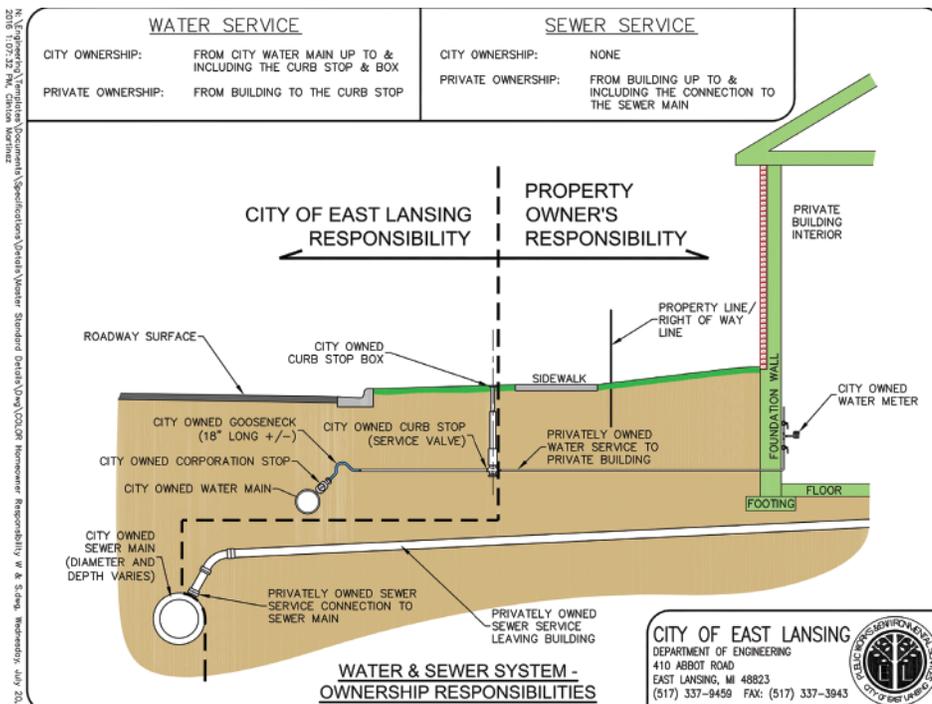
WRRF Project Update

The first phase of a multi-year renewal of East Lansing's Water Resource Recovery Facility is in the books. The \$15.4 million first phase of improvements, funded through MDEQ's State Revolving Fund, began in May 2015 and was completed earlier this year.

The improvements consisted of rehabilitation of the existing tertiary filter process and building, construction of a new ultraviolet disinfection system and building to replace the existing chlorine disinfection system and construction of a new 60-inch effluent pipe to discharge directly to the Red Cedar River.

"The UV system is extremely beneficial from an environmental standpoint. Previously we used chemicals to achieve disinfection. With the use of UV light, there are no residual chemicals being discharged to the river," said WRRF Superintendent Paul Stokes. "This ongoing project will equip the facility with the latest technology, improve employee safety and have a positive impact on the environment."

Design work on the \$31 million second phase has begun and construction is anticipated to begin in June. Improvements will include construction of new headworks, new screening and grit removal facilities and rehabilitation of two interceptors. The WRRF is owned and operated by East Lansing, with operating and capital costs shared with MSU and Meridian Township.



dialog

City Council

410 Abbot Road, (517) 319-6904

Mayor Mark Meadows

Mayor Pro Tem Ruth Beier

Councilmember Erik Altmann

Councilmember Shanna Draheim

Councilmember Susan W. Woods

City Manager George Lahanas

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community events

More info at cityofeastlansing.com/communityevents.

Books, Bites & Bids

April 21, 5:30-9 p.m.

Support the East Lansing Public Library (ELPL) at this annual fundraising event, featuring a silent auction, heavy hors d'oeuvres, drinks, live music, children's activities and more. ELPL is located at 950 Abbot Road.

Crystal Awards

April 27, 5 p.m.

Community members are invited to the annual Crystal Awards reception at the East Lansing Hannah Community Center, 819 Abbot Road. Four unsung East Lansing heroes will be honored. See page 5 for details.

East Lansing Art Festival

May 20-21

The 54th Annual East Lansing Art Festival will bring approximately 180 artists, live music, children's activities, an international food court and more to downtown East Lansing. More info: www.elartfest.com.

Aquatic Center Opens

June 3

The East Lansing Family Aquatic Center will open its doors for the 2017 season on Saturday, June 3. Community members can find hours, rates and additional information at www.cityofeastlansing.com/AquaticCenter.

Recycle! East Lansing

June 3, 8 a.m.-3 p.m.

East Lansing residents are invited to drop off unwanted household items at the Abbott Center, 1400-1500 Abbot Road, for recycling, reuse or proper disposal. See the Curbside Journal insert for more details.

Farmer's Market Opening Day

June 4, 10 a.m.-2 p.m.

The EL Farmer's Market will open for its 2017 season on June 4. The market will be open on Sundays from 10 a.m.-2 p.m. in Valley Court Park through the end of October. More info: www.cityofeastlansing.com/farmersmarket.

