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Happy New Year Swayzee!

It's been a while and I wanted to bring you some updates and information that I know are questions you all have. But first, on behalf of your Town Council, we hope you have had a wonderful Christmas season and the beginning of a great year to come!

Progress on Wastewater Treatment Plant Project

We continue to move forward on our wastewater plant project. As you may recall we were awarded a \$700,000 grant from OCRA and we are still in the application process with the information required for Rural Development (RD). We are pursuing more grant funds with RD, but also hoping to secure a good, long-term interest rate to finance the project. It seems there is always a little more information needed, and the process takes what seems like an eternity, but we are close to having that behind us. Then we will wait to see if our project is selected for any grant money or financing. We will update the town on that front as we learn more information.

Changes to Wastewater Rates


Moving forward with the wastewater plant updates, we are in the process of securing a Bond Anticipation Note that will pay for pre-construction expenses, which includes anything that is required prior to actual construction getting started (i.e., engineering, grant administration, site surveys, required soil testing, etc.). With the rise in interest rates and an effort to minimize the amount that we will have to finance, we are pursuing a stair-step increase in our wastewater rates between now and project completion. With the new plant, there simply isn't a way around having to increase our rates at least to some degree to offset the costs. Our objective is to be as mindful of everyone's rates as possible, and we are trying to devise ways to minimize any increases. One way we can do this is to make small incremental increases. Our January Council meeting will begin as a public hearing for the small increase we are pursuing to cover the added interest that will accrue during the construction phase of the project. We would encourage you to attend and be updated with the latest information, as well as ask questions that you might have.

Change to Council's Monthly Meeting


Starting in January, the Town Council will meet the **third Monday of each month at 7 p.m.** at the Town Hall.

Update on Downtown Demolition

The last time I gave an update, I mentioned that there was a signed demolition contract in place for the eyesore downtown. Since there are demolition permits needed, there was also lead paint and

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asbestos testing required before permits can be issued by the state. That testing has been done and some contamination was found on the second floor. The property owner is currently trying to secure remediation so permits can be issued. I understand how frustrating it is to watch this get drawn out so long! As a council, we are keeping pressure on the property owner, while at the same time, trying not to burn a bridge that would ultimately require the town to pay for the demolition which is going to be more than \$100,000. Yes, we are paying a price visually, but we simply don't have the funds to cover those costs especially with the wastewater project quickly approaching. We have also had questions about the structural integrity. Randall Engineering has evaluated the site with their perspective on the structure and what could be done and if it was salvageable. So currently, we don't feel that the safety concerns have changed over the time of the demolition delays.

Spring Paving

With work from our Town-Clerk, Desiree Arenas, and our Town Manager, Trey Boswell, Swayzee was just awarded a grant of \$166,000 from Community Crossings which will be used solely for paving in the spring! To meet the matching funds requirement, we have been saving funds. This spring we will be able to complete \$200,000 of paving and resurfacing. So, if you see Desiree or Trey around town, thank them for their work in securing that grant!

Additional Police Personnel

As of January 1, 2023, the Swayzee Police Department has had a second full-time Deputy, Chad VanErman. He will be working in conjunction with Marshal Wilber's schedule to have significantly more visibility and consistency in our police coverage. If you see him, welcome him to town!

Special Thanks

I would like to give Jim Cruea a shout out and thank you for giving a nice facelift to his building downtown! If you know of property owners on Main Street, encourage them to help us revitalize the appearances of our downtown area. Also, thank you to everyone that spent time and effort to make the Christmas season very nice throughout town. I've had several people make comments that it seemed like a lot more homes were decorated this year, so thank you! It sure was pretty! Also, thank you to the Swayzee Businessmen for upgrading our street light Christmas decorations to LED bulbs which looked great!

I know this is a substantial amount of information, but each of these items is important in the day-to-day operations here in Swayzee. We discuss many issues like these at each Council meeting and would encourage you to come join us to stay current and be a part of the solutions that our town needs. At each meeting the public is given time to ask questions or voice concerns and would encourage you to participate in that way!

Again, on behalf of the Town Council we hope you have a fantastic New Year!

Aaron Travis
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