

Hello Residents and Council,

I would like to wish everyone a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

Here is my report of recent activities and my calendar of planned Dexter activities looking ahead:

### **Committee Recommendations**

As we get ready for 2019, I am offering some recommendations to fill open positions on two City Commissions. My recommendations are formally presented on the Consent Agenda, but are summarized here in case Council has any questions prior to the consent agenda item.

*Housing Task Force* - On November 12<sup>th</sup>, City Council formed a Housing Task Force committee to consist of 2 City Council members, 1 Planning Commissioner and 4 at large members. We advertised for members of the community to fill the 4 at large spots and received a total of 16 applications. After reviewing all the applications, and with the intent of getting as many people involved as possible, I have included two recommendations on the Consent Agenda, as follows:

- My first recommendation is that we consider expanding the committee size from 7 to 9 members. This would allow 6 at large members to be formally on the committee instead of only 4 at large members. Council provided general support for this concept at the December 10<sup>th</sup> meeting. The proposed action is formally part of the consent agenda at our meeting on December 26<sup>th</sup>.
- I am recommending the following people for the at-large positions for 2019 – Kim Clugston, Sandee Koski, Cole Miller, Liisa Milliner, Joe Semifero, and Mona Walz. All 6 are City residents and I was able to speak to each of them prior to my recommendation. The formal recommendation item is also part of the consent agenda.

*Planning Commission* – I am recommending Kyle Marsh to fill the vacancy on the Planning Commission with a term ending June 2022.

### **Mayor's Thoughts**

Over the past several months, the subject of pedestrian safety has been brought up several times. The City has received comments from the school district specifically related to 4 midblock crosswalks (Baker Road between Creekside and Bates, Dexter AA Road at Kensington and two locations on Dan Hoey) in the City. Each of these locations is an uncontrolled location. In other words, these crosswalk locations do not have a traffic signal or a stop sign at them that requires a vehicle to stop. The school district has requested Rectangular Rapid Flashing Beacons (RRFB's) at each of these 4 locations. When the City reviewed the current guidelines available for recommending when to place a RRFB, none of these 4 locations met the requirements identified in the guidelines.

I am also aware that this topic has been discussed on various social media sites and groups. I was recently approached by Doug Marrin of WeLoveDexter and asked to provide comments on behalf of the City regarding Pedestrian Safety. I spoke to Doug on December 19, 2018 and plan to share some more information with him over the next few days so that he can prepare his article on this topic. I told Doug that I believe education on this topic is needed in order to clarify several misconceptions. Pedestrian safety is something that the City of Dexter has taken very seriously for a long time. The City takes pride in being a walkable, accessible community and we have worked hard over the past 20 years to make the town safe and pedestrian friendly

for all users. The downtown streetscape was the first example of a project aimed at improving pedestrian safety. Over the years since the streetscape, we have expanded our focus to enhance the crosswalks by making them more visible, creating shorter crossing distances, adding advanced signage at designated school crossings, and adding lighting. We have also made the crosswalks ADA compliant. We continue to look for ways to enhance pedestrian safety in the community. Most recently in 2014, we worked cooperatively with the schools to add the crosswalk island on Baker to minimize the number of lanes pedestrians have to cross. We have also added sidewalk to our "grid" to enhance connectivity.

My goal in discussing this topic in my report is to initiate and encourage others to initiate some education about pedestrian safety in our community. As a starting point, the City has met with the Sheriff Department twice over the past several weeks to discuss our crosswalks and the rules regarding "who has the right of way" in a cross walk. Our pedestrian system needs to be compliant with State law and we need to follow approved guidelines whenever we implement an improvement to the system.

Here is some information regarding crosswalks, driver responsibilities, pedestrian responsibilities and who has the right of way that we feel needs to be shared across the community:

- The Sheriff's office provided the City with the following information:
  1. Unlike crosswalks at intersections, the State of Michigan has no law related to mid-block crosswalks, whether they have a flashing light or not. What this means is midblock crosswalks do not provide any additional protection from a legal standpoint.
  2. Pedestrians cannot enter the roadway into the path of a vehicle. If they do, they are not automatically protected by state law. Conversely, if a pedestrian is crossing the road, a driver is required not to hit them. These two points are important to understand because they are based upon the notion of who (vehicle or pedestrian) was in the cross walk first. These two points establish "who has the right of way".
  3. While a yellow light at a signalized intersection means caution, a yellow light (flashing or steady) at a mid-block crosswalk is just a light. In the case of a crosswalk that has an RRFB, what this means is that a motor vehicle is not required to stop.
- Pedestrians need to walk defensively whenever they are approaching or planning to use a crosswalk.
- Driver behavior is unpredictable. It is my hope that through increased education on this topic that we will encourage more and more drivers to stop when they see pedestrians waiting to cross the street, but pedestrians need to understand that not every driver may stop to let a pedestrian have the right of way.
- There is a misconception in our community that a vehicle has to stop at a RRFB just because the lights are flashing. While a flashing light is intended to provide enhanced driver awareness that a pedestrian may be crossing, the input from our Sheriff's office indicates that the pedestrian should not assume that the flashing light requires a vehicle to stop. This point needs some emphasis across our community. As a parent, I feel it is my responsibility to teach my kids this and I would like to encourage all parents to talk to their kids about crosswalks, and driver and pedestrian responsibility at crosswalks.
- The City has a new RRFB at Grand and Baker. The RRFB is appropriate at this location because the crosswalk is across 3 lanes of traffic. It doesn't however guarantee that drivers will stop when it is flashing. In our recent City email update on Friday, December 14, 2018, we issued the following messages:
  1. *If you are a pedestrian, please check for traffic before using any crosswalk. Walk defensively and make eye contact with the drivers to ensure that they see you (before you cross). Never assume that you are seen or that a motorist will yield. Don't leave the curb or go into the path of a vehicle which is so close that the driver can't yield.*

- 2. Drivers must yield to pedestrians within a crosswalk when the pedestrian is in or near the same half of the street as the driver. Drivers can choose to stop at a crosswalk to allow a pedestrian to cross the street, but it is not required regardless of the presence of a beacon.*

I thought it was important to touch on this issue as part of my report. Hopefully, we can all help encourage responsible driver and pedestrian decision making.

### **Recent Activities & Meetings**

December 11, 2018 – Meet the new Washtenaw County Sheriff Lieutenant

December 11, 2018 – Border to Border Segment D2 Preconstruction meeting

December 17, 2018 – Economic Development Corporation – Annual Meeting

December 17, 2018 – Meeting with Avalon Housing and Faith In Action regarding City's Dan Hoey property – please see City Manager Nicholls report for an update on the meeting.

### **Upcoming Activities**

Please note that the DDA meeting scheduled for December 20<sup>th</sup> was canceled.

December 20, 2018 - Dexter Area Fire Department – I anticipate that we will approve the budget and spending plan for January 2019 through December 2019.

January 7, 2019 – Meeting with representative from the United States Census

January 7, 2019 - Meeting with Avalon Housing regarding City's Dan Hoey property – we will be discussing the potential sale of this property.

January 14, 2019 – City Council meeting

I hope everyone has a safe and happy holiday season and I look forward to seeing you around our town. 😊

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