

**Mayor Report – By Shawn Keough  
Prepared on February 6, 2019**

Hello Residents and Council,

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

**Mayor's Thoughts on Pedestrian Safety**

Our next meeting with representatives of the Dexter Community Schools (DCS) is tentatively set for February 12, 2019. Comments on the School's latest crosswalk report were submitted to the Schools on January 18, 2019 and their consultant will be reviewing them and preparing changes accordingly. As of the date of this update, the City has not received an updated report yet from DCS, however we are looking forward to our next productive discussion. The City met with DTE on January 18<sup>th</sup> and requested some lighting upgrades on Baker at the Baker Crosswalk between Bates and Creekside. DTE has completed the lighting upgrades by installing newer brighter LED lighting at this location. My first impression is that even with the upgrade, we could add some more light, so the City will be continuing to work with DTE to improve this location. The City also requested preliminary quotes for lighting enhancements at the two Dan Hoey crosswalks. There is more work and cooperation to come on this between all agencies.

**Goal Setting Sessions**

After discussions with City Manager Nicholls over the past week or so, we are recommending that February 23<sup>rd</sup> be the first Council Goal Setting Session. This date was originally a tentative date for one of our public meetings to discuss facilities, however additional preparation time is needed so Council will need to pick some revised dates in March for the public meeting on facilities.

**Mayor's Thoughts on the Need for upgrading our current City Offices and Fire Station**

As City residents are aware, our current City offices are too small and inadequate in many ways. Our staff are operating in cramped conditions, and we need to find new space to rent or build new space. Our employees deserve better conditions and more modern facilities in order to serve our residents and businesses. We also lack adequate meeting space that is our own. I believe that the cramped appearance of our current office space and conference room (while clean and as organized as possible) presents an image that is not reflective of the very professional and positive attitude that our staff project daily. Whenever we bring visitors, guests, residents, etc. into our current space, people are amazed at how our staff do so much with so little functional space. My reason for writing this article today is to increase public awareness of this problem, to seek input from residents on this topic and to notify you that we will have two upcoming public information meetings to discuss this very important facility topic, as well as options for improving our fire station, which is also in need of some upgrades. We will announce those dates and times as soon as we have them scheduled.

As part of sharing my thoughts, I would like to also encourage feedback. I would like to know how other residents feel about this situation. Do residents know we operate in a cramped space? Do residents feel we need a larger space? Do residents feel that the condition of our City offices is an important reflection of who we are as a community? As a Council, I believe that we are supposed to be making decisions that are reflective of our residents' thoughts and that improve the quality of life and image of the City. We also have a responsibility to spend within our means as we solve these types of problems. I believe that finding a better place for our City Office should be a top priority. City Council has been working for the past couple of years to develop a list of options and we are getting close to presenting that information, however we have many priorities competing for our General Fund dollars.

With regard to our Fire Station, there has been plenty of recent Council discussion about moving the fire station. The majority of the recent Council discussion has focused on the vacant property at Meadowview and Dexter Ann Arbor Road. This property is currently owned by MAV Development and is across from Mill Creek Middle School. The City's Master Plan identifies this property for commercial uses like the day care that was recently built next door or the University of Michigan Medical offices across Meadowview. While this site is certainly big enough to build on, I am not in favor of moving the fire station to this property for two primary reasons:

1. The first reason I am not in favor of moving the fire station is that it does not improve the service or response times for our community if we move the station further down Dexter Ann Arbor Road. The City of Dexter is partners with Dexter Township and Webster Township and together we participate/operate the Dexter Area Fire Department. In 2018, over 70% of the runs by our fire department were in the two Townships. Moving the City station further down Dexter Ann Arbor Road means that the response times for those runs will increase. It simply will take longer for trucks and response vehicles to get from Meadowview and Dexter Ann Arbor Road through town and into the district, whether they are heading under the viaduct to Island Lake Road or through our older portion of the Village to Mast Road. Response time is very important when responding to a fire or medical emergency and it just doesn't make any sense to build a new station that adds time to our ability to respond to those in need. I am also concerned about taking the station out of our historical downtown. If we have a fire in downtown (and we have had 2 in the last 20 years), it is critical that our firefighters can get there to prevent the fire from spreading. It would be very hard to rebuild our historical downtown. We need to protect it by minimizing the response times.
2. The second reason that I am not in favor of moving the station is cost. We have been working with a knowledgeable architect for a few years and the projected cost to build a new station are over \$6 Million, including construction costs, design fees and contingencies. This projected cost is anticipated to be over \$7 Million if you include the cost to purchase the land. I feel that this is simply too costly, especially when it doesn't improve our overall response time to serve the community. We can spend significantly less to modernize our current station and add the additional space we need. Our architect has shown us several plans to accomplish that as well.

### **Mayor's Thoughts on the Topic of Affordable Housing/Living**

On January 31, 2019, the City of Dexter's Housing Task Force held their first meeting. While this meeting was mostly about getting organized and allowed the committee members to get to know one another, it also represented the City's initial steps to gather information and put some focus on the topic of affordable housing. Affordable housing is a subject that is being discussed nationally. The City's task force will be gathering data that can be used to define what is affordable in Dexter and how we compare against other communities in our county and state. I actually prefer to think about this topic as affordable living, because there are so many factors that go into a person or families' ability to live in an area. Housing is certainly one of the biggest factors, but the cost of services, access to public infrastructure, schools and having multiple transportation options also contribute to whether someone can afford to live in an area. As a City we are working to provide the best reliable public services (i.e. water, wastewater collection, roads, sidewalks, trash and recycling pick up, snow plowing, etc.) that people need as efficiently as possible. We realize that these factors also contribute to the affordable living equation.

The City took a big step at our January 28<sup>th</sup> meeting by agreeing to sell our property on Dan Hoey to Avalon Housing so that lower cost housing can be created at that location. This potential development still needs many approvals and Avalon is still in the initial stages of applying for funding and tax credits, but the initial discussions and the City's decision to support this type of project is another step in our efforts to encourage affordable housing in our community.

I appreciate the comments that I have received since my last report on these topics and am interested to hear what other City residents think. I welcome your input and participation in the discussion of any of these topics. Please look for the upcoming meeting notices and feel free to contact me at the number or email below with any thoughts and questions. Thank you in advance for your input on this process.

### **Recent Activities & Meetings**

February 4, 2019 – Pre-application meeting for outdoor seating at Northern United Brewing Company and storage units at Encore Theatre.

### **Upcoming Activities**

February 11, 2019 – County wide Affordable Housing meeting (with Michelle Aniol)

February 11, 2019 – Dexter Community Schools – Dedication of new elementary complex

February 11, 2019 – City Council meeting

February 12, 2019 - Meeting with Dexter Community Schools regarding Crosswalk Safety within the Community

February 21, 2019 – Downtown Development Authority meeting

February 21, 2019 – Dexter Area Fire Board meeting

February 23, 2019 - City Council Goal Setting Session #1 (Tentative date)

February 25, 2019 – City Council meeting

I look forward to seeing you around our town. 😊

Shawn Keough  
Mayor, City of Dexter  
[skeough@DexterMI.gov](mailto:skeough@DexterMI.gov)  
(313) 363-1434 (cell)