

# Executive Department



*Pictured above (left to right): Executive Assistant Wendy Larson and City Manager Bill Vajda. Not pictured: Recently retired, Darlene Inch, former Executive Assistant.*



## EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT 2011-12 ANNUAL REPORT

In accordance with Section 2-80 of the City Code, the Annual Report highlights the accomplishments of the Executive Department over the past year, and provides insights to other on-going activities. Citizens can find detailed information about department operations, awards, and statistics that illustrate how their tax dollars are being used.

### ***Serving Residents and Volunteers***

- Substantial efforts were undertaken to enable broad access to local government information. In addition to expanding the use of “traditional” media channels (radio, television, press, City websites, and reading rooms), City management added several new venues and capabilities (Skype, Google+, NIXLE, expanded radio interviews). All meetings of the City and City Charter Commission were broadcast live on Channel 21 or recorded for posterity and are available on-demand through the City website.
- The City Manager maintains an open-door policy, and entertained visits by hundreds of residents, employees, Commissioners, and visitors who sought to discuss specific issues and concerns. He also hosted 12 monthly *Community Office Hours* at the Peter White Public Library, which elicited over 50 individual visits regarding a variety of matters and interests before the City. In addition, six issues of the *Marquette Matters* newsletter were published during the year.
- City officials met with students at Marquette Area Public Schools and Northern Michigan University to address their interests and views. The sessions were attended by dozens of students and administrators. In addition, the City co-hosted and facilitated visits from visiting elementary school children, charitable organizations, Sister City delegations, and other federal, state, and local officials interested in discussing issues with the residents of Marquette.
- A 24-hour response rule continued to support residents seeking information about City activities, projects, or issues of interest. Over 150 such contacts were completed during the course of the fiscal year, demonstrating exceptional responsiveness to individual information needs.

- In response to conversations with current and out-going board and committee members, and at the request of the City Commission, six (6) Committee “Boot Camps” were conducted during the year, serving 114 volunteer City officials. Volunteer committee and board members were provided with an overview of local government, ethics, parliamentary procedure, and state laws governing meeting and record management. They were also introduced to staff liaisons and peers. The response has been highly positive, particularly for people with no prior government experience.

### ***Community Outreach and Leadership***

- The City and County worked positively together on a variety of mutual interests and improved cooperation. Specific examples include activities and efforts associated with the County Brownfield Authority, the County Land Bank, Sawyer International Airport, Regional Planning, Marquette County Solid Waste Management Authority (MCSWMA) and Recycling, Regional Law Enforcement, and other issues associated with recreation, culture, and economic development.
- Regional Recreation Planning. In order to reconcile complimentary aspects of City Recreation, Surplus Land Sales, and Financial Management policies, the City Manager worked with the City Commission to initiate a regional recreation planning study.



- Waterfront Safety remained a key focus issue. A video was created supporting local awareness that was broadcast through the City’s public access television channel, and won the Michigan Municipal League Region 7 best-practice Award for community innovation. The “Marquette Water Safety Model” has subsequently been adopted by other Great Lakes communities and the Michigan Parks and Recreation Association as the basis for their programs, and has been incorporated as the basis for pending water safety legislation by the Michigan Senate.



- The Marquette Farmer's Market continued to thrive and grow. The program received a \$50K USDA Grants for Local Food and Farmers Market promotion which greatly enhanced service delivery and community opportunities. Much of the effort was undertaken through public/private partnerships between the City and the Marquette Food Co-op, which enhanced local policy focus on agriculture issues and our local food supply.



## Property Sales

- Strong private interest continued for the purchase of City surplus property. In addition to several routine property license and easement agreements, the City received offers totaling \$1.254M for approximately 695 acres of land, including:  
  
09-2011 Marquette Township - \$700,000 for 560 acres of Heartwood  
09-2011 Private Party - \$23,000 for 2,450 sq ft of vacant property  
11-2011 MCSWMA - \$180,000 for 100 acres of Heartwood  
04-2012 Private Party - \$300,000 for 4.67 acres - Founders Landing  
04-2012 NTN - \$51,000 - 30 acres of Heartwood
- As a result, the City Commission chose to confirm two (2) offers for total sales of \$201,565.89 associated with 100.2 acres of land.

## Budget

- In addition to qualifying for 100% of available state revenue sharing through the Economic Vitality Incentive Program (EVIP), steps were taken to formalize the establishment of economic development practices within staff. The City pursued Federal, State, and local grant opportunities that successfully captured awards of \$1,362,448 from a wide variety of organizations, including the US Department of Commerce, US Department of Justice, Michigan Department of Transportation, National Endowment for the Humanities, Environmental Protection Agency, US Department of Energy, US Department of Homeland Security, MSHDA, Michigan Department of Natural Resources, Michigan Justice Training Fund, and the Michigan State Police. The total amount represents approximately 7.5% of the General Fund, or approximately 2.3 mils if captured through taxable value instead. The benefits of these rewards have been demonstrated through improvements to City services, greater fostering of arts and recreational opportunities, as well as direct benefits to home and property owners seeking greater energy efficiency and improved property values.
- The City successfully adopted a budget for FY2012-2013 that did not raise taxes, and continued a trend of lowering long-term debt by 40% per annum, while concurrently lowering the operating budget by 2.6%. In parallel, City services were expanded, and several examples demonstrate improved quality of service to the residents of Marquette, including increased water safety operations, fire protection, facility operation, and telecommunications infrastructure and services. The budget includes a \$4M Capital Improvements Plan for reconstruction of major road, water, and sanitary sewer infrastructure, as well as funding for the maintenance and improvement of other City assets and capabilities. As a result, residents continue to receive high-quality services at the same time as the City takes steps to mitigate the risks of a turbulent global financial marketplace and potential period of State and Federal austerity.