

City of Monmouth

City Manager's Report

A Report on City of Monmouth News, Happenings, Successes and Other Items

September 18, 2014

New City Councilor

Our newest City Councilor is Marshall Guthrie. Marshall will fill a vacant Council seat through December 2013 and is running for a regular term in the November election. He has served on the City's budget committee and as a representative on the area's cable access board. Marshall is director of the student enrichment program (TRIO) at Western Oregon University. During his interview for the Council seat, he noted a variety of ways to better include citizens in City government.

Medallions

While it's not typical to look down when walking around, if you did this in our Downtown you would notice an abundance of great art work. This will only work if you are not looking at your cell phone. Sprinkled throughout the Downtown are medallions that have been installed in the sidewalks to add some flair and local flavor. The medallions were produced by Western Oregon University students. Some of the medallions reflect Monmouth history; some are scenic; some are just innovative. They all add a unique touch to our Downtown and are yet another example of the partnership between the City and WOU.

Madrona Park Progress

The construction crews at Madrona Park have really picked up the pace the last couple of weeks. New entrance ways to the park have been prepped, most leveling has been completed and irrigation lines are being installed. With cooperation on the weather front, we should see pathway paving this week and next.

Talmadge Road Project Done

Everyone hoped that the Talmadge Road pedestrian safety project would be done before school started – and it was! While the focus of the project was to install a sidewalk where a gap existed, we got much more. The bike lane was also realigned, new street lights were installed and the road was resurfaced all the way down to the bridge over Ash Creek. The project was a partnership between the City of Monmouth and Polk County. A big thanks is owed Polk County for providing funding for the project and construction management services.

Development Activity Picks Up

The last few weeks have seen a significant increase in development activity. Currently, eleven single family homes and two duplexes are under construction. We have had initial meetings on several multi-family projects and developers are actively scouring within the City for available lots. This activity mirrors what's going on in other Polk County communities.

City Hall Building

The topic of renovating or replacing City Hall has been an ongoing discussion for a number of years. The current building is old, lacks adequate space, is poorly configured for our needs and every utility system needs to be upgraded. And our City Council and Municipal Court rooms are located in a separate building. The last formal effort to replace City Hall was in 2004. Voters considered allocating funds for a mixed use Civic Center concept that did fairly well at the polls, but

was not approved. More recently, City Hall ideas were gaining some steam, but talks about this building were deferred to focus on the needs of the Police Department.

The City Council has placed City Hall discussions back on the front burner. Current ideas to replace or renovate City Hall include: expanding the current building to the east (into the grassy area) and remodeling the existing building; doing this, and integrating Volunteer Hall into this new building; or moving all City Hall functions to the location of Volunteer Hall. The last option would free up the current building for retail or other uses. We will be enlisting the services of architects to help narrow down our options. Once we have a desired path, we'll clarify costs and develop a funding plan.

Video Arraignment

So, how many of you know that Monmouth does not house prisoners at our Police Station? We hold some suspects temporarily for processing, but Polk County does the bulk of our processing and very importantly serves as the jail for all cities in our county. One consequence of this system is that Polk County and Monmouth spend a fair amount of time processing prisoners in and out of the jail and then transporting them back and forth from our Municipal Court. One option to reduce this time and expense is to use a Video Arraignment system. Through video arraignment, a prisoner can communicate with a Judge through a video connection and never have to leave the jail building. This would drastically reduce prisoner processing and transport time. Monmouth has been trying to develop such a system for many years, but the cost of a system and the technology just wasn't there. Typical video arraignment systems can cost \$40,000 and up, which makes them infeasible for smaller cities.

But sometimes, you have some crafty people on staff that can come up with lower cost alternatives. In our case, our crafty people included Mark Dunmire, City Finance Director and Mark Overman and the Polk County Information Technology staff. Polk County

provides our ongoing IT services. Our tech team came up with a viable arraignment system that is working extremely well and was installed at a fraction of a purchased system. It took a lot of fresh looks at technology and troubleshooting, but they got it done. It's great to have people on your team that think creatively and are o.k. working outside their regular duties.

Safe Cities Award

The City of Monmouth has received a "Safe Cities" award from Safe Choice Security. We are listed as one of the 12 safest cities in Oregon. The company carefully analyzed the data from the 2012 FBI Crime Statistics report to find the communities that stood out from the rest because of their low crime rates. All of the cities had fewer reports of violent crime and property crime than other cities in Oregon. The award is a nice recognition of the work that the community and our Police Department do to make this a safe and desirable community.

If you have any questions about items in this report or anything related to the City, please call me at 503-751-0146 or e-mail me at smcclure@ci.monmouth.or.us.

Scott McClure
City Manager

