



BELDING BUGLE

Belding's Financial Challenges

April, 2017

The financial adventures of a small town are played out in Belding almost every day. The City Council becomes acutely aware of the challenges every year about this time when they work with the administration to prepare the annual budget.

The citizens of Belding last approved a millage rate (the amount per \$1,000 used to calculate taxes on property within the community) in 2011 when it raised the rate to 15.95 mills. The voters in 1993 also approved 2.0 mills to be used for capital improvements. In practical terms, if you own a home with a taxable value of \$50,000, you would pay \$798.00 annually for city operations and an additional \$100 for capital improvements...that equates to only \$75.00 per month. Your tax bill will also include entities for which the city is required to collect revenues including the Belding Library, Belding Area School District, Special Education, State tax, County tax, and the Ionia County Intermediate School District. So, only 30% of the tax bill that you receive involves support of city operations and improvements.

As a result of the recent economic downturn, Belding's property values dropped significantly and the State of Michigan significantly reduced the amount of revenue sharing paid to the city annually (we are not alone as this condition is faced by virtually every city in Michigan).

Also, over the years the City Council has approved a number of bond issues, repayment of which is included in our annual budget, for such things as the Library addition, Covered Village Mall parking area, sewer installation and improvement, water installation and improvements and parks improvements. The city budgets approximately \$460,000 each year to retire these

debts. These bond obligations will be expiring starting in 2020 but several expire in 2028 and beyond.

The annual budget for the city is divided in two sections - the General Fund that derives most of its revenue from taxes and fees for services, and the Enterprise Funds that derive most of its revenue from state and federal grants and user fees.

The General Fund is the one that generates the most interest from citizens as it contains budgets for all of the city departments. Over the past ten years, the size of city government has been reduced from 109 employees to 68 employees as the City Council has attempted to insure that efficient and professional services are provided to our citizens. We have been able to recruit an outstanding staff for a city our size to provide our citizens with what we call "essential services" or those provided by the police department, fire department, the public works department and key administrative functions. What has suffered as a result of the decline in revenues is the "quality of life" items represented by our parks systems, the condition of our residential properties, and the maintenance of the city in general.

Even though the city receives funds from the state and federal governments to maintain and improve streets, we have not been able to keep pace with the natural deterioration that has taken place. It is estimated that 50% of our streets are in poor to moderate condition and desperately in need of attention.

Belding currently has the second highest tax rate in Ionia County. We have resisted traditional approaches to revenue increases such as income tax programs, high fees for use of city properties and buildings, special

assessments, and the like. However, what we are not able to provide our citizens is alarming...for instance:

- We are not able to repair or replace streets on a systematic basis.
- We are not able to budget for sidewalk installation to provide a walkable community (it is interesting to note that the City Charter requires that sidewalks be installed and maintained for all properties in the City of Belding...if not installed by the property owner, the city may construct them and special assess the cost to the property owner).
- We are not systematically removing all of the dead and diseased trees from the public right-of-way.
- We are not adequately maintaining our public buildings and grounds
- We are not able to provide significant incentives to encourage the creation of new jobs in the City.
- We have not developed or implemented a modern system of records protection and retention.
- We are not effectively controlling the vandalism and the use of drugs by our youth.

As Albert Einstein once proclaimed..."Insanity is doing the same thing over and over and expecting a different result".

The Belding City Council is committed to finding innovative and effective ways of approaching these challenges in the future to achieve the objective of "Building A Better Belding".

Code Enforcement

Trash receptacles can be placed at the curb after 6 p.m. the night before pickup and must be removed after the trash is picked up or emptied from the can by the hauler.

Reminder - a fence permit is needed prior to erecting a fence within the City of Belding. For those that will be replacing a roof, a permit must be obtained from the

Ionia County Building Department. They are located at 175 E. Adams St. in Ionia and can be reached at 616-527-5374.

Grass shall not exceed 10 inches. Failure to comply will result in an ordered contractor cutting. The contracted cutting will result in a citation being issued to the owner, and the charge for the contracted

mowing and administrative fees will be charged back to the owner.

Parking of vehicles in the front yard is illegal and may result in a citation from the Police Department.

We are all working together to make Belding a safer place to live, work and play.

Belding Fire Department

Bon Fire Permits

Please contact the Fire Dept. at 794-1900, Ext. 212 between the hours of 8 a.m. and 5 p.m. for the annual Bon Fire permit. Please speak with the on-duty firefighter at the fire station to renew an existing permit. Brushfires or the burning of yard wastes is strictly prohibited within the city limits.

Severe Weather

The City's weather warning sirens will be tested on the 1st Saturday of every month at 12 p.m. starting in April and continuing throughout the severe weather season. The National Weather Service will issue a

tornado watch when conditions are right for the formation of a tornado. This is the time to begin preparations. The weather siren will be sounded when a tornado warning has been issued for our area. A tornado warning means a tornado has been sighted and that persons should immediately take cover.

House Numbers

City of Belding ordinance requires visible house numbers at or near the front entrance of all residences and businesses within the city limits. Visible street numbers are critical to emergency service personnel when trying to locate the origin of

an emergency call.

Smoke Detectors

City of Belding ordinance requires working smoke detectors in all existing residential occupancies, which include all one and two-family dwellings and apartment houses. Detectors must be located on the wall or ceiling in each room used for sleeping purposes, on the wall or ceiling outside of each separate sleeping area, and one on each floor of the dwelling unit. Installation information may be obtained by contacting the Fire Dept. Check smoke detectors regularly and change batteries at least twice yearly.

Belding Police Department

The Belding Police Department would like to remind you that Spring is a time for an increase in pedestrian traffic. Slowing down will allow you to react to the pedestrian stepping off the curb or from behind a parked car; or the ball thrown into the street being chased by a child. For the persons that walk, please use the sidewalks when provided - it is the law!

The department will again this year have an officer in the parks on bicycle. Your assistance is requested while visiting the parks or using the pathways, so if you observe illegal or unacceptable activity, contact the police department immediately!

Parking

Vehicles that are parked on curbed streets

must park with the right wheels to the curb. Parking between sidewalk and curb and in front yards is prohibited. Vehicles that are parked on non-curbed streets must park with the right wheels to the edge of the roadway. Parking between the sidewalk and the edge of the road is prohibited.

Vacation House Checks

If you are going to be away on vacation, please make arrangements to stop the mail and newspaper. Make your home look lived in with the use of light timers. Have trusted friends and neighbors watch the house and help it look lived in by picking up weekly newspapers and flyers left at the door. For the extended stay have someone

mow the lawn. Contact the police department and request a vacation check on your home. The form is available on the website - www.belding.us

Skating and Riding

No person shall roller skate, ride a bicycle or skateboard on any public bench, table, planter wall, retaining wall or any other device or structure which is not intended for pedestrian or vehicular traffic, or to jump or step on or off such devices or structures in the process of roller skating or riding a skateboard. No skating or riding is allowed on private property without permission, in a business district or while attached to vehicles.

Dial-A-Ride

Spring is here and summer heat is around the corner! Beat the heat by riding Dial-A-Ride to your next destination! Our air conditioned buses provide a comfortable ride for you.

Fare rates are as follows:

Student (4-17) \$2.00

Adult (18-61) \$2.50
 Seniors (62+) \$1.25
 Disabled \$1.25

Information about our transportation service is available at 616-794-3278 weekdays between the hours of 6:30 a.m. and 5:30 p.m. and Saturdays from 9 a.m. to

1:30 p.m. Our "Job Access" route to Ionia leaves at 8:30 a.m. and 1 p.m. from Belding. You may also visit the city website - www.belding.us or find us on Facebook for more information. Brochures are available at the Pere Marquette Depot, 100 Depot St.

Belding Housing Commission

Availability and eligibility questions for Belding Housing Commission rental properties may be directed to the administrative office by phone 616-794-1740, Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. or by visiting the office located at 41 Belhaven

Avenue during window hours, Monday through Friday from 1 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. Applicants must be determined eligible for participation in the program, and are selected from the waiting list for placement. Preferences apply in accordance

with federal regulations and agency policy. Rent is offered on a flat rent or income basis. Belding Housing Commission is an Equal Housing Opportunity agency.

Household Hazardous Waste Collection

The City of Belding Fire Department along with Ionia County Resource Recovery will be holding their annual Household Hazardous Waste Collection on Saturday, May 20, from 8 a.m. to noon at the old Belding

Hospital parking lot in the 1400 block of West State Street in Belding.

Area residents are welcome to bring household hazardous waste such as

sprays, cleaners, flashlight batteries, rechargeable batteries, chemicals, insecticides, pesticides, antifreeze, oils, stains, cell phones, and non-latex paints.

Library Happenings

April

4, 11, 18, 25 Little Wigglers at 10 a.m. (Birth-2 yrs.)
 5, 12, 19, 26 Storytime at 10 a.m. (3-5 yrs.)
 8 Lego Day 10 a.m. to noon
 10 Movie Night at 5:30 p.m.
 26 Book Club at 6 p.m.
 27 Book Club at 10 a.m.
 29 "Spring into Writing" Writer's Workshop at 10 a.m. with Karen Duquette

May

2, 9 Little Wigglers at 10 a.m.
 3, 10 Storytime at 10 a.m.
 8 Movie Night at 5:30 p.m.

13 Lego Day 10 a.m. to noon
 24 Book Club at 6 p.m.
 25 Book Club at 10 a.m.

June

28 Book Club at 6 p.m.
 29 Book Club at 10 a.m.

Summer Reading Program

June 9 Sign ups with Special Kick-off!
 Preschool 6 p.m. on June 12, 19, 26 and July 10, 17, 24
 Preschool 10 a.m. on June 13, 20, 27 and July 11, 18, 25
 Elementary 2 p.m. on June 14, 21, 28 and July 12, 19, 26

Special Programs include: IM Kids 3rd Meal, Cup stacking with Jim Merrills, and "Touch a Truck".

Summer Reading Program Awards - July 31, August 1 and 2.

Friends of the Library

May 22 at 6 p.m. Michigan's Ghostly Beacons with Dianna Stampfler. What is it about Lighthouses that attract the spirits? Lighthouse keepers were dedicated to their profession and it seems that even after death, they never stopped working. Almost two dozen lighthouses in Michigan are rumored to be haunted.



CITY of BELDING

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City Hall Office Hours:

Monday through Thursday, 7 a.m. to 6 p.m.

LOCAL POSTAL CUSTOMER

BELDING, MI 48809



Music in the Park

"Music in the Park" will be held at East Riverside Park on Mondays from June 5 to August 21. A concert will not be held on July 3. Please join us for free popcorn! A door prize will be given away each week!

Belding Museum

Open the 1st Sunday of each month from 1-4 p.m.

Children's Museum

April and May - Open the 1st Sunday and Wednesday of each month from 1-4 p.m.

June - Open the 1st Sunday from 1-4 p.m., and every Wednesday from 1-4 p.m.

Fire Hydrant Flushing

Hydrants will be flushed on April 9-12 from midnight to 7 a.m. If you experience discolored water, please flush the cold water faucet closest to the water meter until the water runs clear.

"Spring into the Past"

The Belding Museum, in conjunction with the Tri-Rivers museum network, will be open Saturday, May 6 and Sunday, May 7 from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m., along with other local small museums. Please stop in to see new displays featuring vintage clothing. With three floors of interesting artifacts, there is something for everyone to enjoy.

The museum is housed in the historic Belrockton at 108 Hanover St. Admission is free. Rediscover Belding!

Arbor Day

Arbor Day seedlings will be given away from noon to 2 p.m. at the Depot on Friday, April 28, 2017. Red maple and sugar maple seedlings will be available.

Celebrate Arbor Day by planting a new seedling!

Dept. Public Works

Yard Waste/Leaves

There will be no loose leaf pick-up in the spring. Yard waste and leaves must be placed in biodegradable bags and will be picked up every Friday, beginning April 21, 2017.

Bags must not exceed 35 pounds and cannot contain other materials. Please place bags at the curb by Friday at 7 a.m., but no earlier than 6 p.m. on Thursday.

Brush Pick-Up

April 24, May 22, June 26, July 24, August 21, September 25 and October 23

Please place brush at the street by 7 a.m. on the above dates, but no earlier than the 18th of the month. The total amount of brush and limbs per household shall not exceed 10 cubic yards per month.

To ensure pick-up, please locate brush in a clear area, away from any obstacles and overhead wires.