

## **Discussion about Parks and Recreation**

The Township and the City have had a collaborative agreement with the Grand Blanc schools for close to 50 years to provide Parks and Recreation activities for the Grand Blanc Community at large. However, the Township Board has insisted on revising the long-standing Agreement. The City was informed the Township Board was concerned about the liability of the employees of the Parks and Rec Commission who were not officially employed by the City, the Township or the Schools. For this reason, City Council voted for the City to become the employer of record in order to keep the Parks and Rec Commission viable. This decision was made by City Council in a thoughtful and conscientious manner. The goal has always been, on our part, to quote the Township Superintendent, "to ensure the Community continues to enjoy the high quality and quantity of recreational opportunities." Our goal is to keep the Parks and Rec Commission intact. Period. We hoped that proactively addressing the Township's concerns by offering a simple, workable solution would accomplish that end.

However, in addition, The City and the Township have split the administrative costs of running the parks department 40% city/60% township. That arrangement was established at the beginning of the agreement 50 years ago based on the population of the two municipalities at the time. Over the years, with the growth of the township, the city's population has become 20% of the total as compared to the original 40%. The City feels that any new agreement should incorporate that funding change.

The total budget for Parks and Rec is around 1.2 million dollars. \$900,000 is raised by the Parks and Rec Commission from the many successful programs they provide in addition to some fundraising and grants. This accounts for 73% of the Parks and Rec budget. The other 27%, \$300,000, is provided from the general funds of the Township and the City in the above mentioned ratio of 60%/40%. As a reflection of the actual population of the two municipalities today, the City has requested that in any new agreement its percentage of the Parks and Rec budget be decreased to accurately reflect the 20/80 split. The City has been paying more than its fair share for many years, but did so for the benefit of the Community. The Parks and Recreation Department is well run and has provided great programs for our constituents, but the funding mechanism needs to be fairly updated.

The City has always funded its own parks. It has always allowed Parks and Rec to use City Parks for programs that they offer. If the city became the employer of record for Parks and Rec, the employees would be doing the same job they have been doing for the last 48 years - we hoped that would satisfy the concerns of the Township Board.

## **Fire Discussion**

As Mayor of the City of Grand Blanc, I want to repeat that we tried to work with the Township to keep the Fire Commission together. In addition to contributing time and energy to a joint task force which met numerable times with representatives from the Township, the City Council also met with the Township Board three times over the past two years to discuss the fire millage. We even asked to have a meeting run by a moderator to try to work through our differences, but the Township Board refused to pursue that option.

We helped fund a study requested by the Township after the millage passed in the Township and before it passed in the City. The City government did not even have the opportunity to hear the results of that study from the consultant before the joint Fire Commission was dissolved by the Township Board. However, the consultant who finally presented the study to the City Council told us he was shocked by the Township Board's vote to dissolve the Fire Commission on a suggested shortage of 1.3% of a 1.5 million dollar budget, a sum of \$19,500.

At our recent February 13<sup>th</sup> meeting, City Council voted to initiate another attempt to negotiate a fire department agreement with the Township. That earnest effort on the part of the City was summarily rejected by the Township.

The City of Grand Blanc has been evaluating all available options and is waiting for a professional and detailed fire study which has been commissioned to be presented to City Council in the near future.