

CITY OF ST. JOHNS/CITY MANAGER NEWSLETTER  
SUBMITTED TO CLINTON COUNTY NEWS  
Submitted: January 25, 2017

**ASSESSOR INFORMATION REGARDING PERSONAL PROPERTY TAXES:** The 2017 Personal Property Statement must be filed with the City of St. Johns Assessing Department no later than February 10, 2017. This is the same due date for filing the Affidavit to Claim Small Business Tax Exemption for Personal Property. Please adhere to these deadlines. It is noteworthy that 245 St. Johns small business owners took advantage of the Small Business Tax Exemption in 2016. 15 local taxpayers successfully filed for the Disabled Veterans Tax Exemption during this same period.

**ELECTION DATA:** With a full slate of state and national candidates, the city saw significant turnout at the local polls in November 2016. Almost 67 % of registered St. Johns voters cast their votes, which was more than ten percentage points over the 55% of voters who went to the polls nationally. In the Presidential election St. Johns voters broke 2,034 for Trump/Pence and 1,443 for Clinton/Kaine.

**HICKS GRAIN ELEVATOR:** The City Commission authorized the purchase of the Hicks property on North Clinton Avenue directly behind the Railroad Depot. The purchase price for the two lot parcel was \$150,000. Closing of the sale is pending. The City Commission and Planning Commission will be soliciting public input regarding appropriate uses for the property once the sale is finalized.

**2017 DEDICATED STREET IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM:** 2017 is the last year of the four year dedicated millage for improvement of local streets within the city. During the preceding three years ten miles of city streets have been repaved, with other improvements to curbs and storm water catch basins and other infrastructure. During the 2017 construction season 3.2 additional miles of local streets will be worked on. This includes portions of Hampshire Drive, Lincolnshire, Lambert Drive, Wight Street, McConnell, Mead Street, Railroad Street, Lewis, North Oakland, and Giles Street. The City Commission is studying the feasibility of extending the street millage program to allow continued improvements to city streets. Any such street millage renewal or extension must be taken to the voters in 2017. It is worth noting that the city's matrix of local streets is 41 miles in total, and more than 12 miles of streets that are in poor condition have yet to be improved through the millage program.

**DRINKING WATER:** Given the frequency with which the quality of municipal water supplies is in the news, residents of St. Johns should be comforted by the fact that annual reports submitted to the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality consistently show the City of St. Johns in compliance with required water quality standards. City of St. Johns water quality information can be reviewed on the City of St. Johns homepage by clicking "Departments" and then clicking "Water Department". A variety of Water Department report links are available to all residents just by clicking on the report you wish to review.

**WASTEWATER FACILITY UPGRADES:** Recent Lansing State Journal and Clinton County News articles have discussed the rising cost of water and water/sewer rates in the Lansing region.

While St. Johns water/sewer rates compare favorably to other communities in the area, there is no question rates continue to climb. As the articles point out, it is not the cost of water that drives rising expenses and rates, but the significant expense of maintaining the underground pipes and most especially, the water treatment and waste water treatment plants. Treating wastewater is an especially costly operation, and many of the upgrades are mandated by federal and state laws and regulations. In 2009 the City Commission approved a 4.5 million dollar upgrade of the waste water plant. Every year since then additional upgrades or repairs of equipment have been necessary, adding up to more than another one million dollars in plant outlay. These are not discretionary expenditures; it is what it takes to keep these facilities operational and within regulatory guidelines. And it is for this reason rates continue to go up. The City anxiously awaits the State of Michigan to develop some sort of financial assistance program as our residents cannot continue to bear the costs of aging infrastructure. Unfunded mandates that the State and/or Federal government requires comes at a cost, and our hope is that we can develop financial partnerships.