

Photo by Kim Eliassen, Administrative Assistant, Community Services

Marquette Matters

A bimonthly publication produced by the City of Marquette

Wastewater Treatment Plant Gains National Research Attention

The Marquette Area Wastewater Treatment Plant has gained national attention recently as the result of process problems experienced since the 2008 plant upgrade. The Water Environment Research Federation (WERF) has been studying the problem of anaerobic digester foaming on a national and international level. The Marquette facility attracted the attention of the WERF staff because it is a well-operated, high-performance facility that has experienced digester foaming nearly continually, despite ideal process operating conditions.

The anaerobic digestion process, which is used to bio-degrade and stabilize pollutants removed from wastewater, has experienced severe and persistent foaming incidents. Foaming occurs when gas bubbles form from within a liquid volume and collect at the surface. Foaming becomes problematic when it accumulates at the liquid's surface and interferes with gas collection and utilization systems. The foaming caused the treatment plant unforeseen expense when the facility was unable to burn gas to heat the treatment plant facilities.

The WERF staff reviewed volumes of plant operational data and made a site visit in November 2011. The root cause(s) of digester foaming at the Marquette facility are not yet clear. WERF staff has recommended several full-scale plant operational testing protocols that may help narrow the cause(s) of the foaming.

In the meantime, plant staff has rectified the problem by implementing a system to control the foam; the system has proven to be very effective and reliable. Full scale plant testing is scheduled to begin early in 2012. There are several technical and coordination issues to be resolved prior to engaging in this testing. More information about WERF can be found at their website:

www.werf.org. More information about the Marquette site can be found by contacting Curt Goodman, Superintendent, at 906-225-4055.

Right: One of three anaerobic digesters at the Marquette facility.



Upcoming City Commission Budget Sessions

Date	Time	Place	Topic
Wednesday, January 18, 2012	8:00 a.m.	City Hall Room 103	Audit Presentation, Budget Work Session for City Commission Priorities
Wednesday, February 15, 2012	8:00 a.m.	City Hall Room 103	Budget Work Session for Capital Outlay
Wednesday, February 22, 2012	8:00 a.m.	City Hall Room 103	Budget Work Session for Capital Outlay

A complete schedule of the 2012-2013 City Commission Budget Sessions can be found at www.mqtcty.org. See article, right.

Bill's Blog...

Bill Vajda, Marquette City Manager (pictured right), shares his comments on the health of our City in "Bill's Blog" as part of each issue of "Marquette Matters." The City Manager is the chief administrator for the City government. Vajda welcomes comments from the community at (906) 225-8102 or manager@mqtcty.org.



It's Budget Season Again!

Residents frequently ask my views on the biggest challenges facing the City. "The economy," is a succinct answer, and easy to understand. Perhaps a better response (albeit a longer conversation) would be "the uncertainty of federal and state policies on local finances, and the urgent need for residents to participate in upcoming City budget deliberations."

Over 220 years ago, as the nation struggled to define itself through a Constitutional Convention, Alexander Hamilton identified these same concerns. He realized that taxation at the local, state and national level were *equally* important "to the happiness of the people." He noted that unchecked taxation at the national level could lead to a "federal monopoly, to the entire exclusion.... of the state governments." Equally so, decreases in state revenue sharing pose real concerns at the local level, especially when trying to meet citizens' needs with fewer resources to do so.

Hamilton believed that the only way to avoid the downfall of state and local governments would be through the organization of government, and most importantly, through *citizen participation at every level*. I couldn't agree with him more. In my view, the best government is one that maintains the values and priorities of its citizens – the foundations of which are reflected within its budget.

So how do we (City staff and elected officials) know if the coming-year City budget meets the expectations and priorities of the residents of Marquette, while anticipating unknown impacts, and avoiding "ruinous pomp and extravagance"?!? How best can we engage the community on this complex topic, and find a well-balanced outcome during a time of resource scarcity, and difficult sets of choices?

By using another time-proven method--Openness and Transparency! As has been the City's practice, the City Commission will hold many public meetings and working sessions where folks can offer their own comments and views on the budget. The schedule for the meetings is published on the City Website, and Commission meetings are noticed through the standard processes.

The table at left displays upcoming City Commission budget sessions. The meetings are open to all who care to participate. It remains my deep, sincere hope that residents embrace this opportunity, and I encourage as many as possible to share their thoughts and suggestions with the Commission as we endeavor to provide the best government possible.

Regular meetings of the City Commission are usually held on the second and last Monday of each month at 7:00 p.m. in the Commission Chambers. The public is invited to attend these meetings. A full schedule is listed on page two of this publication.

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Millage Rate Explanation on Taxable Property

Property owners in the state of Michigan have always been concerned about their property's value. However, in this economy where certain areas in the state have experienced significant loss in property value, that concern is paramount. To help understand the ways assessors throughout the state are required to value properties, a property owner must first understand the terminology used to value their property. Terms relating to value are the Assessed Value (AV), the State Equalized Value (SEV), and the Taxable Value (TV). Listed below are the meanings of these different terms.

Assessed Value – This is generally the same as the state equalized value unless an equalization factor other than 50% has been applied by the county in which the property is located or the State. This is a very rare occasion to have a factor other than 50%.

State Equalized Value – This is one half (1/2) of your property's true cash value as determined by the assessor. Please note that assessors must establish a value and cannot arbitrarily take 50% of a sales price as the SEV. The practice of taking 50% of a sales price and setting that as the SEV is known as 'chasing sales' and is an illegal practice of which an assessor may lose their assessing certification.

Taxable Value – This is the value used to calculate your property taxes. Due to Proposal A of 1994, a property's taxable value can only increase annually by the rate of inflation or 5%, whichever is less, unless there is an addition to the property (i.e., new construction or omitted property) or the property's ownership transferred during the previous tax year. A property's taxable value can also decrease if there is a physical loss to the property (i.e., demolition of a structure or fire).

The taxable value is multiplied by the current millage rate. For 2011 the millage rates for the City of Marquette were as follows:

2011 Summer Millage Rates

City Operating	14.9225
Senior Millage	0.3500
Library Operating	1.3698
Library Debt	0.6150
School Operating*	18.0000
School Debt	0.9500
State Education	6.0000
Special Education	2.0000
MA-RESA	0.2048
County Operating	5.2938
Heritage Authority	0.2000
TOTAL	49.9059

2011 Winter Millage Rates

County Transit	0.5997
County Aging	0.4376
County M.O.E. *	0.5500
County Dispatch	0.4862
County Rescue	0.1491
TOTAL	2.2226

*Maintenance of Effort (County Run Medical Care Facility)

Note: For a property where the owner resides and is claiming a Principal Residence Exemption (PRE), the total summer millage that would be levied against their TV would be 31.9059 (The 18.0000 School Operating mills would be exempt.)

Out of 5,080 residential properties the average TV for 2011 is \$64,358. If the property was owner occupied, receiving a PRE, the summer tax would be $(\$64,358 \times 31.9059)/1000$ which equals \$2,053.39, without the addition of the 1% administration fee. If the property was not owner occupied, the summer tax would be $(\$64,358 \times 49.9059)/1000$ which equals \$3,211.84, without the addition of the 1% administration fee.

AARP E-Filing Tax Assistance Available for Seniors

If you are over the age of 60 and need to file State and Federal income taxes, as well as the Homestead Property Tax Credit and/or the Home Heating Credit, AARP volunteer Kathy Lakenen and her team of professionals will be available by appointment at the Marquette Senior Center beginning in February.

AARP volunteers will be available on Tuesdays and Fridays, from 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m., beginning February 3, 2012. Appointments are required.

This service is offered to seniors at no charge. For more information, please contact the Marquette Senior Center at 228-0456.

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March Board of Review

March is the time of year for property owners to protest their valuations to the Board of Review. The dates for the March Board of Review for hearing protests are:

March 26, 2012, 9:00 a.m. until 12:00 p.m. and 1:30 p.m. until 4:30 p.m.

March 27, 2012, 1:00 p.m. until 4:00 p.m. and 6:00 p.m. until 9:00 p.m.

The meetings are held in City Commission Chambers. The process to protest is for the person protesting to first come into the Community Development Department to complete the required paperwork. Upon filling out the paperwork, an assessing staff member will pull the parcel record file for the protested parcel. The staff member will then deliver the completed paperwork and record file to the Board of Review. No appointments are taken to protest to the Board of Review. Agents may protest for a property owner with written authorization from the property owner to the Board of Review. Protests can also be submitted via letter.

City Commission Meetings

The Commission usually meets the second and last Monday of each month at 7:00 p.m. in the Commission Chambers at City Hall, unless noted otherwise. Citizens are invited to attend.

Monday, January 9, 2012, 7:00 p.m., Commission Chambers

**Wednesday, January 11, 2012, 6:00 p.m., Citizens Forum Room, Lakeview Arena
Special Meeting: Changes in Recycling**

Wednesday, January 18, 2012, 8:00 a.m., Room 103, Work Session: FY 2011 Audit Presentation; Budget Priorities Discussion

Monday, January 30, 2012, 7:00 p.m., Commission Chambers

Monday, February 13, 2012, 7:00 p.m., Commission Chambers

Tuesday, February 21, 2012, 7:00 p.m., Commission Chambers

Meetings are televised on City of Marquette Channel 21, and are available on streaming video at www.mqctcy.org.

Benefits of Fluoridation in Drinking Water

The following are frequently asked questions about the benefits of fluoridation in drinking water. For additional information about fluoride in Marquette City's drinking water please contact Superintendent Curt Goodman by phone at (906) 225-4055 or by email at cgoodman@mqctcy.org.



Q: When did the City of Marquette start fluoridation of their drinking water?

A: Fluoridation of the Marquette water supply began in 1951.

Q: What is fluoride and how does it benefit dental health?

A: Fluoride is a mineral that exists naturally in nearly all water supplies. Research proves that at a certain level in drinking water, fluoride prevents tooth decay. This optimal level is reached when a public water system adjusts—either increasing or lowering—the level of fluoride.

Q: I recently found the website of a group that opposes fluoridation. This group claims that the connection between fluoridation and cavity prevention isn't solid. Is that true?

A: No, it is not true. There is solid, consistent evidence supporting fluoride's role in cavity prevention. Studies show that fluoridation reduces tooth decay by 18 to 40 percent. Two studies released in 2010 strengthened the already substantial evidence that fluoridated water prevents cavities.

Q: If I use fluoridated toothpaste, am I getting enough fluoride to protect against decay?

A: No. The benefits from water fluoridation build on those from fluoride in toothpaste. Studies conducted in communities that fluoridated water in the years after fluoride toothpastes were widely used have shown a lower rate of tooth decay than communities without fluoridated water. The author of a 2010 study noted that research has confirmed "the most effective source of fluoride to be water fluoridation." Water fluoridation provides dental benefits to people of all ages and income groups without requiring them to spend extra money or change their daily routine.

Q: Do any states have laws guaranteeing residents' access to fluoridated water?

A: Twelve states and the District of Columbia have laws designed to ensure access to fluoridated water. Forty-three of the 50 largest cities in the U.S. fluoridate their drinking water. Research shows that every \$1 invested in water fluoridation saves \$38 in unnecessary dental costs.

Water Meter Winter Access

Please take an extra few minutes to clear a path to your touchpad (shown left) as you snow blow, shovel, or plow your home or business. The water meter readers must physically touch the center of the touchpad with their electronic reader to



obtain a reading. If this is not possible, your reading and bill will be estimated for that billing period. If your meter is located behind a gate that is normally kept locked or becomes snowed in during winter, please call Utility Billing at (906) 228-0420 to have your touchpad relocated. There is no charge to have the touchpad moved.

Christmas Tree Drop-Off Sites Open

Properties paying the "Garbage/Yard Waste" fee on their monthly bills (green bag users) are eligible to use the Christmas tree drop-off sites. Owners and tenants of properties not paying the fee should contact their regular waste hauler for service. These sites are supported by **fees, not taxes**.

Beginning December 31, 2011 through January 15, 2012, there will be two drop-off sites available for Christmas tree disposal. One site available for drop-off is located at the west end of Lakeview Arena parking lot; place tree inside orange fencing. The second site available for drop-off is the Baraga Avenue ice rink located east of 850 West Baraga Avenue. Access can be obtained from Baraga Avenue or West Spring Street. Please place tree inside the orange fencing. Residents are to remove all decorations and stands before disposing of their tree. For more information, please contact the Public Works Department at (906) 228-0444.

Marquette Matters Volume 2, Number 1

Marquette Matters, published bimonthly by the City of Marquette, is available to all residents and businesses online at www.mqctcy.org. Article ideas are always welcomed. To sign up for our e-mail list or for story ideas please email marquettematters@mqctcy.org or call Lea at (906) 228-0472. Any individuals with disabilities who would like to receive the information in this publication in another form may contact the *Marquette Matters* newsletter at marquettematters@mqctcy.org, or the Arts and Culture Center at (906) 228-0472.

Important Winter Information

Winter Tax Collection

The 2011 winter taxes are due at the City Treasurer's office by February 14, 2012 without penalty. From February 15th through February 29th, a 3% penalty is added. Property taxes are delinquent on March 1st and the real property tax bills are transferred to the County for delinquent collection. Personal property taxes (for equipment used to run a business) remain with the City as delinquent and have additional monthly interest and penalty assessed.

Taxpayers that have a deferment with the City have until February 14th to pay both their summer and winter taxes without interest and penalty. The due date can be extended to February 29th if the taxpayer has filed a Homestead Property Tax Credit form before February 14th with the State. Bring in a completed copy of the form to the Treasurer's Office when applying for the extension.

Did you know ... that rental property is considered a "business" and is assessed personal property taxes? Contact the Treasurer's Office at (906) 228-0475 with any questions regarding the payment of taxes.

Winter Fire Safety

The Fire Department asks the Marquette community to take extra caution when heating their homes this winter. Follow these tips to increase safety levels in your home this winter:

Furnace or Boiler

- Have the units serviced in the fall, prior to heating season
- Internal problems can be resolved
- Filters replaced and burners adjusted
- Keep storage items clear of heating units

Space Heaters

- Need space - maintain three (3) feet of clearance around and above the unit
- Do not leave unattended

Kerosene Heaters

- Use in short duration
- Follow safety directions on the unit
- Open a window slightly for fresh air

Wood Stoves

- Install per the manufacturer's specifications
- Maintain clearance from combustibles
- Maintain a clean chimney

Fireplaces

- Have the unit inspected and cleaned by a qualified chimney sweep

Smoke Detectors

- Have a working smoke detector; it will double your chances of surviving a fire
- Install new batteries when you change your clock for daylight savings time

Carbon Monoxide Detectors

- Designed to alarm at low levels (not of an emergency nature) but immediate action is required to be taken

Winter Parking Ban in Effect

The Winter Parking Ban is in effect and runs until April 1, 2012. The winter parking ban ordinance makes it a violation to park a vehicle on City streets or in parking lots between the hours of 1:00 a.m. and 6:00 a.m. Anyone failing to remove their vehicle from these locations will be fined. For more information please contact the Police Department at (906) 228-0040.

Nominations Sought for Annual Arts Awards

The City of Marquette Arts and Culture Center welcomes citizens to anonymously nominate deserving members of the community to be considered for a Marquette County Arts Award. Support for the arts contributes to significant economic development within Marquette and also raises the community's quality of life. The Arts and Culture Center offers the Art Awards to thank arts supporters and recognize citizens that are especially involved in raising arts awareness. Nominations will be accepted until February 1, 2012 and nomination forms can be found at the Arts and Culture Center, located in the lower level of the Peter White Public Library or downloaded from www.mqtcty.org/arts.html.

Local Photographer Featured in Lower Level Gallery

City of Marquette Arts and Culture Center Gallery is proud to present "Goodnight Analog," an installation by local artist Kristine Granger.

The interdisciplinary piece "Goodnight Analog" was inspired by Ms. Granger's desire to create from absence. She states, "I have created an installation that relates to both my memory and collective memory. Collective memory and its connection to the sensorial experience elicit all forms of individual memory into the formation of a collective history."

"Goodnight Analog" will be on display at the City of Marquette Arts and Culture Center's Lower Level Gallery from January 4 - 27, 2012 with a public reception for the artist in the gallery on Thursday, January 19th, from 6:00 - 8:00 p.m. The City of Marquette Arts and Culture Center is located in the lower level of the Peter White Public Library and open during regular library business hours.

Painter and mixed media artist Rudy Brinks will be featured in the Lower Level Gallery for the month of February.

Citizens Enjoy Thanksgiving Meal Together



The Marquette Senior Center and the Alger-Marquette Community Action Board hosted a Thanksgiving meal for senior citizens in November. Over 40 people were in attendance. Nicole Messer, NMU intern at the Senior Center comments, "The Senior Center offered the Thanksgiving meal to spread some holiday cheer to the senior community within Marquette. Many of our guests live by themselves so this offers them the opportunity to enjoy a nice meal with their neighbors." The Center is located in the lower level of City Hall.

The Senior Center also wide variety of health, education, nutrition, fitness and recreation programs, as well as the services of state-licensed social workers. Social workers and homemaker assistants also provide services to home-bound residents. Visit www.mqtcty.org or call (906) 228-0456 for more information and their events schedule.

Lakeview Arena Hosts Adaptive Ice Skating Program

Superior Alliance for Independent Living (SAIL) has partnered with the Gliding Stars Adaptive Ice Skating Program, headquartered in Buffalo, NY, and Lakeview Arena to bring an ice skating opportunity to Marquette children with disabilities. Following a year of planning and organizing, five young persons ranging in ages 3 - 12 experienced the feeling of skating in November. With the help of two volunteers each, the children skated with enthusiasm in a safe and inviting environment. The program is scheduled to continue throughout the winter.



"We Don't Want Them..."

The traveling exhibit "We Don't Want Them: Race and Housing in Metropolitan Detroit" will be displayed in the Huron Mountain Club Gallery of the Peter White Public Library from January 6 - 25, 2012. The exhibit ties in with the Great Michigan Read's current selection, *Arc of Justice: A Saga of Race, Civil Rights, and Murder in the Jazz Age*, by Detroit native Kevin Boyle. The exhibit encourages communities to look at their housing history and explore local housing issues.

Although the exhibit focuses on metropolitan Detroit and the Sweet trials, it encourages all communities to examine their housing history, practices, and policies. Following this focus, on Monday, January 16, a panel discussion, "Are You My Neighbor?" part 1, will begin at 7:00 p.m. in the Library's Community Room. The evening's focus is on current housing issues.

"Are You My Neighbor?" part 2 will be held Tuesday, January 24 at 7:00 p.m. This panel will focus on the history of housing and neighborhoods in Marquette.

"We Don't Want Them" is sponsored by the Michigan Humanities Council in partnership with the Michigan Roundtable for Diversity and Inclusion. The exhibition is touring Michigan through June 2012. After Marquette, the exhibit can be seen in Detroit, Interlochen, Traverse City, Saginaw, Dundee, and Big Rapids.

All are welcome to attend these free programs. For more information call (906) 226-4323 or visit www.pwpl.info.

City Committee Boot Camp Session Offered

The City has instituted a new training session for the members of our volunteer authorities, boards and committees called "Committee Boot Camp." The City Manager and City Attorney will be presenting a number of topics during the one-hour session: an overview of City operations; ethics; parliamentary procedures; rules of procedure; filing minutes; and finally, questions and answers. The City is asking these individuals to attend at least one of these sessions during their tenure. The next Committee Boot Camp will be held on the following date:

Wednesday, February 8, 2012, at 5:30 p.m.

All sessions will be held in Commission Chambers and are limited to 20 people per session. To reserve your spot (available on a first-come, first-served basis), please contact Wendy Larson in the City Manager's office via email (wlarson@mqtcty.org) or call her at (906) 225-8104.

City Manager Offers Open Office Hours

Each month City Manager Bill Vajda is available to meet with citizens on an informal basis at the Peter White Public Library. This is a chance to let him know your concerns, your suggestions or simply have a brief chat. Upcoming sessions include:

Wednesday, January 11, 2012 and Wednesday, February 8, 2012
from 10:00 a.m. - Noon from 10:00 a.m. - Noon

These functions are held in the Peter White Conference Room, on the main level of the Library. No appointments are required.