

BASHERT'S BI-WEEKLY MAYORAL BULLETIN



HAPPY HOLIDAYS!

I hope you have a lovely holiday season, and a fabulous New Year. Whatever holiday(s) you celebrate, however many candles you light, or whatever decorations are in your home: May your holidays be peaceful, bright, and celebratory.

Merry Christmas, Happy Hanukkah, Happy Kwanzaa, Merry Solstice! And to all of us; May 2020 bring you joy, health, success, and happiness.

On a related note: Water Tower Lights! Take some time to drive by our (in)famous Water Tower. YCUA and our DDA have cooperated to get festive lighting for our enjoyment. Happy Holidays from the DDA and our Water Authority!



The image above is the view looking east on Michigan Avenue downtown during the holiday season in the early 1940s. Notice the brick streets, neon signs, and decorative garland overhead.

Photo courtesy of the Ypsilanti Historical Society Archives and the Historical District Commission's Throwback Thursday posts.

FREIGHTHOUSE CHANGES COMING

We all love the Ypsilanti Freighthouse. Many of us have fond memories of the farmers market there (it used to be held inside the Freighthouse), as well as attending many local events in the building -- I myself held a number of events in this beautiful building in the 90s for various organizations I was working with. It was inexpensive and easy to use for small and large gatherings, concerts, meetings, dances, and more.



Then, major structural damage was discovered and it was condemned. Friends of the Ypsilanti Freighthouse (FOYF) came together and raised the money to save the building. It took years to do this. It felt like every time we turned around, another major issue was discovered, and opening the building was again delayed. Again, and again, and again. The work took so long, that the membership of this group changed almost completely three times.

Our community loves the Freighthouse. We have fond memories, and a significant amount of pride about it. In our hearts, it is still the inexpensive and easily accessible building we loved 20+ years ago.

MORE ON NEXT PAGE

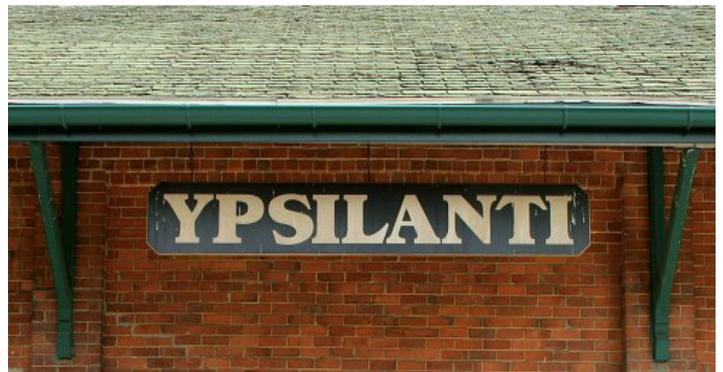
CONT. PG. 1

While the building is owned by the City of Ypsilanti, it is run by the Friends of the Ypsilanti Freighthouse, rent free. All the income and expenses are handled by the FOYF. This is not a sensible set up for two reasons:

1. Ypsilanti is not a rich city. We spent the last 15 years on the verge of economic crisis, cutting staff, closing our Parks and Rec Department, slashing staffing levels, freezing wages, etc. We are no longer at that level of dire economic stress, but we are not wealthy. Allowing the management and revenue of the building to not be benefitting the City is a loss to Ypsilanti and to our community at large. Other cities do not give away management and proceeds from historic buildings. A nearby example is Cobblestone Farm, which is run by (and proceeds benefit) the city of Ann Arbor.
2. Because the City owns the building, we end up being directly responsible for the decisions of the FOYF. Their fiscal decisions, their decisions about events, how they handle community issues like questions about parking -- these all require City staff and Council time and energy. Yet the City has no input into the decisions. This creates stress and adds extra steps in communication that predictably create some problems.

Both of these issues are caused by this flawed relationship between the City and the Freighthouse. This in no way is a criticism of the Friends of the Ypsilanti Freighthouse, or the work they do. FOYF has worked hard for years, and through several iterations, on behalf of our community and it is much appreciated. This is to be celebrated and valued.

FOYF took on a massive task, and we are thankful for their work and passion. Without their dedication, we might not have the Freighthouse for our use today.



To correct both of the above problems, the City is going to take over direct management of the Freighthouse. The City will take on the management of the building, repairs, scheduling and running events, etc. The City has staff now who can schedule events, manage the books, and maintain the building. In many ways, it will be a smooth transition.

This plan will be more in line with our relationship to Ypsilanti's other Friends groups, who are associated with some other City buildings used by the community, such as Parkridge Center and the Senior Center.

This change has come up in City Council Goal Setting. Both Staff and Council have mentioned this matter repeatedly in our goals for the coming fiscal year. There is a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) agreement between the City and the Freighthouse through fall of 2020. The MOU contains a 60 day back-out clause for both groups. Legally, this makes it an easy move. From a community perspective, it is a little more complicated.

I expect that the transition may be bumpy for a little while. Again, a list of reasons:

1. FOYF has a number of events scheduled through fall of 2020, when the current MOU expires. People have signed contracts and made plans to use the Freighthouse and we will honor those contracts.
2. The community has a vision of the Freighthouse and its role in our City based on its traditional use throughout the life of the building. There are pent up expectations about how that building should be used. There is already

MORE ON NEXT PAGE

CONT. PG. 2

- lobbying to have no weddings, lower pricing, expand community use, and other hopes and dreams.
3. The Freighthouse is not a community center. While it can and probably will be used by the community more often in the future, it will never be the same as it was. There may be tension between that romantic memory from 20 years ago and what is possible today.
 4. The City will have a learning curve: we will have to train some staff (while others can step right in), say, for example, to learn more about catering for formal events.
 5. Most likely, the City will make a few changes. Some changes will work, others may not be successful. Through it all, we will do our best.
 6. The timeline is not known at this time. The City is happy to offer whatever flexibility the FOYF needs to consider their options.
 7. FOYF must make decisions about what they want their new role to be. There is a wide range of options for them and some very successful models from Friends groups already thriving in our community.

While this is a positive move, it will be a challenging one. I am asking for patience and understanding for both FOYF and the City as we move through the changes and settling into our new roles.

Lastly, I would like to extend gratitude and appreciation to the Friends of the Ypsi Freighthouse for years of dedication and work. We share a love of the Ypsi Freighthouse and their work to preserve it has been priceless. Many thanks to FOYF.

MOMS AGAINST GUN VIOLENCE

Gun violence continues to harm our community and our country. Moms Against Gun Violence has an active local chapter. They have held rallies and been at Council meetings. I encourage you to check out their activities.

Meanwhile, they recently turned me on to a few tools for reducing gun violence. I am sharing those tools with you, below. Some are helpful, some may not be a good fit for our community. Know that we are constantly looking for ways to protect our community from gun violence.

[Everytown for Gun Safety Support Fund Launches New Online Portal for City Gun Violence Prevention](#)

WATER SAFETY NEWS

SPOILER ALERT, OUR TAP WATER IS STILL SAFE.

Ypsilanti gets our water from the Detroit water system. There was some news recently about a land collapse in the Detroit River and its possible impact on our water quality. The Great Lakes Water Authority announced the following:

GLWA has two raw water intakes in the Detroit River. One is located several miles upstream of the Detroit Storage site, a portion of which last week partially collapsed into the river. Because it is upstream of the site, there is no danger of any potential water quality issues from the collapse. The second intake is several miles downstream of the Detroit Storage site. However, the intake is located on the Canadian side of the Detroit River, and is not in the direct flow stream of the river where the land collapsed. Because of this, GLWA does not believe that there is any danger of this incident impacting water quality.

[Full Statement](#)

BOARD AND COMMISSION FEATURE

BY CLERK ANDREW HELLENGA

Board and Commission feature:

In this Newsletter, I am featuring our Board of Ethics. Clerk Andrew Hellenga once again has brought us an informative and interesting description of this Board. Ypsilanti is unique in that we have an Ethics Ordinance, not all cities do.

We VALUE values. Enjoy!

The Board of Ethics was created by Charter amendment to combat the use of public office for personal gain. A complaint must be written, sworn, and signed prior to submission. Once submitted, the City Attorney reviews the complaint and determines if it falls within the realm of the board. If so, the City Attorney would make a non-binding recommendation to the board.

Once the board receives the recommendation, it must determine the next steps; to either accept the recommendation of the City Attorney, investigate the complaint further, hold a hearing, or refer the complaint to law enforcement. If a complaint is forwarded to a law enforcement agency, any hearings concerning the complaint will be placed on hold until completion of the investigation.

The Board of Ethics consists of five members serving a five year term, and only permitted to serve one term. The board must be politically balanced, and members are required to report the party they identify with on their application. The board meets as needed, however, it currently has two scheduled meetings in 2020, on February 20th and October 26th beginning at 7:00 pm.

--Clerk Andrew Hellenga

UPCOMING EVENTS

There are so many events planned for over the Winter holidays, I'm stymied to pick three to highlight. GO OUT! ENJOY! I'll see you around our lively City over the holidays and let's take a selfie.



IN COMMUNITY,

Mayor Beth Bashert

FB page: <https://www.facebook.com/bashert4ypsi/>

Email: mayor@cityofypsilanti.com

Phone: 734-368-3573

READING THIS OFFLINE?

Here's a list of links I mentioned in the articles above.

Moms Against Gun Violence:

<https://everytown.org/press/everytown-for-gun-safety-support-fund-launches-new-online-portal-for-city-gun-violence-prevention/>

Water Safety Statement:

<https://www.glwater.org/update-feeds/glwa-statement-detroit-storage-partial-land-collapse-possible-impact-on-raw-water-intakes/>